

Concern as flu vaccination target for key health workers repeatedly missed

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- Concern as flu vaccination target for key health workers repeatedly missed

3 Dec 2017



The Scottish Government has been urged to ensure healthcare workers receive flu jabs this Christmas – after it emerged just one in three got them last winter.

The latest available figures for 2016/17 show that only 35% of healthcare workers were vaccinated against flu which, if repeated this year, could have a disastrous effect on Scottish NHS capability over the Christmas period.

The target is that 50% of all healthcare workers should be vaccinated in order to maintain staffing levels and protect vulnerable patients. This has never been reached.

The Scottish Conservatives have recently revealed figures that 3,000 doctors have left the country since 2008, nearly a third of GP training places are going unfilled, and the number of nursing and consultancy vacancies in Scotland has reached a record high.

With these ongoing vacancies and the predictable winter hazards and health challenges, it is more important than ever that NHS staff are protected from winter flu.

Miles Briggs, Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary said:

“The Scottish NHS is under ever increasing pressures, with doctors leaving the country, GP training places going unfilled and nursing and consultancy vacancies at a record high.

“The SNP’s ongoing mismanagement of the health service has resulted in the worst ever waiting times and a workforce crisis in our NHS.

“The Scottish Government has repeatedly missed the flu vaccination target for healthcare workers by around 15%, demonstrating an unacceptable risk at this increasingly pressurised time.

“Making sure that vulnerable patient groups are ready for winter and have received flu vaccinations is vital – but as important is trying to make sure our key NHS workers have also been vaccinated.

“As always, all of this places ever increasing pressure on our GPs; the frontlines of our NHS.

“Our campaign to prioritise GP funding would ensure that GPs could respond flexibly to winter crises and pressures in other areas of the workforce.

“Winter is here. The Scottish Government must make sure that our workforce and vulnerable patients are protected as much as possible.”

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29 Nov 2017



The length of time it takes patients to receive hospital treatment after referral has dropped to its worst ever rate.

ISD Scotland figures released today have shown just 81.4 per cent of patients hit the 18-week referral-to-treatment target in September.

And in some health boards, a third of people didn't receive that vital care in the agreed timeframe.

That's well below the 90 per cent standard imposed by the SNP government.

Medics have repeatedly stressed the importance of people beginning treatment as soon as possible after they are referred by a GP or a nurse.

But performance on that measure has plummeted, and compares to 92 per cent just four years ago.

The official statistics also revealed more than 30 per cent of outpatients waiting for an appointment had to wait longer than 12 weeks, another worst-ever performance.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said the performance was more evidence of the SNP's "shambolic" stewardship of the NHS.

It comes as nurse and consultant vacancies are also at a record high, while BMA Scotland reports one in five junior doctors are regularly sleep deprived at work.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“With every week that passes, another set of statistics exposes the SNP’s shambolic running of our NHS.

“And while it may look bad on paper, it’s even worse for the patients and over-stretched medical staff who have to face the reality.

“It’s well known that the sooner someone starts treatment after being referred, the better their chances of recovery.

“Yet under this SNP government the referral-to-treatment waiting times have plummeted to their worst ever.

“The SNP can’t possibly claim to be a party of the NHS while these appalling statistics continue.”

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- Victory for Scottish Conservatives on ‘swim tax’ campaign

28 Nov 2017



A campaign by the Scottish Conservatives to scrap the proposed “swim tax” has succeeded, it was confirmed today.

As part of the Barclay Review on business rates, it had been recommended that council arm’s length bodies which run leisure and cultural facilities should lose their charitable status.

The Scottish Conservatives warned this would force many organisations to the wall, resulting in poorer access to facilities for people right across Scotland.

However, the Scottish Government confirmed in a briefing today that this particular element of the review would not go ahead.

It comes a day before the SNP would have been defeated in a parliamentary debate on the issue.

As part of their party business, the Scottish Conservatives tabled a motion to reject the proposals, a move backed by all other opposition parties.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

“This is a major victory for the Scottish Conservatives and for the Scottish Parliament as a whole.

“For weeks, we have been demanding the SNP ditch its swim tax.

“Following our lead, opposition parties were preparing to unite in parliament this week and send the SNP government a message.

“Derek MacKay has now been forced to bow to the inevitable and u-turn on his tax grab.

“Only the SNP would have even considered a tax raid on leisure centres and community facilities across Scotland.

“The nationalists have been forced to listen thanks to strong opposition from the Scottish Conservatives.”

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28 Nov 2017



Cash reserves within some local authorities could run out “within two to three years” amid budget cuts by the SNP government, it has been warned.

An Audit Scotland report on council finance said local government money was under more pressure than ever, with debts increasing and finances dwindling.

In 2016/17 around 20 councils drew on £79 million worth of cash reserves to keep things going, double the number who resorted to that measure the previous year.

And auditors said today: “Councils tell us that they are finding the situation more serious than ever, with savings becoming increasingly difficult to identify and achieve.

“Councils are showing signs of increasing financial stress. Some risk running out of General Fund reserves within two to three years if they continue to use them at levels planned for 2017/18.”

The financial overview stated there had been a 7.6 per cent real terms reduction in funding from the Scottish Government for councils since 2010/11.

Local authorities now have debt totalling £14.5 billion, and spend around 10 per cent of their budget servicing it.

Scottish Conservative local government spokesman Alexander Stewart said:

“Under the SNP government, the financial health of Scotland’s 32 councils has deteriorated rapidly.

“Debt levels are eye-watering, and millions upon millions of pounds in taxpayers’ cash is now being used just to service it.

“We’ve even got to the stage where local authorities are dipping into the rainy day fund routinely just to stay afloat.

“And as auditors say, if that continues, there won’t be any reserves left to call on.

“The Scottish Government needs to provide far more support to councils right across the country to ensure best practice is shared, debts are reduced, and council tax payers are receiving value for money.”

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- SNP spends £1.4m a week on private care despite rhetoric

24 Nov 2017



The SNP government spends nearly £1.4 million a week on private hospitals to bail out the NHS, despite its supposed opposition to the independent care sector.

New figures have revealed £72 million of taxpayers’ cash was paid to private firms to treat NHS patients in 2016/17.

And while that figure is a slight decrease from the previous year, some health boards recorded notable rises.

Scotland’s biggest health board, Greater Glasgow and Clyde, spent more than £20 million on private hospitals, £3 million more than in 2015/16.

Others to record increases last year were Borders, Highland and Tayside.

It means the NHS across Scotland is handing £197,000 every day to companies to help treat patients and reduce waiting lists.

The statistics were published following a parliamentary question by shadow health secretary Miles Briggs.

He said the independent health sector played a valuable role in easing the strain on the NHS, and that the SNP should be thanking it, rather than continually talking it down.

During the 2014 independence referendum, the nationalists claimed the only way to save the NHS was by voting Yes, and that it opposed the use of private healthcare.

Since then, SNP ministers have spent tens of millions pounds each year utilising it.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“Listening to the SNP you would think private healthcare was an evil that isn’t welcome in Scotland.

“Yet now we see it spends millions every month using it to help out the NHS.

“We believe the independent sector plays a vital role in reducing waiting lists, and helping out an increasingly under-strain NHS.

“It’s time the SNP admitted that, rather than reverting to its dogmatic playbook to appease the extremes of the independence movement.

“This is just the latest example of SNP hypocrisy, and the people and patients of Scotland are seeing right through it.

“The Scottish Parliament’s Health Committee is hearing more and more cases of Scottish patients being encouraged to go private in order to receive the care they do desperately need – resulting in people dropping off NHS waiting lists and not being recorded within the NHS.”