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Scotland's hospitals could be set for a fresh staffing crisis, after a potential retirement boom of consultants was revealed.

According to latest figures, more than a fifth of consultants working for the NHS in Scotland are now aged 55 or above.

That's a significant increase compared to previous years, with more than 100 consultants now working despite being over 65.

Research by the Scottish Conservatives showed those aged 55 and over, and therefore able to consider retirement, accounted for 21.34 per cent of the consultant workforce as of September 2018.

That compares to 20.23 per cent the year before, and just 18.68 per cent in 2014.

And in the 50-plus age group, the percentage rose from 37.15 per cent to 39.8 per cent in the space of five years.

It's the latest grim forecast for the future of staffing within Scotland's NHS.

In December, the Scottish Conservatives revealed the number of doctors in training was at a five-year low.

Around the same time, BMA Scotland expressed fears that the official vacancy figure for consultants (set at 6.8 per cent) is more likely to be around 14 per cent.

**Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:**

"We're going to have even more serious staffing issues in Scotland's hospitals if the SNP government doesn't take urgent action.

"We already know the numbers of doctors in training have fallen to a five-year low.

"Now we learn, at the other end of the spectrum, the consultant workforce is ageing at a considerable rate.

“Even in just a few years the number of consultants who’ll be considering retirement has risen, and now accounts for more than a fifth of that workforce.

“It’s another indictment of the SNP’s shambolic workforce planning, and patients and those workers left over will be the ones who suffer.”