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Nicola Sturgeon has been challenged to explain why vaccination rates for NHS staff in Scotland are falling below those elsewhere in the UK.

Speaking on Good Morning Scotland today, the First Minister sought to claim that vaccination rates for doctors, nurses and medical staff were higher than last year.

However, she did not explain why rates are so much lower than elsewhere in the UK, and below the set target.

The latest available figures for 2016-17 show that only 35 per cent of healthcare workers were vaccinated against flu. The target is 50 per cent – a level that has never been reached.

However, the comparable figure was 63 per cent for England and 49 per cent for Wales.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs MSP said:

“Nicola Sturgeon tried to put a gloss on the SNP’s response to the winter flu crisis this morning but failed to explain why so few NHS staff in Scotland have been inoculated.

“Last year, only 35 per cent of healthcare workers were vaccinated against flu – below the target, and well below figures elsewhere in the UK.

“The impact of this is devastating – it means doctors and nurses unable to come into work, and patients suffering further delays as a result.

“The SNP was warned repeatedly about the impending flu crisis coming to Scotland and repeatedly failed to act on those warnings. It’s all very well the First Minister saying sorry now, but she needs to demonstrate that the SNP is getting a grip.”