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- Hundreds of Scottish-trained nurses seek work abroad

5 Jan 2018



Hundreds of Scottish-trained nurses every year are seeking work abroad, new statistics have revealed.

Since 2012/13, 1609 nurses who qualified here have filled out verification requests from the Nursing and Midwifery Council, which enables them to practice in other countries.

The potential exodus coincides with vacancy rates of nurses and midwives reaching a record high earlier this year, and wards across the country struggling to plug the gaps.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said more had to be done to ensure nurses who train in Scotland are then encouraged to stay here and work.

The NMC statistics follow revelations in October that 3000 Scottish-trained doctors have left the country since 2008.

The Scottish Conservatives have warned the “brain drain” of both is not only leaving hospitals short of key staff, but shortchanging the training system which is meant to generate medics for Scotland’s NHS.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“It’s extremely worrying that hundreds of nurses every year signal their intention to leave and work abroad.

“At a time when recruitment is so challenging, the last thing we need is Scottish-trained nurses upping sticks and moving elsewhere.

“Clearly more needs to be done to incentivise them to stay, otherwise patients and the staff left behind will be the ones who suffer the consequences.

“The SNP can’t point the finger elsewhere – it must try to attract nurses who’ve left back to Scotland, and do more to make sure others don’t leave in the first place.

“In an organisation the size of the NHS there will always be departures to work overseas, but for more than 1600 to have indicated they want to leave in

the past five years is alarming.

“We know the SNP are presiding over a brain drain in general practice but it appears they are also presiding over a brain drain in nursing.”

[10,000 single-crew ambulance journeys despite SNP pledge](#)

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- 10,000 single-crew ambulance journeys despite SNP pledge

4 Jan 2018



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.”

[Business start-ups receiving support sink to 8-year low](#)

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- Business start-ups receiving support sink to 8-year low

3 Jan 2018



The number of start-up firms receiving support from the Scottish Government’s Business Gateway scheme has dropped to an eight-year low.

New figures have revealed that 8746 new businesses received help from the organisation last year, a 15 per cent drop from 2009.

The total sums invested also fell to their lowest, with the £12.6 million spent in 2016/17 around £1 million less than eight years ago.

Business Gateway describes itself as “publicly funded service contributing to the economic well-being of Scotland by providing access to free business support services”.

Statistics obtained by the Scottish Conservatives also revealed the birth and date rate of businesses north of the border is worse than the UK average.

According to ONS figures, Scotland’s business birth rate of 12.5 per cent is

worse than every English region, and only marginally better than Wales and Northern Ireland.

Shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said the data exposed the SNP's anti-business agenda, warning the overall situation could get worse still after it hiked income tax in the budget.

Derek Mackay, the finance secretary, made that decision against the advice of a range of business organisations, who said it would damage the economy and place firms here at a competitive disadvantage.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

"Business Gateway provides essential support to many start-up businesses right across the country.

"These are the firms we hope will create jobs, boost growth and create a stronger economy overall for Scotland.

"So it's extremely concerning to learn fewer have been using the free support of Business Gateway, and it's yet another indication of the cost of having an anti-business SNP government.

"If you take these findings along with the fact more Scottish businesses are dying, while fewer are being created, it paints a grim picture.

"But instead of seeking to improve this situation in the budget, Derek Mackay went against the wishes of the business community, and hiked taxes for hundreds of thousands of Scots."

[Soaring number of dementia prescriptions illustrates 'crisis'](#)

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- Soaring number of dementia prescriptions illustrates 'crisis'

30 Dec 2017



Thousands more dementia drugs were given to patients last year as Scotland's NHS faces the consequences of an ageing population.

More than 263,000 drugs were prescribed last year, an increase of 5.4 per cent from 2015/16.

Compared with two years ago, doctors now give out 70 more dementia drugs a day as growing numbers are diagnosed with the illness.

And in the space of seven years, the total number of patients receiving drugs for dementia has almost doubled from 135,840 in 2010/11 to 263,444 last year.

The figures were published by ISD Scotland.

It's the latest set of statistics illustrating the challenges faced by the NHS in relation to an ageing population.

It's estimated there will be nearly 20,000 newly diagnosed cases of dementia a year by 2020, while health experts have said hospitals are being overwhelmed with patients who are being treated for physical ailments, but also suffer from conditions like Alzheimer's.

Despite the increase in prescriptions, the cost burden on the NHS has reduced.

Last year, the average cost per item decreased to £14.38, compared to £21.57 two years ago.

Scottish Conservative public health spokeswoman Annie Wells said:

"It's of course welcome that so many people are living longer.

"But it would be foolish to ignore the challenges that brings for the NHS, and we can see from these figures more and more people are being treated for dementia.

"The Scottish Government will have seen this coming down the track for many years now, so there's no excuse for it not to be ready.

"This rise will also pose huge challenges for hospitals who treat these patients when they succumb to other ailments.

"Having been in charge of health and social care for more than a decade, we need to start seeing signs that the SNP has a plan for this impending crisis."

[Hundreds of hospital beds lost in past year](#)

29 Dec 2017



Hundreds of hospital beds have been cut in Scotland's NHS over the past year, it has been revealed.

Official figures have shown there was a reduction of 622 beds in 2016/17, a decrease of 2.8 per cent.

This is despite growing demands on the health service and higher inpatient activity than there was five years ago.

And the 21,340 beds available to Scotland's NHS last year is a 7.3 per cent reduction from the 23,012 in 2012/13.

The statistics were included in an ISD Scotland report on health service costs.

They showed that some health boards were worse hit than others.

For example, in NHS Grampian over the past five years, the reduction of 2358 beds to 1959 is a drop of 17 per cent.

Last year there were 1.15 million inpatient cases across Scotland, excluding long-term stays.

And while that's a slight decrease on the previous year of 1.16 million, it compares to just 1.07 million five years ago.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"There is a general shift towards community care, which will explain some of the reductions we've seen over the past years.

"But at the same time, we have an expanding and an ageing population, and we're going to need hospital beds to support and care for more patients who have increasingly complex needs.

"The NHS is under severe financial pressure, but having access to a hospital bed must remain one of its fundamental principles.

"We've all heard the horror stories about people being kept waiting on trolleys in accident and emergency, and massive delays for various types of care.

"When these things happen against a backdrop of dwindling bed numbers, it's easy to see where at least some of that problem lies.

"The Scottish Government must get on top of this situation and make sure, when beds are taken out of action, it is for the right reason, and no patient will suffer as a consequence.

"Increasingly it seems that SNP ministers' planning around hospital bed numbers has limited flexibility and that their usage modelling is not matching what is required in reality."