



Update for key stakeholders

27 August 2021

COVID cases

We had 1,897 new cases in the seven days to 29 August. The infection rate is 591.3/100,000 across the NHS Highland area: 756.2/100,000 in Argyll and Bute and 531.4/100,000 in North Highland.

We have 18 patients in hospital with COVID-19, with none in ITU. We have 7 ITU beds altogether, all of which are occupied with non-COVID-19 patients.

There have been 183 recorded deaths in the NHS Highland area since the start of the pandemic: 108 in Highland and 75 in Argyll and Bute. This represents no increase in the last 7 days.

Vaccination

93.9% of people over 18 in the NHS Highland area have received one COVID vaccination, compared to a Scottish average of 91.1%. 84.4% have received two doses, compared to a Scottish average of 82.9%. You can view progress on the national [vaccination programme online here](#).

Details of drop-in vaccination clinics for first and second doses are available on our [dedicated web page](#). This will continue to be updated as more clinics are added.

Contact tracing

Anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 is sent a link to a secure online form with their test result so that they can share who they have been in close contact with, and any places they have visited. It is important that people do fill out this form, so that their contacts can be notified.

Although we always aim to phone people who have tested positive, given the extreme pressures facing the contact tracing service, we are following national guidance and now only health and social care workers, cases linked to custodial institutions, and travel-related cases will be followed up by phone, making the online system even more important.

As COVID cases increase, in common with other health boards, our contact tracing teams are under pressure. We are working to support our teams, and are receiving mutual aid. Please help us to spread the word and encourage people to use the online system. This will allow our teams to get to key cases more quickly.

You can find out more about contact tracing, and there is a video explaining the online form, on [NHSInform](#).

Testing capacity

There is currently significant pressure on testing capacity across the UK. We monitor cases carefully and direct testing capacity to where it is most needed.

Currently, there is a Mobile Testing Unit in Broadford on Skye on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and this will remain in place until the end of October. The 119 courier service has also gone live on Skye, so people can book a postal test through [NHS Inform](#), take the test at home, and then book a courier to get the test collected the same day if completed before 6pm.

There is currently a Mobile Testing Unit in Fort William and plans to site a further unit in Inverness to supplement testing capacity for the Inner Moray Firth area.

The situation can change rapidly and we will respond as required to any increased incidence.

GP capacity and workloads

You may have seen recent media coverage criticising general practice for not reinstating face to face appointments at pre-COVID levels. We would like to clarify that GPs and practice staff across the NHS Highland area are working harder than ever. Face to face appointments continued during the pandemic and these continue, guided by practice clinical teams. This is despite the ongoing need for physical distancing, PPE and extra cleaning, all of which reduces the time and space available to see people.

At the same time, GP practices are carrying out more phone appointments, more virtual appointments, and more communication with acute colleagues about complex cases than ever before. Like all colleagues in NHS Highland, they are also having to cope with reduced staffing as people test positive for COVID, or need to isolate.

It is important that we continue to offer the right sort of appointments for people who need them, and that we learn from and retain appropriate practices which may have been accelerated by the pandemic. We also need to respect our colleagues' professional judgement, and protect and support their personal wellbeing. Thank you to all of our primary care teams for your ongoing dedication.

Update on Alness and Invergordon Medical Practice

Alness and Invergordon Medical Practice has been experiencing issues with both recruitment and staff retention over the last few years.

Three partners will leave the Practice within the next six months and the Practice is actively looking for new partners to join.

There is a national shortage of trained GPs which is placing a strain on many GP Practices throughout the country. GP Recruitment is considered one of the biggest pressures in Primary Care Services and workforce shortages have increased since the pandemic.

NHS Highland is working closely with Alness and Invergordon Medical Practice to ensure services are maintained to the local community while this recruitment campaign is ongoing. Service delivery will remain unchanged during this time.

Feedback

If you have comments or queries please contact nhshighland.feedback@nhs.scot