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Hundreds of patients across Scotland have been forced to wait more than two months for cancer treatment to begin, despite being urgently referred by a medic.

ISD Scotland figures showed that 86.9 per cent of people were seen to within 62 days, the worst since figures for the standard began in 2012.

Health boards have a target of seeing 95 per cent of patients in that timeframe, yet in some parts of mainland Scotland nearly one in five had to wait longer.

Today's figures cover from April to June this year, during which 3493 were urgently referred after a suspicion of cancer was detected.

Of those, only 3034 were treated within 62 days, the figures show.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said the performance was indicative of a staffing and resource crisis across the whole NHS.

He blamed the SNP's disastrous workforce planning, which has seen recent vacancy rates among nurses and consultants increase to the highest ever.

He also pointed to a crisis within radiology north of the border, which last month culminated in staff sending x-rays to Australia to be analysed due to a lack of resources here.

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

"It's inexcusable for so many people who've been urgently referred on suspicion of cancer to wait more than two months.

"Not only will these patients and their families be beside themselves with worry in this period, but with every day that goes past their chances of a good prognosis deteriorate.

"There's no point in constantly publicising the importance of checking out cancer fears at an early stage if the NHS isn't well sufficiently resourced to hold up its end of the deal.

"This is completely on the SNP's head.

"It's had full charge of the NHS for a decade, and now this performance has slipped to such an unacceptable low, it's time for a proper apology from the nationalists.

"The SNP has also been well-warned about a crisis in radiography but is failing to act.

"That failure results in shocking statistics like this."