

Just 9% of children do enough exercise, official report states

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1 Aug 2017



Fewer than one in 10 children reach the daily recommended levels of physical activity, a Scottish Government report has revealed.

According to a survey published today, the overwhelming majority of 10 and 11-year-olds north of the border don't do enough exercise.

Children are "sedentary" for more than seven hours every day, the analysis showed.

The 'Growing Up in Scotland' report is the latest to reveal Scotland's battle with obesity.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said these findings suggested the country's battle with the bulge is going to get significantly worse before improvements are seen.

The data – which involved a survey of thousands of children between May 2015 and May 2016 – also showed deprivation and gender were irrelevant when it comes to activity levels, with all groups returning similar results.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"This is a problem for everyone, regardless of deprivation or gender – the entire country is impacted.

"From a public health perspective, it's alarming that so few children are doing enough exercise each day.

"We've always known activity levels in Scotland are lower than they should be.

"But people will be stunned that just nine per cent of youngsters are doing enough.

"We already have severe problems with obesity north of the border, and all the health complications that brings.

"Going on this survey, that situation is only going to get worse in the years and decades to come.

"If the Scottish Government doesn't take strong action to address this now, thousands upon thousands of Scots will suffer the implications further down the line."

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31 Jul 2017



The appointment of another special adviser to the Scottish Government means numbers have returned to the previous record high under the SNP.

It was confirmed over the weekend that Callum McCaig, who lost his seat as an MP in June, is now working as a SPAD.

That takes the total number to 14, the same level as the independence referendum, and considerably more than the nine employed in 2012.

The increase comes despite the SNP previously saying it would cut down on SPADs, and First Minister Nicola Sturgeon describing similar appointments to Mr McCaig in Westminster as "an absolute abomination".

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

"Over the years the SNP has repeatedly said it wants to reduce the number of special advisers working for government.

"Yet this latest appointment returns numbers to the previous record level.

"For some reason, when the UK Government appoints former politicians it is an 'absolute abomination', according to Nicola Sturgeon.

"Yet in recent times, she has appointed two former SNP politicians to the public payroll.

"The SNP clearly thinks it can use taxpayer's cash in this way without any recourse from voters at all.

"But people are increasingly seeing through the SNP's hypocritical ways."

Scottish Government spending on SPADs has more than doubled under the SNP. From 2007/8 to 2015/16 expenditure on SPADs increased from £480,251 to £1,140,104. The number of special advisers has increased from 9 to 14 (The Scottish Parliament, *Question S4W-10032*, 4 October 2012, [link](#); The Scottish Parliament, *Question S5W-00837*, 16 June 2016, [link](#); Scottish Government, *Special advisers: July 2017*, [link](#)).

- **The SNP have given SPAD jobs to two ex-parliamentarians.** Stewart Maxwell is a former West of Scotland MSP and Callum McCaig is a former MP for Aberdeen South (Scottish Government, *Special advisers: July 2017*, [link](#)).
- **Alex Salmond promised that he would reduce the number of special advisers as part of a cut in bureaucracy.** ‘We could do with less ministers and therefore less ministerial departments, probably less executive agencies, certainly less special advisers, because I think one of the key attributes of joined-up government is to have less bits to join up.’ (*The Glasgow Herald*, 7 November 2006, p6).
- **John Swinney previously said ‘We need more medical doctors not spin doctors’ but has two SPADs working on his brief.** Colin McAllister and Kate Higgins both cover education (*Glasgow Evening Times*, 25 July 2006, p6)
- The previous record for SPADs was 14:
<https://www.pressreader.com/uk/the-scottish-mail-on-sunday/20150802/281728383229112>

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30 Jul 2017



The Scottish Conservatives have slammed the SNP after their Westminster leader revealed plans to reboot the campaign for independence.

Ian Blackford denied that independence had been put on the back burner, saying “We’ve clearly got a manifesto commitment from the 2016 election that says if there is a change in circumstances there’s the question of a second referendum.”

It comes after Nicola Sturgeon promised that there would be a “forward-

looking and ambitious” relaunch of the campaign, despite having said she would delay her plans after the General Election.

Scottish Conservative MSP Murdo Fraser said these comments completely destroyed any claims that the SNP would be focussing on the day job.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser MSP said:

“These latest comments from the SNP prove once and for all that they will always put independence first.

“Despite voters sending them a clear message this year that they are fed up with them obsessing over independence, the SNP just aren’t listening.

“It destroys claims from Nicola Sturgeon that her priority is anything but separation, or that she would be getting back to the day job.

“People are crying out for the Scottish Government to start concentrating on improving our hospitals, schools and the economy.

“But instead we have a narrow minded administration that will stop at nothing until they have torn Scotland out of the UK.”

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28 Jul 2017



The Scottish Conservatives have criticised the SNP over headteacher recruitment, suggesting it had “categorically failed” in its attempt to encourage teachers to take up headship.

An investigation from Tes Scotland put a spotlight on the sharp rise in the number of headteachers placed in charge of one or more schools.

It revealed that just under 200 teachers have been asked to run numerous schools at the same time.

Overall, 190 of 2,000 nationwide headteachers were in charge of more than one school – a rise of just over 50 per cent compared with 2010.

In 2010, it was revealed that 17 councils had introduced shared headships – this year however, 23 of Scotland’s 32 councils are using these arrangements.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

“This will be a matter of great concern to parents across Scotland.

“It is a clear sign that the SNP is categorically failing in its attempts to get more people into the teaching profession and to take up headship.

“Other than in very remote rural communities, this is completely unsustainable to have heads needing to be in charge of a number of schools.

“It is grossly unfair on the pupils. The absence can affect direction and strategy and can have a negative impact on staff morale.

“Staff shortages have become a major issue under this SNP government. It is completely unacceptable and speaks volumes about its promise to make education the number one priority.”

Tes Scotland release:

<https://www.tes.com/news/school-news/breaking-news/scottish-schools-spending-three-years-trying-recruit-headteachers>

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27 Jul 2017



A new report has revealed the urgent workforce challenges facing Scotland’s NHS, saying that the SNP Government has failed to plan for the long term.

Audit Scotland’s report into workforce planning in the NHS revealed that there has been a 107 per cent increase in spending on agency staff since 2011/12, with the cost now standing at £171 million.

It also showed that over a third of nurses and midwives are now aged over 50, while the number of newly qualified nurses available to replace them fell by

15 per cent in 2014-15 and then a further seven per cent in 2015-16.

The number of vacancies across NHS Scotland has also increased, with the percentage vacancy rate for consultants rising from 3.6 per cent in 2011/12 to 7.4 per cent in 2016/17.

There was a rise from 1.8 per cent to 4.5 per cent for nursing and midwifery vacancies over the same period.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs MSP said:

“This is another deeply concerning report into the workforce crisis in our NHS.

“Time and again we have seen warnings about long term workforce planning, and these figures show the situation is only getting worse.

“Agency costs are soaring, and the percentage of vacancies in consultancy and nursing posts have more than doubled.

“More worryingly, we are not seeing enough new nurses being trained to keep up with an increasingly elderly workforce.

“The growing strain within NHS departments is clear, and it is the SNP’s totally shambolic approach to work-force planning over the last decade that is to blame.

“Instead of standing idly by, it’s time the SNP started listening to the growing chorus of voices saying that we need an effective, long-term workforce strategy put in place.”