

Hundreds of hospital beds lost in past year

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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.”