

# Community Resilience Group Weekly Briefing - 48

## 23 December 2021

### Covid Update

Over the last 7 days there have been 857 new positive cases in Highland (to 22 December). This means the latest 7-day rate per 100,000 shows an increase from 287.6 per 100,000 as of 14 December to 364 per 100,000 as of 22 December.

The new Omicron variant is now the dominant variant in Scotland. Extra caution is advised, as is sticking to the Scottish Government guidelines. The Scottish Government advice has been revised with a focus on advice over the festive period and 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 7.5% on 20 December up from 6.1% on 14 December.

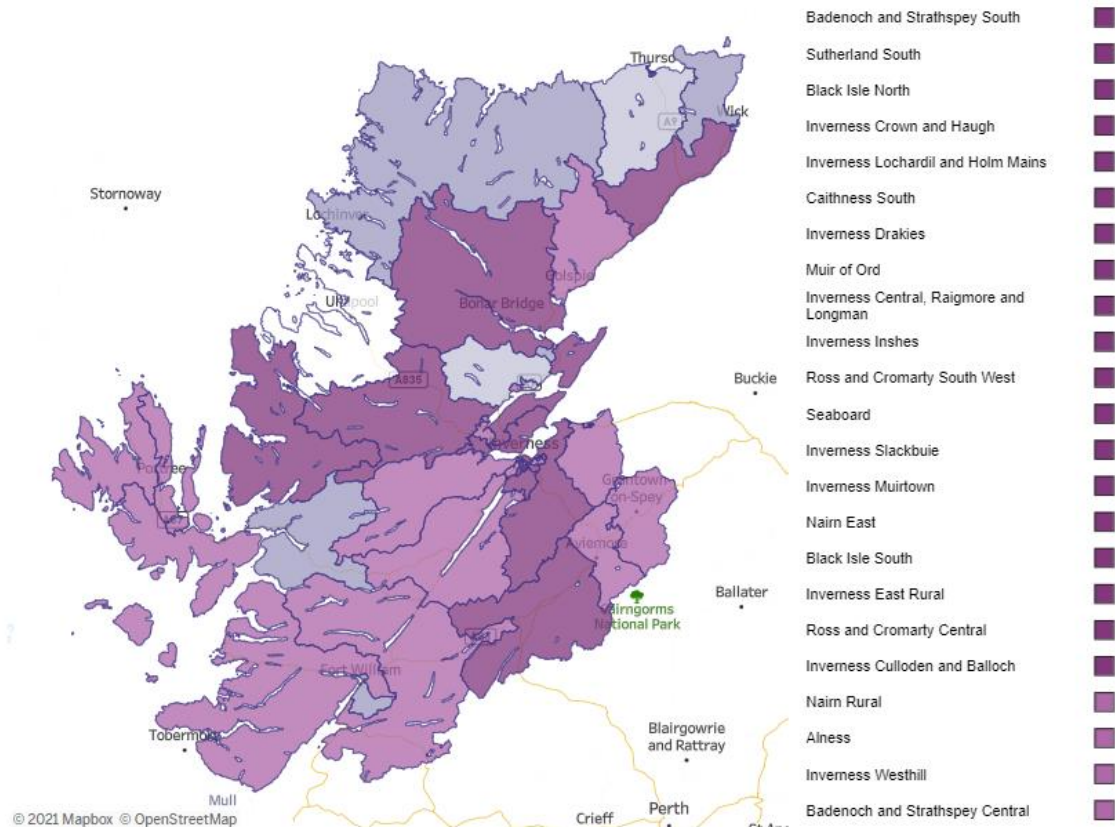
7 day positive cases in Highland based on people tested between 14 December 2021 and 20 December 2021

7 day positive cases	7 day positive rate per 100,000 population	7 day test positivity rate
857	364.0	7.5%

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.



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

On 22 December, the Scottish Government again revised its 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. This includes advice on Christmas and the festive season – the main points are highlighted in the summary of the Scottish Government statement below.

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

## **Scottish Government messages this week**

The First Minister gave a Coronavirus (COVID-19) statement to the Scottish Parliament on 21 December 2021

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-update-first-ministers-statement-21-december-2021/>

### **Key Points include:**

The First Minister opened her statement by saying further steps are necessary to protect public health and the economy as the booster campaign continues.

Omicron has now firmly established itself as the dominant strain and it now accounts for 62.9% of all cases (on 21 December) – that's compared to 27.5% at the same time last week. Omicron is significantly more transmissible than previous variants. FM confirmed that cases increased by more than 50% in the past week - from over 3,500 a day to almost 5,500 a day.

There were increases across all age groups but the biggest - of 161% - was in 20 to 24-year-old age range.

As the booster roll-out is completed - bear in mind that it takes around a week for immune protection to take effect in individuals - we must also act to slow down the spread of cases. This is to try to stem pressures on the already stretched NHS and other vital service. We are already seeing a significant impact from staff absences across the economy and public services.

