# Scotland’s public sector spends over £100 million on press staff amid NHS crisis



More than £100 million of taxpayers' money has been squandered by Scotland's public sector on press and communications staff in recent years, a frivolity that comes at a time when the National Health Service (NHS) and other vital services grapple with significant challenges. Critics are imploring the Scottish National Party (SNP) government to rethink its misplaced spending priorities, arguing that this lavish expenditure on spin doctors constitutes a misuse of funds that could dramatically improve frontline services.

Recent data shows the Scottish Government now employs 642 press and communications personnel across an array of institutions, including councils and health boards. This swelling workforce is ostensibly designed for media engagement and to promote government initiatives, yet the steep surge in communications costs—from £30.7 million in 2021/22 to £36.7 million in 2023/24—has raised alarms. Scottish Conservative finance spokesman Craig Hoy exclaimed, “Taxpayers will be horrified that, while they face debilitating cuts, the SNP Government is squandering an obscene amount on spin doctors.” He vehemently condemned this spending as emblematic of a disturbing trend that prioritises public relations over the delivery of essential services.

Breaking down these figures reveals that nearly £12 million was expended by the Scottish Government itself over the past three years. Local authorities reported just under £32 million spent on communications, while ten NHS boards alone contributed around £7.8 million. Alarmingly, spending on communications staff within health boards has also soared, rising from £2.39 million in 2021/22 to £2.83 million in 2023/24. Such figures strike a discordant note against the backdrop of the NHS crisis in Scotland—characterised by intolerably long waiting times and mounting pressures on both general practitioners and the beleaguered Scottish Ambulance Service.

The financial fallout from this extravagant spending has not escaped scrutiny. The SNP government imposed its own income tax hikes just as the public sector was demanding heightened service levels, with individuals earning over £30,000 now facing tax burdens greater than their counterparts in the rest of the UK. Local authorities have also compounded financial woes by enacting steep council tax increases. Hoy contended that the staggering £100 million spent on spin reflects a monumental failure of governance, equating to funds that could otherwise bolster critical services like winter fuel payments and housing support during a time of crisis.

Health boards' escalating reliance on spin doctors has attracted scathing criticism from opposition parties, particularly those addressing the distressing implications for public health. Reports indicate that NHS communications spending has surpassed £8 million, shining a light on the misallocation of resources when NHS services confront unprecedented demand.

Moreover, analysed data exposed disparities in spending habits across public bodies. The largest expenditure was attributed to the Scottish Government's budget, which accounted for £4.13 million in 2023/24, followed by considerable outflows from Police Scotland and major local councils. With the NHS grappling with severe operational challenges, critics are insisting the SNP government urgently reevaluate these funding priorities, to alleviate staffing shortages and enhance patient care.

In a defensive stance against these grave allegations, a Scottish Government spokesman argued that effective communication is paramount in promoting government policies and public service engagement. He maintained that individual organisations ultimately determine their communication budgets, emphasizing their role in delivering essential services.

As Scotland navigates this precarious moment, the contrast between escalating spin doctor expenditures and the floundering NHS intensifies public outcry for enhanced governmental transparency and accountability. As the debate over fund allocation sharpens, taxpayers and service users are increasingly demanding a thorough reassessment of priorities in this time of urgent need.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14717503/SNPs-100million-bill-spin-doctors-amid-crisis-gripping-Scotlands-health-service.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/politics/20142044.snp-government-criticised-appalling-6-6m-spend-nhs-spin-doctors/> - The Herald reports that the Scottish National Party (SNP) government has been criticized for spending at least £6.6 million on spin doctors for Scotland's health boards. Scottish Labour labeled the expenditure as 'exorbitant' and 'appalling,' highlighting the misalignment of priorities amid the NHS crisis. The report details the spending across various health boards, including NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, NHS Lanarkshire, and NHS Lothian, emphasizing the need for proper investment in frontline staff.
3. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/politics/23612979.anger-8-5m-spent-health-service-spin-doctors-not-real-ones/> - An article from The Herald reveals that Scotland's health boards and the overseeing government department are spending £8.5 million annually on spin doctors, while patients face unprecedented waits. Figures obtained by Scottish Labour show a 13% increase in the bill over a year, with the total spending rising from £6.6 million to £7.5 million. The report underscores the misallocation of resources amid the NHS crisis.
4. <https://www.scottishdailyexpress.co.uk/news/politics/nhs-spends-85m-month-spin-30322932> - The Scottish Daily Express reports that the NHS in Scotland is spending £8.5 million annually on spin doctors, a 13% increase over the past year. The article highlights the contrast between the rising communication costs and the ongoing challenges in the health service, including long waiting times and recruitment issues. Scottish Labour criticizes the expenditure, suggesting funds could be better utilized to address frontline staff shortages.
5. <https://news.stv.tv/politics/ministers-putting-headlines-before-health-amid-nhs-spin-doctor-costs-says-scottish-labour> - STV News covers Scottish Labour's criticism of the SNP government for spending nearly £2 million on spin doctors for the health and social care portfolio in the 2023-24 financial year. The report details the allocation of funds to 29.4 full-time equivalent staff handling press and communications, and includes a response from the Scottish Government emphasizing the importance of effective communication in public services.
6. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/nhs-health-boards-scotland-spending-30318044> - The Daily Record reports that health boards across Scotland are spending more than £7 million annually on spin doctors amid financial pressures on the NHS. The article details the spending across various health boards and includes criticism from Scottish Labour, which describes the expenditure as 'absolutely disgraceful' given the ongoing challenges in the health service.
7. <https://www.scottishdailyexpress.co.uk/news/politics/snp-spend-almost-2m-nhs-32532709> - The Scottish Daily Express reports that the SNP government has spent almost £2 million on NHS 'spin doctors' as the health service faces significant challenges. The article details the spending on press and communication support for the health and social care sector in the 2023-24 financial year, including the hiring of 29.4 full-time equivalent staff tasked with media inquiries and press releases.