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More than 10,000 ambulances have been dispatched with only one crew member on board in the last four years, even though the SNP promised to end the practice.

Figures obtained by the Scottish Conservatives revealed there were 2204 occasions last year alone where paramedics were forced to attend an emergency on their own.

This is despite a pledge by the SNP as far back as 2008 that it would no longer happen, other than in “exceptional circumstances”.

Then health secretary Nicola Sturgeon said: *“I have made it clear to the Scottish Ambulance Service that it must take action to eliminate rostered single-manning. The policy of the Scottish Government is clear – traditional accident and emergency ambulances should be double-crewed, with at least one member being a paramedic, unless in exceptional circumstances.”*

Yet the Freedom of Information statistics have revealed single-crew journeys occurred six times every day in 2016/17.

The Scottish Conservatives have said while it’s understandable there will always be some instances where a single-crew responds to an incident, it happens far too often.

It is understood staff sickness is one reason why a single-crewed ambulance would be dispatched.

Last year, the sickness rate within the organisation was 7.6 per cent, way above the target of five per cent and the private sector average of 1.9 per cent.

Scottish Conservative public health spokeswoman Annie Wells said:

“Everyone accepts that in the emergency services there will always be times where rules have to be bent and people need to adapt to developing situations.

“But for single crews to be sent out on 10,000 occasions in four years – when the specific policy is not to do that – is unacceptable.

“The SNP government has to take responsibility for this.

“Nicola Sturgeon herself said she would end this practice nearly a decade ago, but next to no progress has been made.

“It’s simply not fair on hard-working ambulance staff to continually expect them to hit the road on their own.

“We need to see a clear plan from the Scottish Government to help them out.”