



Update for key stakeholders

4 March 2022

Covid figures

We had 3,500 new cases in the seven days to 28 February. The infection rate is 1,093.9/100,000 across the NHS Highland area: 937.6/100,000 in Argyll and Bute and 1,146.4/100,000 in North Highland.

There have been 283 recorded deaths of people with COVID in the NHS Highland area since the start of the pandemic: 178 in Highland and 105 in Argyll and Bute. This represents an increase of 4 in the last 7 days.

Vaccination

Covid-19 vaccinations as at 8 February 2022	NHS Highland	Scotland
% of population (18+) received 1 dose	96.6	93.7
% of population (18+) received 2 doses	93.1	89.9
% of population (18+) received third dose or booster	81.1	77.0

NHS Highland continue to provide Covid vaccinations and boosters to the general population, and are currently completing the first doses for 5-11 year olds at risk.

From spring, an additional booster will be provided to care home residents over the age of 65, people aged over 75 in the community and for severely immunosuppressed adults.

The key planning constraint to delivering these booster is that there should be 24 weeks (6 months) between their previous booster and the new one. We will plan clinics by area based on this key eligibility criteria. Because people will have received their earlier doses at varying intervals, a longer time frame will be needed to provide vaccinations as people reach the 24 week mark and become eligible.

The provision of boosters to these groups will take priority over the provision of vaccinations to non-at risk 5-11 year olds, following the advice from the JCVI.

Those over 75, severely immunosuppressed adults and 5-11 year olds who are not at risk will receive an appointment using the National Vaccine Scheduling System (NVSS). Appointments will be sent in blue envelopes, with rescheduling support provided by the National Helpline.

We are finalising our clinic plans and will publish these once complete.

Current situation

After a period of Covid cases in our area declining or plateauing, we have more recently seen a renewed rise. This is coming from a fairly high base level of cases, with the omicron variant proving more transmissible, and people starting to relax some of the precautions we have become used to.

Thanks in large part to the vaccination programme, a smaller percentage of people are becoming seriously ill with Covid. However, the large number of cases overall does mean we are seeing an increase in people needing in-patient treatment. As at 2 March we had 53 in-patients with Covid across NHS Highland, despite efforts to keep and treat as many people as possible at home.

In addition, we have seen outbreaks in hospitals and care homes, with colleagues affected as well as patients. This creates further pressure as we try to cover staffing while team members isolate.

Hospitals

We are particularly short of nurses, especially in Raigmore and New Craigs Hospitals. Currently the staff bank is reporting a 41% unfilled rate for registered nurses shifts across the organisation.

Senior nurses have reviewed the significant staffing challenges across the system and agreed to step down clinical nurse training; review and risk assess provision of resus training; reassign additional clinical non front-facing nursing colleagues from corporate services to areas of need; and link with Highland Council, Highland Hospice, UHI and other partners to scope additional availability. We are also looking for Health Care Support Workers on the staff bank to work in Raigmore and New Craigs, making agency block bookings, and moving supervision of some developmental roles to 100% clinical for this week.

Care at home

Care at home is affected by staffing shortages, due to Covid and the ongoing pressure on this particular staff group, where there is competition from hospitality and other sectors. We are having to reduce some care packages and are communicating directly with affected clients and their families.

Urgent Care Centre in Portree

Due to significant staffing pressures the Urgent Care Centre in Portree will have reduced operating hours during the next few days. The Urgent Care Centre will not have advanced nurse practitioner cover on Thursday 3 March. A member of staff will be present to answer the telephone and redirect anyone who attends the Centre and the service will be supported by the Rural Emergency Practitioner Team based at the Dr MacKinnon Memorial Hospital in Broadford.

Outbreak updates: NHS Highland Care Homes

All Infection Protection and Control measures are in place as appropriate at our care homes, plus regular resident and staff testing.

Ach an Eas

Outbreak: some positive residents and staff.

An Acarsaid

Closed: very small number of positive staff members, currently no concerns with residents.

Dialmhor

Outbreak: small number of positive staff members. Currently no concerns with residents.

Grant House

Closed: very small number of staff members positive. Currently no concerns with residents.

Home Farm

Outbreak: very small number of residents and staff positive.

Pulteney House

Outbreak: some residents and staff positive.

Seaforth House Golspie

Currently under 7 day enhanced surveillance.

Outbreak updates: Hospitals

All Infection Protection and Control measures are in place as appropriate at our hospitals, plus regular patient and staff testing.

Ward 4A Raigmore

Remains closed. Some positive patients and staff.

Ward 4C Raigmore

2 x bays closed. Very small number of positive patients and contacts.

We have multiple bay closures throughout the tower block in Raigmore and contacts isolating in single rooms.

Belford Ward 1

Remains closed. Very small number of positive patients and staff.

Caithness, Rosebank Wing

1 bay closed due to a close contact.

New Craigs Ruthven Ward

Ward has reopened.

New Craigs, Morar Ward

Ward partially closed. Very small number of patients positive.

Aonach Mhor Community Unit

Closed. Very small number of patients positive.

Badenoch and Strathspey Hospital

Ward closed. Very small number of patients positive.

Broadford Hospital to open next week

We remain on track to open the new Broadford Hospital next week. The new hospital has a range of consultation and treatment rooms, an emergency department, physiotherapy and occupational therapy, chemotherapy, an imaging department (x-ray and ultrasound) and a maternity unit.

The renal dialysis service, which was established as a new service for Skye and the surrounding area last year, will move over from the existing hospital in the coming weeks. It will be delivered across four in-patient rooms to ensure that patients will continue to access dialysis treatment closer to their homes.

The hospital will also be a base for the Scottish Ambulance Service.

Feedback

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