

Holyrood must take action on waiting times

✖ The Scottish Government has said that 93.5% of patients were seen and admitted or discharged within four hours at the core A&E departments across Scotland during the week ending 21 February 2016.

Although this is 7.4 percentage points higher than the same week last year, and the 10-week average is higher than last year too, Green MSP Alison Johnstone has criticised The Scottish Government over the waiting times.

She alleges that the figures show that five of Scotland's health boards have failed to meet the target of seeing 95 per cent of Accident and Emergency patients within four hours,

Johnstone who is Health spokesperson for the Scottish Greens and MSP for Lothian, said: "The Scottish Government needs to pick up the pace on investment in our NHS to achieve the target for emergency treatment. It's particularly disappointing to see Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and St John's lagging so far behind. The pressure on staff at these hospitals is enormous and we must see targeted support to ease the strain.

"We must tackle the recruitment and retention problem in the health service by making jobs more attractive, with time for skills development. We must also provide more social care places to free up space in hospitals, and shift spending towards preventative measures on wages, housing, transport and food, to make Scotland's population healthier. And given that most patient contacts are with GPs we must invest in primary care services to reduce demand for acute services such as A&E."

Health Secretary Shona Robison said:

"We know that in winter A&E performance can fluctuate from week to week and also from hospital to hospital as pressure on the service increases. However, as we reach the one-year mark since weekly reporting began, it is promising that A&E waiting times this winter have consistently been better than last year.

"As the only part of the UK to publish figures on a weekly basis, we remain committed to providing an open and transparent health services for the people of Scotland.

"Today's figures show an increase in performance on last week and on the same week of 2015, which is testament to the dedication of staff working right across the NHS.

"It is also promising to see the improvement made in areas such as NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, where performance over this winter is significantly higher than the same period last year.

"Nationally, our core accident and emergency waiting times have also been better than elsewhere in the UK for the last ten months of published data, from March to December 2015.

"While performance has remained up on the same period as last year throughout this winter, we know there is still more to be done to retain and build on improved performance and cut waiting times even further.

"We have put record investment in place and increased staffing to help meet demand through this winter period and are working closely with health boards to minimise any dips in performance.

"We have invested an additional £10.7 million to help ease pressure on Scotland's NHS throughout the winter months."