

Community Resilience Group Weekly Briefing - 47

17 December 2021

Covid Update

Over the last 7 days there have been 677 new positive cases in Highland (to 16 December). This means the latest 7-day rate per 100,000 shows an increase from 258.2 per 100,000 as of 09 December to 287.6 per 100,000 as of 14 December.

What is noted this week, however, is that across Scotland there is an increase in the number of cases of the new variant Omicron and today (17 Dec) the First Minister confirmed that this was now the dominant variant in Scotland. Extra caution is advised, as is sticking to the Scottish Government guidelines. The Scottish Government advice circulated earlier this week, is shared again below.

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 6.1% on 14 December, down slightly from the previous week.

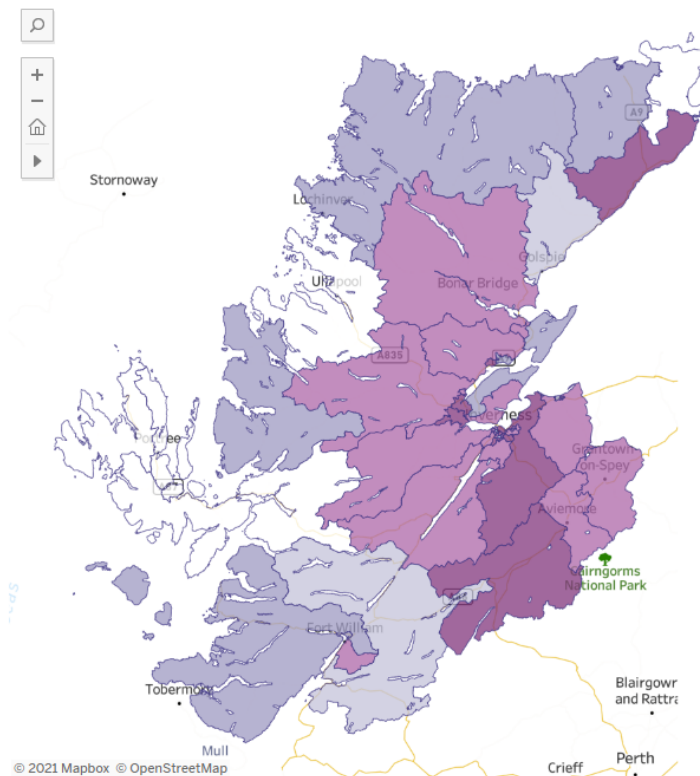
7 day positive cases in Highland based on people tested between 8 December 2021 and 14 December 2021

7 day positive cases	7 day positive rate per 100,000 population	7 day test positivity rate
677	287.6	6.1%

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.



Neighbourhoods in Highland

- Muir of Ord
- Caithness South
- Inverness Central, Raigmore and Longman
- Inverness Drakies
- Inverness East Rural
- Inverness Inshes
- Inverness Crown and Haugh
- Alness
- Badenoch and Strathspey South
- Conon
- Inverness Lochardil and Holm Mains
- Dingwall
- Inverness Smithton
- Badenoch and Strathspey Central
- Ross and Cromarty Central
- Inverness Hilton
- Inverness Merkinch
- Sutherland South
- Inverness Culloden and Balloch
- Inverness Scorguie
- Badenoch and Strathspey North
- Loch Ness
- Ross and Cromarty East

Scottish Government Guidance on Coronavirus (COVID-19): staying safe and protecting others

On 14 December, the Scottish Government published updated rules and guidance on how to stay safe and help prevent the spread of COVID-19 as a result in the surge of cases of the new highly transmissible Omicron strain of COVID-19 which can infect those who have been vaccinated, or previously infected.

The new guidance aims to help stem the flow of transmission, keep businesses and services open, and protect against pressure on health services.

The main changes are:

- limit the number of contacts you have and gather in small groups of no more than 3 households - it would be sensible to postpone work Christmas parties
- avoid crowded places – shop at quieter times where possible and follow the enhanced precautions in shops and hospitality venues, which may include controlled entrances and exits to limit customer numbers, and signs and floor markings to help people keep a safe distance from others
- work from home if you can
- you will need proof of a negative LFD test to visit someone in hospital or a care home or to accompany someone to medical appointments

To help protect yourself and others this winter you should also:

- get the vaccine or the vaccine booster
- if you have symptoms - self isolate and book a PCR test
- if you don't have symptoms take regular lateral flow tests – especially before mixing with other people
- wear a face covering where required and in crowded places, including crowded outdoor events such as Christmas markets and festive celebration
- wash your hands regularly, and cover your nose and mouth if coughing or sneezing
- open windows when meeting indoors
- keep your distance from people from other households
- use the apps: COVID status ('vaccine passport'), Protect Scotland and Check-in Scotland

