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A new report has revealed the urgent workforce challenges facing Scotland's NHS, saying that the SNP Government has failed to plan for the long term.

Audit Scotland's report into workforce planning in the NHS revealed that there has been a 107 per cent increase in spending on agency staff since 2011/12, with the cost now standing at £171 million.

It also showed that over a third of nurses and midwives are now aged over 50, while the number of newly qualified nurses available to replace them fell by 15 per cent in 2014-15 and then a further seven per cent in 2015-16.

The number of vacancies across NHS Scotland has also increased, with the percentage vacancy rate for consultants rising from 3.6 per cent in 2011/12 to 7.4 per cent in 2016/17.

There was a rise from 1.8 per cent to 4.5 per cent for nursing and midwifery vacancies over the same period.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs MSP said:

"This is another deeply concerning report into the workforce crisis in our NHS.

"Time and again we have seen warnings about long term workforce planning, and these figures show the situation is only getting worse.

"Agency costs are soaring, and the percentage of vacancies in consultancy and nursing posts have more than doubled.

"More worryingly, we are not seeing enough new nurses being trained to keep up with an increasingly elderly workforce.

"The growing strain within NHS departments is clear, and it is the SNP's totally shambolic approach to work-force planning over the last decade that is to blame.

"Instead of standing idly by, it's time the SNP started listening to the growing chorus of voices saying that we need an effective, long-term workforce strategy put in place."