

SNP still ill-equipped for GP crisis

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The SNP is still ill-equipped for sorting out Scotland's GP crisis now and in the future, despite years of being warned about a range of challenges.

An Audit Scotland report on the Scottish Government's approach to primary care workforce planning described it as "fragmented", and warned the bid to attract a further 800 GPs would be tougher than the SNP realised.

'NHS workforce planning – part 2' warned that a third of GPs are over the age of 50, and changing working patterns meant more family doctors were working part-time.

As a result, auditors said: "For every GP that retires more than one will need to be trained and recruited to replace them."

The SNP's pledge to attract more than 800 GPs over the next decade also came under fire, with the report stating: "The Scottish Government has not set out what impact these additional GPs will have or how the target reflects retirement rates or changes in working patterns. It has not provided an assessment of how policy initiatives will contribute to reaching the target, or identified what the risks are if it is not achieved."

And because of the changing working patterns being adopted by GPs, the report said – even with an additional 800 GPs – current numbers could remain stable.

According to the document, a £15 million drive to recruit more GPs had resulted in an extra 39 GPs being hired.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"The GP crisis in Scotland has occurred on the SNP's watch, and things don't look like they're going to get any better.

"Doctors have been very clear that more than 800 new GPs will need to be recruited over the next decade just to stand still.

"But because of the SNP's shambolic workforce planning, even that might now not be enough.

"The nationalists have been warned repeatedly about workforce problems across the whole NHS for several years, from nurses and midwives to consultants and GPs.

"They have continually failed to act, and now patients and those NHS workers left behind are being forced to suffer.

"That's why Scottish Conservatives have launched our Save Our Surgeries

campaign and we will put the family doctor back at the heart of our NHS.”