

Methadone's hospital toll revealed

14 Jun 2019



Thousands of vulnerable drug addicts have ended up in hospital after overdosing on the very treatment prescribed by the NHS to help them, it has emerged.

Research by the Scottish Conservatives has revealed there have been 4479 hospital admissions caused by methadone since records began in the mid-1990s.

Last year alone 222 users were rushed to hospital after overdosing on the heroin-replacement substance.

The party's public health spokeswoman, Annie Wells, said the official statistics proved the need to find better ways to treat heroin addicts.

She has long called for alternative treatments for users in Scotland, rather than parking them on a substance like methadone which offers no real hope of recovery.

In contrast, the SNP government simply wants to make it even easier for addicts to take heroin, with the bid to set up NHS-run injecting facilities.

The figures on methadone-related hospital admissions, which were buried in the depths of ISD Scotland data files, show no improvement in reducing these figures since they were first gathered in 1996.

Scottish Conservative public health spokeswoman Annie Wells said:

"Methadone is meant to help heroin addicts – but now we learn it has hospitalised thousands in recent years.

"It's a disgrace that the system is so utterly dependent on parking vulnerable addicts on this dangerous substance when what they need is actual help.

"We need to remember that the vast majority of these people want to give up drugs altogether.

"But all they get is an SNP government which either feeds them methadone with no other alternative considered, or allows them to inject the ruinous heroin for free at a state-run facility.

"That's unimaginative, and will only worsen Scotland's already shocking drug problem.

"It's time to see efforts going into changing the lives of heroin addicts for good, not making things worse for them."

[Move to sell Prestwick airport welcomed](#)

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In response to a question in the Scottish Parliament today, Transport Secretary Michael Matheson set out plans to place an advert in the Official Journal of the European Union, inviting expressions of interest in the airport.

John Scott, Scottish Conservative MSP for Ayr said:

“It is good news that Prestwick Airport is now being actively marketed for sale and I hope that a buyer can be secured at the earliest opportunity.

“Despite the problems the airport has faced over recent years, and the need for it to be taken over by the government in 2013, I have always firmly believed that it has the potential for a bright future.

“Prestwick has all the foundations for success; the longest commercial runway and parallel taxiway in Scotland, a reputation of being Britain’s only fog-free airport, its own dedicated railway station and a thriving aerospace campus.

“What it now needs is an owner prepared to put in the investment to take the airport forward as the major economic asset it undoubtedly is.”

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[Children taking fewer subjects in school under the SNP](#)

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Pupils in Scotland are on average taking fewer subjects at s4 level now than when the SNP’s Curriculum for Excellence was introduced, it has been revealed.

Research by the Scottish Conservatives has shown there are now 165 schools in Scotland where pupils take six subjects or less.

In 2013, that figure was only 46.

In contrast, the number of schools where pupils take seven or more has almost halved in that timeframe, from 308 to 182.

Nicola Sturgeon was challenged on the issue at First Minister’s Questions today.

But in response to Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson, she said

discussing the issue was simply “talking down Scottish education”.

That follows education secretary John Swinney’s view that critics of the SNP’s performance on education were merely embarking on a “moan-fest”.

The statistics revealed today have also been backed by Professor Jim Scott, an expert on subject choice.

He said: “Just over 200 schools have declines, or significant declines, in the number of entries, where-as just over 50 demonstrate an increase.”

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“If we’re going to improve education in this country we need to accept the evidence.

“That evidence shows a child in s4 is, on average, taking fewer subjects than they would have done just a few years ago.

“But this exchange again proved this SNP government is simply unwilling to act.

“If both Nicola Sturgeon and John Swinney don’t start listening, the education system under their control will continue to go downhill.

“This is the consequence of schools simply not having enough teachers or resources to deliver the world-class levels of education Scots deserve.

“Nicola Sturgeon should spend less effort trying to shoot the messenger, and more time acting on the evidence.”

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