

Community Resilience Group Weekly Briefing - 45

03 December 2021

Covid Update

Over the last 7 days there have been 558 new positive cases in Highland (to 2 December). This means the latest 7-day rate per 100,000 shows a decrease from 330.4 per 100,000 as of 25 November to 237 per 100,000 as of 02 December. This continues to be a welcome decrease in the number of cases in Highland however it is important to be careful and stick to the Scottish Government guidelines.

In terms of neighbourhood data, the map below and accompanying table, highlights the positive cases per 100,000 in communities across the Highland area. The test positivity rate on was 6.8% on 23 November a decrease from 7.4% on 23 November.

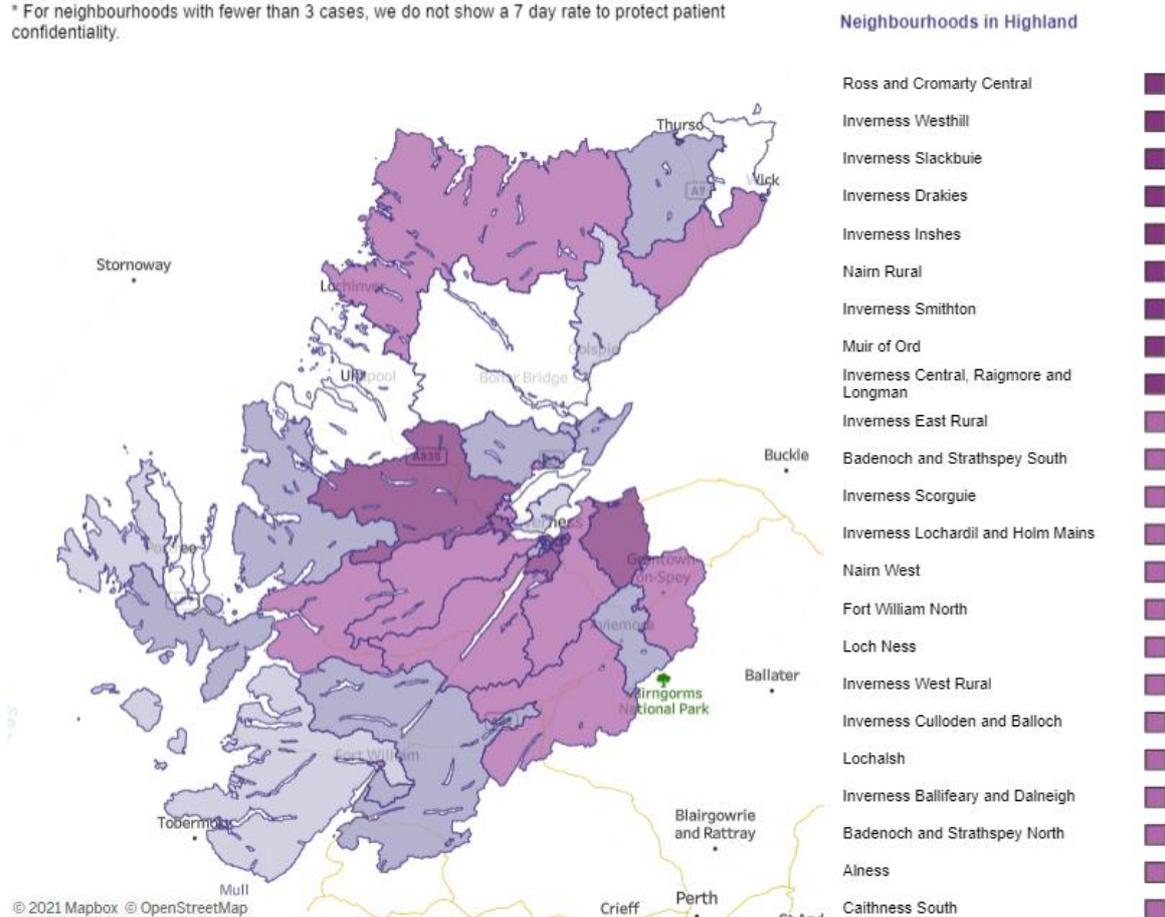
7 day positive cases in Highland based on people tested between 24 November 2021 and 30 November 2021

| 7 day positive cases | 7 day positive rate per 100,000 population | 7 day test positivity rate |
|----------------------|--|----------------------------|
| 558 | 237.0 | 6.8% |

7 day positive rate per 100,000 population



* For neighbourhoods with fewer than 3 cases, we do not show a 7 day rate to protect patient confidentiality.



