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- Sturgeon must explain low vaccination rates for Scottish NHS staff

8 Jan 2018



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.”

Attacks on emergency service workers hit 3-year high

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The number of assaults on emergency service workers has reached a three-year high, new figures have revealed.

In 2016/17, a total of 6509 common assaults were recorded on police, fire and ambulance staff, the equivalent of nearly 18 a day in Scotland.

And the Scottish Government admitted the true figure may be even greater, with official statistics not recording some of the more serious incidents.

The number of attacks last year was nearly 100 more than in 2015/16, the highest since 2013/14.

Shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said the SNP had to take the issue of emergency service worker safety more seriously.

Other statistics from 2015/16 have shown that while 260 were convicted under the dedicated Emergency Workers Act legislation, just 58 received a custodial sentence as a result.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

“The protection of our dedicated emergency service workers has to be absolutely paramount.

“There are laws in place to crack down on this very thing, and it’s time we started using them.

“It’s extremely worrying that the number of attacks recorded by police on emergency service workers has risen to a three-year high.

“We have to get tough on those who commit these offences to make it absolutely clear it will not be tolerated.

“Many of these attacks will have occurred when a police officer, paramedic or firefighter has arrived specifically to help the very people who end up assaulting them.

“That’s illogical and unacceptable, and the fact these figures may just be a fraction of the whole picture is all the more concerning.

“This is a subject I’ve pressed ministers on repeatedly, but I am yet to see any convincing action from them on this front.”

SNP Ministers failed to act on flu warnings

7 Jan 2018



SNP Ministers failed to act on clear warnings that Scotland faced an imminent flu crisis this winter, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Calls to boost jab rates ahead of this winter were made last September after figures revealed a drop in the number of inoculations to all groups for whom the flu jab is recommended.

At the time, the Scottish Conservatives urged action to ensure more people received the crucial flu jab this winter.

However, provisional figures for this year suggest that uptake in key groups is no higher than last year.

The fears about low jab rates was reinforced in December when further figures revealed that only one in three healthcare workers received flu jabs last winter – well below the target of 50%.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs today said the SNP had failed to heed warnings about an imminent flu crisis hitting the NHS.

He said Ministers now needed to set out action to ensure more people were getting the right jab for the rest of the winter.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs MSP said:

“The SNP was warned about the dangers of a flu crisis this winter. All the signs were there. They knew vaccination rates were dropping.

“Yet despite our repeated calls for action, they failed to act in time to protect more people, and support our NHS.

“Instead all we get are excuses and belated attempts to act.

“This whole sorry episode is yet more evidence of SNP mismanagement of our NHS. Shona Robison should apologise immediately for her mishandling of this crisis.

“They knew they had a problem – and, once again, were found asleep at the wheel. It is a disgrace.”

1. Warnings about this winter’s uptake of the flu jab were raised by the Scottish Conservatives on September 29th last year:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/09/warnings-over-flu-epidemic-after-jab-uptake-falls/>

2. Up to date provisional figures for 2017-18 flu jab rates are published here, on page 4:

www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/resourcedocument.aspx?id=6321

They show vaccination rates of:

- 71.0% in people aged 65 years and over, (compared with 71.0% in 2016-17)
 - 41.3% in under 65’s at-risk, (compared with 42.2% in 2016-17)
 - 52.6% in preschool children (2 to under 5 year olds), compared with 54.8% in 2016-17
 - 71.0% in primary school children, compared with 71.0% in 2016-17
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[Hundreds of Scottish-trained nurses seek work abroad](#)

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5 Jan 2018



Hundreds of Scottish-trained nurses every year are seeking work abroad, new statistics have revealed.

Since 2012/13, 1609 nurses who qualified here have filled out verification requests from the Nursing and Midwifery Council, which enables them to practice in other countries.

The potential exodus coincides with vacancy rates of nurses and midwives reaching a record high earlier this year, and wards across the country struggling to plug the gaps.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said more had to be done to ensure nurses who train in Scotland are then encouraged to stay here and work.

The NMC statistics follow revelations in October that 3000 Scottish-trained doctors have left the country since 2008.

The Scottish Conservatives have warned the “brain drain” of both is not only leaving hospitals short of key staff, but shortchanging the training system which is meant to generate medics for Scotland’s NHS.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“It’s extremely worrying that hundreds of nurses every year signal their intention to leave and work abroad.

“At a time when recruitment is so challenging, the last thing we need is Scottish-trained nurses upping sticks and moving elsewhere.

“Clearly more needs to be done to incentivise them to stay, otherwise patients and the staff left behind will be the ones who suffer the consequences.

“The SNP can’t point the finger elsewhere – it must try to attract nurses who’ve left back to Scotland, and do more to make sure others don’t leave in the first place.

“In an organisation the size of the NHS there will always be departures to work overseas, but for more than 1600 to have indicated they want to leave in the past five years is alarming.

“We know the SNP are presiding over a brain drain in general practice but it appears they are also presiding over a brain drain in nursing.”

[10,000 single-crew ambulance journeys despite SNP pledge](#)

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- 10,000 single-crew ambulance journeys despite SNP pledge

4 Jan 2018



More than 10,000 ambulances have been dispatched with only one crew member on board in the last four years, even though the SNP promised to end the practice.

Figures obtained by the Scottish Conservatives revealed there were 2204 occasions last year alone where paramedics were forced to attend an emergency

on their own.

This is despite a pledge by the SNP as far back as 2008 that it would no longer happen, other than in “exceptional circumstances”.

Then health secretary Nicola Sturgeon said: *“I have made it clear to the Scottish Ambulance Service that it must take action to eliminate rostered single-manning. The policy of the Scottish Government is clear – traditional accident and emergency ambulances should be double-crewed, with at least one member being a paramedic, unless in exceptional circumstances.”*

Yet the Freedom of Information statistics have revealed single-crew journeys occurred six times every day in 2016/17.

The Scottish Conservatives have said while it’s understandable there will always be some instances where a single-crew responds to an incident, it happens far too often.

It is understood staff sickness is one reason why a single-crewed ambulance would be dispatched.

Last year, the sickness rate within the organisation was 7.6 per cent, way above the target of five per cent and the private sector average of 1.9 per cent.

Scottish Conservative public health spokeswoman Annie Wells said:

“Everyone accepts that in the emergency services there will always be times where rules have to be bent and people need to adapt to developing situations.

“But for single crews to be sent out on 10,000 occasions in four years – when the specific policy is not to do that – is unacceptable.

“The SNP government has to take responsibility for this.

“Nicola Sturgeon herself said she would end this practice nearly a decade ago, but next to no progress has been made.

“It’s simply not fair on hard-working ambulance staff to continually expect them to hit the road on their own.

“We need to see a clear plan from the Scottish Government to help them out.”