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26 Oct 2017



Nicola Sturgeon owes GPs an explanation over an “unequivocal” funding pledge which they say hasn’t been kept.

At First Minister’s Questions today, Ruth Davidson pointed to criticism by the Royal College of GPs of the SNP’s commitment to general practice.

It follows a damning report by Audit Scotland this morning blasting the Scottish Government’s stewardship of the health service north of the border.

On the back of that report, GPs said that “underfunding general practice is the root cause” of many of the problems the NHS currently faces.

And they added: “The First Minister seemed to make a clear and unequivocal promise to patients and the health service at her 2016 conference ... It is deeply disappointing that the First Minister’s direction seems not to be being followed.”

Now the Scottish Conservative leader has demanded answers on their behalf, pointing out that a failure to properly support GPs places additional strain on other areas of the NHS.

But instead of addressing the issues, the First Minister instead pointed to the performance of the NHS in England.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“Audit Scotland makes clear that GPs are ‘central’ to the changes that we all agree are needed to improve healthcare.

“But this has been hindered by the continuing difficulties in the recruiting and retaining of family doctors.

“As doctors themselves say, the SNP government has consistently cut the percentage share of health spending going directly to GPs over the last decade.

“That’s why Nicola Sturgeon owes them an explanation.

“She told them unequivocally that 11 per cent of funding would go directly to

general practice but, so far, that hasn't happened.

"Today, GPs have demanded to know why.

"If the First Minister doesn't want to read the same findings from Audit Scotland this time next year, she has to start taking action now."

[Audit Scotland report blasts state of NHS](#)

26 Oct 2017



A report released by Scotland's public services watchdog has blasted the state of the NHS north of the border.

Audit Scotland's annual review of the health service highlighted a series of failings across numerous areas of the organisation, and issued grim warnings for the future.

The SNP government is repeatedly failing to hit waiting times targets for patients, it stated, while health boards are being restricted in terms of financial planning by one year budgets.

And auditors warned: "Scotland's health is not improving and significant inequalities remain."

The report also said there were "warning signs that maintaining the quality of care is becoming increasingly difficult".

Audit Scotland recommended ministers improve governance, accountability and transparency, as well as promote culture change and develop a longer-term approach to financial planning.

The damning report also highlighted an £887 million backlog in maintenance of the NHS estate, and pointed out life expectancy here is poorer than in most other European countries.

Last year, £171 million was spent on employment agencies to bring in temporary staff, while £109 million was spent on locums, it said.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"This report exposes just how badly the SNP has mismanaged the NHS since it came to power more than 10 years ago.

“Hospitals are short-staffed, workers are stressed and the maintenance backlog is spiralling out of control.

“And while this happens, as this report states, people aren’t getting any healthier.

“What more indication could the SNP need to show it has to change its ways on the NHS.

“For years it neglected the health brief at the expense of agitating for separation, and now those chickens are coming home to roost.

“That’s a disgraceful approach to government, and one which won’t be forgiven by the people of Scotland.”

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24 Oct 2017



Nearly a third of this year’s GP training places remain unfilled according to official NHS figures – leaving Scotland with the highest vacancy rates in Britain.

The statistics come with the Scottish Conservatives today stepping up their campaign to ‘Save our Surgeries’, calling on Ministers to prioritise GP funding.

The figures show that just 275 of 402 GP training places have been filled after two rounds of recruitment – amounting to 68% of vacancies. In England 84% of vacancies have been filled so far, and 91% in Wales.

It follows last year when Scotland achieved a 68% final fill rate, lagging well behind other parts of the UK.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland over 90% of places were filled in 2016.

The figures come after the Scottish Conservatives revealed that up to 3000 Scottish doctors had left to work abroad over the last decade.

The party is now supporting calls by GP leaders to ensure 11% of all NHS spending goes to general practice.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs MSP said:

“Ministers are fond of trumpeting the number of GP training places they are offering – but they are less vocal about the numbers being filled.

“The reason is clear – Scotland has the highest number of GP training vacancies in the UK. So far this year, 127 places are still empty.