This information is being updated in other languages and formats and will be available shortly. Further details are available on the Scottish Government website. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-safe-and-protecting-others/>

Coronavirus (COVID-19): safer businesses and workplaces

There is also revised guidance published for businesses and workplaces on reducing the risk of COVID-19 and supporting staff and customers.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-general-guidance-for-safer-workplaces/documents/>

Scottish Government messages this week

As highlighted earlier this week the First Minister gave a statement to the Scottish Parliament on Covid-10 on 14 December concerning the government's proposals for

further protective measures which are considered necessary to help slow the spread of the new omicron variant while the pace of booster vaccinations is accelerated.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-update-first-ministers-statement-14-december-2021/>

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.

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

LFD Rapid Test you can do yourself.

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 by calling 0800 028 2816 or online <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/test-and-protect/coronavirus-covid-19-how-to-do-a-pcr-test-at-home>.

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.

Community Testing for those without symptoms (Asymptomatic): Pop-up LFD Collect service points in Inverness, Nairn and Dingwall

The Highland Council and NHS Highland are working in partnership to increase availability of Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests throughout the Highlands. This week, there will be pop-up LFD Collect service points in public spaces in Inverness City Centre and Retail Park, Nairn High Street and Dingwall High Street.

During next week, 20 to 24 December, pop-up LFD Collect service points will be in the following public spaces. Please note these dates and times are subject to change but alternatively test kits can be ordered online <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests> or collecting through your local pharmacy:

DAY	DATE	OUTREACH TIMES	AREA
Monday	20/12/2021	0830-1700	INVERNESS RETAIL PARK
Monday	20/12/2021	0830-1700	EASTGATE CENTRE
Monday	20/12/2021	0830-1700	VICTORIAN MARKET INV
Tuesday	21/12/2021	0830-1700	EASTGATE CENTRE
Tuesday	21/12/2021	0830-1700	VICTORIAN MARKET INV
Tuesday	21/12/2021	0830-1215	NAIRN HIGH STREET
Tuesday	21/12/2021	1330-1700	DINGWALL HIGH STREET
Wednesday	22/12/2021	0830-1700	EASTGATE CENTRE
Wednesday	22/12/2021	0830-1700	INVERNESS HIGH STREET
Wednesday	22/12/2021	0830-1215	DINGWALL HIGH STREET
Wednesday	22/12/2021	1330-1700	NAIRN HIGH STREET
Thursday	23/12/2021	0830-1700	EASTGATE CENTRE
Thursday	23/12/2021	0830-1700	INVERNESS HIGH STREET
Thursday	23/12/2021	0830-1215	NAIRN HIGH STREET
Thursday	23/12/2021	1330-1700	DINGWALL HIGH STREET
Friday	24/12/2021	0830-1200	EASTGATE CENTRE
Friday	24/12/2021	0830-1200	VICTORIAN MARKET INV
Friday	24/12/2021	0830-1200	INVERNESS HIGH STREET

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/>.

Winter Readiness

A separate briefing has been prepared and is attached with key information and contacts that may be of interest to resilience groups. It includes a quick guide with contact numbers – also attached separately for handy reference.

For anyone in need of urgent Covid-19 related support over the festive period, such as emergency food supplies or prescription collection or other emergency support arising from the need to self-isolate, the Council's free helpline for Covid-19 will remain open over the festive period:

Tel. 0300 303 1362.

This helpline is available Monday – Friday 9-5pm. It is available for emergency calls out with this time and this includes the Christmas period and bank holidays.

Council agrees support for households living in fuel poverty

As noted in last week's briefing a proposal to The Highland Council on 10 December was agreed to provide almost £3m to help households in fuel poverty in Highland this winter.

A payment of £180 will be made to around 16,440 eligible Highland households where residents were in receipt of means-tested council tax reduction on 30 November 2021. The Service Delivery Team will identify those who are eligible and will write to them with the relevant details. Payments will be made during March 2022.

On 29 October 2021, the Scottish Government announced a £41m Winter Support Fund for low-income families which includes £10m nationally to help those struggling

to pay their fuel bills. Highland Council is proposing to use an allocation from this fund together with £2m from reserves in order to mitigate the fuel challenges faced by Highland residents this winter.

The Council's Welfare Support Team provides free, impartial and confidential support on fuel insecurity concerns, in addition to offering assistance to check eligibility and submit a claim for all benefits and entitlements. Getting in touch with the Welfare Support Team is the first step to maximising your potential income and managing your money well. They can be contacted by phone on 0800 090 1004 or by e-mail welfare.support@highland.gov.uk.

https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/14220/council_agrees_support_for_households_living_in_fuel_poverty

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