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New figures released today have shown how NHS performance on waiting times has nosedived under the SNP.

Tables published by ISD Scotland have revealed the alarming slump since 2010 on both referral-to-treatment and new outpatient waiting times.

In December, just 83.8 per cent of patients were treated within 18 weeks of being referred, well below the target rate, and significantly poorer than the 92 per cent rate of five years ago.

Performance varied across health boards, with one in three patients in NHS Ayrshire and Arran breaching the target timeframe.

It means, at the end of last year, more than 15,000 patients were waiting longer than they should following a referral.

The official data also showed new outpatients in Scotland were receiving a far poorer service than in 2010.

One in four people were waiting longer than the 12-week standard for care for their first appointment, with many of them being forced to wait longer than 16 weeks.

In NHS Highland, nearly half of all outpatients weren't being seen to on time, while in NHS Lothian that figure was one in three.

It's the latest set of statistics showing the SNP's mismanagement of the NHS, and clear evidence of a drop in service levels for patients since 2010.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Donald Cameron said:

"This shows very clearly that in two important areas performance has declined sharply in the last few years.

"This is all on the SNP's watch, and it has to explain the disastrous slump in these crucial waiting times, given it's been running the NHS for almost a decade.

"It's well-documented that the sooner someone begins treatment, the better

chance they will have of recovery.

“Instead, the SNP hasn’t bothered to try and make improvements in this area, and that will be having a very direct impact on the health and wellbeing of vulnerable people.

“The Scottish public are getting increasingly sick of an SNP which, almost on a daily basis, is found wanting on the day job as it obsesses about the constitution.”