“The reason is simple. Due to cutbacks and existing shortages, it is becoming harder than ever to persuade young doctors to take up a GP training place.

“And the blame for that lies firmly at the SNP’s door. They have starved general practice of proper funding over the last ten years. Now we see the damage that has caused.

“Our Save our Surgeries campaign is clear: 11% of NHS funding should go straight to general practice so we can help local practices recruit and retain staff.

“The buck stops with the SNP. It is time they acted.”

[Up to 3000 doctors have left Scotland in the last decade](#)

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23 Oct 2017



The SNP must step up efforts to boost recruitment and retention of Scottish trained doctors as new figures today reveal the scale of the “brain drain” of medics over the last decade.

As many as 3,000 are estimated to have left the country to work abroad since 2008, the figures show.

The new data is revealed as the Scottish Conservatives launch a major new campaign entitled “Save our Surgeries”.

GPs are particularly affected by doctor shortages – with the Royal College of GPs warning that Scotland will soon be short of 850 general practitioners.

The Scottish Conservatives will this week be writing to every GP clinic in Scotland, and is urging an increase in the share of NHS funding that goes direct to GP practices.

Today's figures were obtained from the General Medical Council and show the number of doctors who have requested a Certificate of Current Professional Status – the document required by medics who choose to work abroad under a new employer.

Since 2008, 5,044 have done so. The two highest years were the two most recent completed years, 2015 and 2016, when 663 and 612 doctors requested a CCPS.

Of those that applied, 2,149 are connected to a 'designated body' – meaning they are likely to still be practicing in Scotland.

The remainder, some 2,895 Scottish trained doctors, are not – and are therefore almost certain to be working abroad.

The call for action to boost the flow of doctors in the NHS comes with BMA figures suggesting that as many as a third of GPs – some 1,500 doctors – are set to retire by 2020.

The Scottish Government has sought to boost GP recruitment but, last year, a major drive to find an extra 100 GPs resulted in only 37 coming on board.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“These figures show that as many as 3,000 Scottish trained doctors are currently working abroad – setting out starkly the brain drain we have seen in Scotland over the last decade.

“Of course every part of the UK has lost doctors to countries like Australia and New Zealand in recent years. But rather than point the finger elsewhere, the SNP must act on these figures and do more encourage doctors to come back – or not leave in the first place.

“A Scottish Conservative government would prioritise GP spending, so that 11% of all NHS spending went direct to the local practice, helping to boost working conditions, recruitment and retention.

“Scotland's GP's are at the forefront of our NHS – if we as a country can't get General Practice right and working to deliver health services across Scotland then the rest of our NHS will continue to be destabilised.

“That's why, this week, our Save our Surgeries campaign will shine a spotlight on the problems we face – and suggest a better way of doing things. The SNP needs to wake up and deliver.”

Businesses need better support now

20 Oct 2017



The SNP Government have been criticised for not providing more urgent support for businesses by the Scottish Conservatives.

Speaking at a conference on inclusive growth, Nicola Sturgeon today announced the launch of a consultation on a national investment bank for Scotland.

However the Scottish National Investment Bank (SNIB) is similar to the Scottish Business Development Bank, which was first announced by the Scottish Government several years ago but never came into existence.

The SNP also announced the creation of a Scottish growth scheme just last year, but as of yet no businesses have received any support through it.

With Scotland's economy continuing to lag behind the rest of the UK's, Scottish Conservative economy spokesman Dean Lockhart argued that what Scottish businesses needed was better support now.

Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary Dean Lockhart MSP said:

"The Scottish National Investment Bank is simply another desperate attempt by the SNP to distract us from the mess they have made of our economy.

"It is a re-hash of a policy first announced several years ago, and then repeated again when they launched the Scottish Growth Scheme last year.

"Not a single penny has been received by a business under the growth scheme, and Scottish companies will understandably be sceptical about when they can expect to see any benefit from this latest plan.

"What they need is meaningful action taken now to help them grow their businesses, and with it the Scottish economy.

"If we are to see any inclusive growth in Scotland we need to start seeing substantial economic growth in the first place – and that's something the SNP have totally failed to deliver in the last decade."