Scotland has Moved Beyond Level Zero

From 9 August 2021 the whole of Scotland moved to beyond Level 0. You can find Scottish Government guidance for everyone on how to stay safe and prevent the spread of COVID-19 here.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-safe-and-protecting-others/>

Scottish Government messages this week

The First Minister gave a statement to Parliament on COVID-19 on Monday 28 November 2021

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-update-first-ministers-speech-29-november-2021/>.

Key messages include:

- The overall situation in Scotland remains stable at this stage and in recent days cases have been declining slightly.
- Over the past few days a new risk has emerged in the form of the Omicron variant which has raised some concerns although much more data and analysis is needed. What we do know at this stage, is that we should treat it seriously, and we should continue to act on a precautionary basis at this stage
- We are asking everyone to significantly step up and increase compliance with all existing precautions - face coverings, hygiene like washing hands and surfaces, getting vaccinated and of course testing yourselves regularly with lateral flow devices and, from now on, testing yourself before mixing socially with people from other households.
- We are also reminding people to work from home if possible. As of today (29/11), employers are asked to make sure they are maximising the potential of home working.
- We have already reintroduced some travel restrictions and our local response will complement the UK-wide travel restrictions that aim to avoid importing new cases while we are trying to curb community transmission. In line with the rest of the UK, we have reinstated the red list of countries, and to date 10 countries from southern Africa have been added to that red list. In addition, anyone arriving in Scotland from anywhere outside the common travel area, will be asked to take a PCR test on the second day after arrival, and self-isolate until they get the result of that test.

The FM ended with a reminder of what all of us can do, saying these steps are now vital rather than optional.

- Firstly, get vaccinated. Vaccination remains our most important line of defence. It is the single most important thing we can do to protect ourselves and each other.
- Secondly, test for Covid regularly. We will be increasing testing in areas where the new variant has been identified.

- For all of us, even if we are feeling fine, regular lateral flow testing is a really important way of finding out if we might have the virus.

And finally, comply with all of the existing protections.

- Wear face coverings on public transport, in shops, and whenever you are moving about in hospitality settings.
- Keep windows open if you have people in your house to improve ventilation because we know that helps.
- Follow all advice on hygiene. It is time to go back rigorously to washing our hands, to cleaning surfaces.
- Please work from home right now if you can.

Covid-19 Testing

The chart below provides a helpful overview of the types of tests available.

The 2 types of coronavirus test currently being used regularly are:

Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) for people with symptoms
Lateral Flow Device (LFD) also known as a rapid test and is for routine testing for people that do not have symptoms.

COVID-19 TESTING

WITH SYMPTOMS

PCR test

When to take a test

- If you have COVID-19 symptoms
- To confirm a positive lateral flow test result

How long does it take?

- PCRs are processed in a lab
- Results usually received within 48 hours

How to get a test?

Book Online https://bit.ly/Book_PCR_Test or call 119
It can take up to 72 hours to get the PCR Test result because they are processed in a laboratory.

LFD Rapid Test you can do yourself.

WITHOUT SYMPTOMS

Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test

When to take a test

- If you do not have COVID-19 symptoms
- As part of routine testing

How long does it take?

- Produce results within 30 minutes
- With regular use, LFDs help to detect infection early

How to get a test?

Order online https://bit.ly/Free_Lateral_Flow_Tests_Scotland or call 119 or collect rapid LFD tests from your nearest participating pharmacy, if you do not have symptoms.
Visit https://bit.ly/LFDTest_Pharmacy

Symptomatic Testing (with symptoms)

If you do believe you have symptoms, please self-isolate and book a PCR test. Postal PCR kits are available through NHS Inform either online [here](#) or by calling 0800 028 2816.

In addition to the local support that is available, people can get support to self-isolate by calling the Council's helpline number: 0300 303 1362. This can include access to food and supplies to self-isolate and individuals may be entitled to a £500 self-isolation support grant.

Asymptomatic Testing (without symptoms)

It continues to be important that people test themselves even if they don't have symptoms. Taking a rapid LFD test twice a week can help stop new variants earlier, limiting the spread of the virus.

Test kits are available at pharmacies, or to order online from www.nhsinform.scot/testing, or by calling 119. Test kits are also available at Community testing sites.

