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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."