NHS Highland

MEDIA RELEASE

Appeal for public to help reduce pressure on services

We are experiencing significant sustained pressure across all health and social care sites in primary and secondary care.

Local A&E departments across Highland, Argyll and Bute remain open for those who have a life-threatening emergency.

However, to ensure patients have the fastest access to the treatment they need, anyone with a non-life threatening condition who would usually go to A&E should call NHS 24 on 111 first, day or night, to be directed to the right NHS service.

Dr Boyd Peters, NHS Highland's Medical Director, said: "All services in the NHS work closely together, and if one service is impacted, it affects us all. Our emergency departments are exceptionally busy during this time as we recover services while continuing to fight against the spread of COVID-19. This pressure is felt right across our system.

"We are appealing to the public to help us by contacting the appropriate service. The NHS is always there for you, however Accident and Emergency (A&E) is not always the right place for the care we need.

"If you think you need to go to A&E for care that is not life-threatening, the NHS 24 telephone service on 111 will be available day and night to direct you to the care you need.

"People should always contact 999 or go to the nearest A&E department in an emergency. By doing so, we will continue to help our doctors and nurses through this pandemic and ensure A&E provides the fastest and most appropriate care for people when they really need it."

Anyone with symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 should not attend A&E and must adhere to public health advice. They should contact the NHS to arrange to be tested - either online at NHSInform.scot, or by calling 0800 028 2816.

For further information on where to access the right medical care, visit **https://www.NHSinform.scot/right-care**