Covid-19 Vaccination Update

The latest update from NHS on the vaccine can be accessed at the following link: www.nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine.

For details of vaccination access for flu and Covid-19 and information about drop-in clinics that are operating in Highland please check the following link: <https://www.nhshighland.scot.nhs.uk/COVID19/Pages/Vaccination.aspx>

From 30 November those aged 16 and 17 in Scotland are to be offered a second dose of the vaccine.

Vaccination Scams

Scammers are using mobile phone numbers to offer Covid-19 tests using a 'vaccinationpass' website which then demands payment.

If you receive a message, call, or link like this, do not respond. Instead, notify www.scamwatch.scot or call 0808 164 6000.

For information on vaccination scams and other Covid-19 related scams, visit the Trading Standards Scotland website <https://www.tsscot.co.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-scams/>.

Energy Price Increase – help and support is available

Winter is a time when everyone's household energy bills increase, especially when energy prices are going up. If you are struggling to pay your heating bills, help and support is available.

The Highland Council's Welfare Support Team provide free, impartial and confidential support to claim all benefits and entitlements including some help to heat your home. Please contact the Welfare Support Team by telephone: 0800 090 1004 or email: welfare.support@highland.gov.uk

You can also contact, Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) who have a specialist team of Energy Advisors who can undertake a range of energy checks which are designed to help with reducing domestic fuel bills. CAB Energy Advisors can be contacted on 01463 237664.

In addition, the Worrying About Money? guide covers information for people waiting for claims to be assessed as well as those already receiving benefits. Topics

including advice on what to do if anyone finds themselves having a sudden loss of income or if their statutory sick pay does not cover their living expenses. There is also information on how to apply to the Scottish Welfare Fund, maximising income and benefit advice, debt advice and how to challenge a decision.

The Worrying About Money Guide is available on the Highland Council website here: https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory_record/102970/benefit_advice

Inverness winter payments scheme 2021/22

People on low income in the Inverness area can apply for a one-off payment of £88 from The Highland Council's City of Inverness Area Committee 2021/22 winter payments scheme to help them with their winter fuel bills. Residents of the 7 Inverness Wards are encouraged to apply for the one-off winter payment.

For details of criteria and how to apply, or to download the application form, please see the press release on the Council website.

https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/14194/inverness_winter_payments_scheme_202122

The Money Support Scotland website

Funded by the Scottish Government, the Money Support Scotland website will point users to a range of organisations committed to promoting the take up of social security benefits, free debt advice and access to affordable credit. The website launches alongside a national marketing campaign to raise awareness of the services available for those experiencing financial worries.

The Money Support Scotland website will help people to get support from organisations including Citizens' Advice Scotland and the network of Citizens Advice Bureaux, StepChange, Christians Against Poverty, Money Advice Trust, Responsible Finance, Advice Direct Scotland, the Association of British Credit Unions Ltd (ABCUL) and the Scottish League of Credit Unions (SLCU).

Money Support Scotland has an initial focus on encouraging benefits uptake, moving to promote accessing debt advice from January 2022, followed by raising awareness of sources of affordable credit in February 2022. This comes after recent research by Money Advice Scotland that estimated that 22% of adults in Scotland find their level of personal debt to be unmanageable. Over 1.4 million people in Scotland, a total of 32%, also shared that they had run out of money before pay day in the last year.

<https://moneysupport.scot/find-help>

Food Support for Groups

We know that a number of you continue to provide support to the most vulnerable in your communities and that most of you already have well defined routes for accessing food to provide this support or are supporting individuals to access their shopping or community fridges/food tables.

If you are struggling to access food to continue support to vulnerable people locally, please do contact us through the policy mailbox and we can look at ways that we can support your group going forward.

Contact: policy6@highland.gov.uk

Helpful Links

Welfare Support Team -

www.highland.gov.uk/directory_record/102970/benefit_advice

Self Isolation Support Grant - www.highland.gov.uk/info/20016/coronavirus/940/self-isolation_support_grant

Energy Advice

energyadvisors@hi.homeenergyscotland.org

AbilityNet - IT advice or support AbilityNet

Helpline 0800 048 7642.

Covid Resilience Grant Support -

www.highland.gov.uk/directory_record/1422811/supporting_community_resilience/category/155/grants_for_community_groups

HTSI Community Group Helpline

Telephone Number 01349 808022