



COVID-19 Update for key stakeholders



25 March 2021

COVID cases

On 24 March we had four new cases. The infection rate is 19/100,000 across the NHS Highland area: 8/100,000 in Argyll and Bute and 23/100,000 in North Highland.

We have a total of six inpatient cases in Raigmore, plus three in ITU, and none in Argyll and Bute. There have been 169 recorded deaths in the NHS Highland area since the start of the pandemic: 98 in Highland and 71 in Argyll and Bute.

Vaccination

In the last week, we passed the milestone of over half of our population having received their first dose of vaccine. 53.4% of over 16 year olds have been vaccinated, compared to a Scottish average of 48.8%. We are now prioritising vaccinating cohort 6, 'clinically at risk 16-65', and cohort 7, 60-65 year olds, while also opening up vaccination to all over 50 year olds.

You may have been contacted by constituents concerned that people are receiving a COVID-19 vaccination earlier in another part of the country or at another GP practice. Across the Highlands and Argyll and Bute there is no significant variation between GP practices.

Practices may move through the age groups differently depending on who they have been able to contact. Although this may mean they vaccinate some people in lower age groups, they will try again to contact those in previous age groups. If a constituent is concerned that the practice does not have up to date contact details for them, they should check the practice website for a process on how to update their details.

GP practices will contact people about their vaccination. Constituents should only contact their GP about COVID-19 vaccination if they are over 65 and have not received an invitation.

There are some GP practices which are not vaccinating under 65s:

- Craig Nevis Surgery, Fort William
- Glen Mor Medical Practice, Fort William
- Tweeddale Medical Practice, Fort William

People aged 50-64 registered at the above practices will be vaccinated at Caol Community centre on 8-10 April.

- Aird, Beaully: vaccinations for 50-64 year olds will take place in the mobile unit, 6-8 April, in Beaully
- Culloden Medical: vaccinations for 50-64 year olds will take place at Smithton Church, 9 and 12 April
- Ballachulish practice is vaccinating those aged 60+: vaccinations for 50-59 year olds will take place in the mobile unit, 12 April in the Ballachulish Co-op car park

Patients in all of these practices will receive a letter advising them of their appointment, using the national vaccination scheduling service. Contact details for queries will be included in this appointment letter.

We hope to have offered a first dose vaccine by mid April to everyone who is:

- over the age of 50, or
- has a health condition which puts them at increased risk, or
- is a carer or frontline health or care worker

This information is on the [NHS Highland website here](#) and you can view progress on the national [vaccination programme online here](#).

Dental Services

On 12 October 2020 the Scottish Government Chief Dental Officer announced that as of 1 November 2020 dentists could provide a full range of NHS treatments. The Chief Dental Officer acknowledged that it would not be possible to return to the pre-COVID volumes of patient treatments under the current health protection measures and that it would be necessary to prioritise appointments for patients requiring urgent dental care, those at greatest risk of oral disease, and the backlog of patients from March 2020.

The health protection measures remain in place and dentists continue to have reduced capacity and are using their clinical judgement to prioritise those requiring urgent or emergency care. Inevitably those patients whose treatment has been assessed as necessary but not urgent may face lengthy delays.

If practices cannot accept new NHS dental registrations, based on current capacity, they should offer any patient seeking registration the opportunity to be placed on a waiting list for registration with the practice in the future.

If an unregistered patient requires urgent or emergency care they can contact the NHS Highland Dental Helpline on 0800 141 2362, Monday to Friday from 8.45am to 4.45pm. For dental emergencies outwith these times patients should contact NHS24 on 111. The Helpline team will triage the patient and if they are clinically assessed as requiring urgent or emergency care this will be provided by the Public Dental Service at the nearest available clinic.

In his letter of 12 October 2020 the Scottish Government Chief Dental Officer referred to the development of future plans for NHS dental services and as we move out of lockdown, and health

protection measures allow, NHS Highland will align its plan for NHS dental services with the national plan as it is announced.