

[Concern as flu vaccination target for key health workers repeatedly missed](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
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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.”