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9 Sep 2017



The number of people in Scotland being prescribed antidepressants has soared again, despite an SNP pledge to stop the increase.

New statistics have revealed 6.4 million items were handed out last year, the equivalent of 17,500 a day.

That compares to 6.1 million the previous year, and 5.8 million in 2014/15.

In addition, the NHS now spends £44.6 million supplying medication to patients with mild-to-moderate depression or anxiety.

It is the latest set of statistics revealing the extent of mental ill health north of the border.

More than a decade ago, the SNP said it recognised too many antidepressants were being prescribed, and promised to ensure the numbers dropped.

However, in government the nationalists have failed every single year to do this, despite calls from experts and mental health charities to explore other forms of treatment, not least improved access to counselling.

The figures were published by ISD Scotland's Prescription Cost Analysis system.

Scottish Conservative mental health spokeswoman Annie Wells said:

"There will always be a place for antidepressants in the health system when it comes to the treatment of a range of mental health conditions.

"But the increase has got completely out of hand, and after 10 years the SNP has to do something about this.

"The nationalists were very clear that reducing the prescription of these drugs would be one of their priorities, but the opposite has happened.

"Mental health is becoming more important, and there's consensus across parliament that more funding and attention have to go on it.

"The suspicion among many is that these pills are being handed out too readily when more appropriate solutions could be found.

“These figures should act as a wake-up call to ministers to address this particular issue once and for all.”