Setting out the steps we must take:

- The advice for Christmas that was set out last week has not changed, and people are urged to keep family celebrations as safe as possible.
- Keep gatherings as small as your family circumstances allow.
- This involves taking a lateral flow test before meeting up, isolating if a test is positive, and following hygiene advice and keep windows open.
- Between now and Christmas Day, we are asked to cut our contacts with people in other households as much as possible.
- From 27 December, individuals and households are being asked to limit contacts as much as possible, and to apply this to New Year socialising too.

Some additional protections are also being proposed:

- From 26 December, for up to three weeks, there will be a limit on the size of live public events in Scotland. This does not apply to private life events such as weddings.
- Sports such as football matches will have to take place without spectators and large-scale Hogmanay celebrations will be cancelled. For indoor standing events the limit will be 100; for indoor seated events it will be 200; and for outdoor events 500 seated or standing.
- From 27 December for three weeks all hospitality venues in Scotland will operate on a table-service-only basis if they serve alcohol.
- There will also be a rule on 1-metre physical distancing.
- Groups of people will be limited to three households
- Additionally, guidance will be issued to the effect that non-professional indoor contact sports for adults should not take place during the three-week period from 26 December.

These decisions have significant financial implications for many businesses.

- Last week Scottish Government confirmed £100m of support from within existing resources for affected sectors.
- Eligibility and guidance for the hospitality sector has been published on the Scottish government website today.
- UK Treasury announcements have also enabled additional spending power of £175m for Scottish Government, which will all be allocated to business support <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-december-and-january-business-support-top-up-hospitality-information-for-businesses/>.

It remains a priority to re-open schools as normal after the holidays.

From this week, Test & Protect will flex its approach as necessary to ensure priority is given to higher risk settings, such as hospitals and care homes, where outbreaks can cause the most harm.

- For many of us, this means that if we test positive, our contact from Test & Protect teams is more likely to be by text or e-mail, rather than phone call.
- Please respond to these messages and complete the online form that is sent. This helps your contacts get the right advice as quickly as possible.
- And if you are the contact of someone who tests positive, please follow Test & Protect advice. This will help slow the spread of the virus.
- There has been a significant acceleration of the programme in the past week and the FM thanked everyone involved.

Getting fully vaccinated is the best thing any of us can do to protect ourselves, our loved ones, and the country

The FM ended with a heartfelt thank you to everyone - for everything you have done to help us through another exceptionally tough year, wishing everyone the happiest and safest Christmas possible - and a much better, brighter new year.

## Covid-19 Testing

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

The infographic is titled "COVID-19 TESTING" and is set against a dark blue background. At the top left is the NHS Highland logo. The main title is in large yellow letters. Below the title, it states: "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." Two QR codes are positioned on either side of the title. The infographic is divided into two columns. The left column is for "WITH SYMPTOMS" and describes the PCR test. The right column is for "WITHOUT SYMPTOMS" and describes the Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test. In the center, there is an illustration of a blue test tube and a white LFD device with a red line in the 'C' window and a blue line in the 'T' window. A yellow speech bubble points to the LFD device with the text "LFD Rapid Test you can do yourself." At the bottom, there are two boxes with text: "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." and "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".

**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](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\\_](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](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 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](http://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** – there are no planned deployments during the festive break.

## **Covid-19 Vaccination Update**

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

## **Highland Council service arrangements over festive period 2021/2022**

Service users and customer can find information about opening hours and service arrangement over the festive period on The Highland Council website

[https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/14249/highland\\_council\\_service\\_arrangements\\_over\\_festive\\_period\\_20212022](https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/14249/highland_council_service_arrangements_over_festive_period_20212022) and on social media at:  
<https://twitter.com/HighlandCouncil/status/1473322099347501058>  
<https://www.facebook.com/highlandcouncil/posts/5071390032872612>

The Council's free Coronavirus Helpline will remain open for urgent requests over the festive period. Call **0300 303 1362** for support including emergency food for those in crisis including those who must self-isolate and have no other way of getting food supplies.

## **Scottish Welfare Fund festive period opening hours**

The Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) offers two types of grant:

- Crisis grants provide help for people who need help quickly because of an emergency or disaster
- Community care grants are made to help people on a low income live independently in the community or to ease pressure on families

Opening times for the SWF over the festive period are as follows:

Friday 24 December 2021	9am to 4 pm
Monday 27 December 2021	Closed
Tuesday 28 December 2021	Closed
Wednesday 29 December 2021	9am to 4 pm

Thursday 30 December 2021	9am to 4 pm
Friday 31 December 2021	9am to 4 pm
Monday 3 January 2022	Closed
Tuesday 4 January 2022	Closed
Wednesday 5 January 2022	9am to 5pm

[https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory\\_record/20775/social\\_welfare\\_fund](https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory_record/20775/social_welfare_fund)

## **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](mailto:policy6@highland.gov.uk)

## **Helpful Links**

Welfare Support Team -

[www.highland.gov.uk/directory\\_record/102970/benefit\\_advice](http://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](http://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20016/coronavirus/940/self-isolation_support_grant)

Energy Advice

[energyadvisors@hi.homeenergyscotland.org](mailto: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](http://www.highland.gov.uk/directory_record/1422811/supporting_community_resilience/category/155/grants_for_community_groups)

HTSI Community Group Helpline

Telephone Number 01349 808022