



Update for key stakeholders

17 December 2021

COVID cases

We had 1,011 new cases in the seven days to 12 December. The infection rate is 2316.3/100,000 across the NHS Highland area: 358.2/100,000 in Argyll and Bute and 299.5/100,000 in North Highland.

We have 17 patients in hospital with COVID-19, including 2 in ITU. We have 7 ITU beds, of which 2 are occupied with COVID-19 patients and 4 with other patients.

There have been 244 recorded deaths of people with COVID in the NHS Highland area since the start of the pandemic: 150 in Highland and 94 in Argyll and Bute. This represents an increase of 3 in the last 7 days.

Omicron

We are now preparing for a surge in cases caused by the Omicron variant. We have asked health and social care staff to test daily when coming to work, and reminded them to access their COVID booster vaccination. This is particularly important as a COVID booster is a requirement to exempt health and care staff from self-isolation for work purposes if they are identified as a contact of a positive COVID case.

In order to prioritise the vaccination programme and the most critical care, some less urgent treatments and services may be postponed or reduced. We have taken the decision to postpone orthopaedic surgery which requires an inpatient bed. This will free up beds and also colleagues to support other areas.

We are also working hard to ensure we have capacity to call on should the situation require it. This includes training staff so that they are ready to work as vaccinators if needed, and pausing some internal meetings and training that are less urgent.

Vaccination

The COVID booster programme is an absolute priority to reduce the number of people becoming seriously ill with COVID, and the pressure on services. The Scottish Government has set a minimum expectation that 80% of those aged over 18 are vaccinated by 31 December.

We have worked hard to maximise capacity to meet this challenge, re-engaging some GP practices, adding drop in clinic capacity, in addition to continually adding capacity to the national booking portal. As a result, the board is in a strong position to achieve this target based on the numbers that are being vaccinated on a daily basis at the moment.

The board has currently boosted 65% of those aged over 18 that have received two doses (58.5% of all over 18s, compared to a Scotland average of 50.7%), totalling almost 160,000 vaccinations. The board needs to vaccinate an additional 35,000 people between now and New Year's Eve to achieve the 80% target.

The directive from Scottish Government has been to focus on providing a small number of large vaccination centres to achieve this. Given where most of the board's younger population live, our activity over Christmas is focused on Inverness and the surrounding areas. The Inverness Vaccination Centre is now operational, and a second site, Culduthel Christian Centre will go live on several days over the next three weeks.

Details of our board run clinics are available on our website, which is regularly updated.

Achievement of the 80% target is dependent on the public booking vaccination appointments between Christmas and New Year. Uptake may be lower during this time and this may make achieving the target more challenging.

Argyll and Bute

Argyll and Bute have significant drop in and portal capacity focusing on this week and next, focusing on the larger areas of population: Oban, Helensburgh and Dunoon. Some GP practices are providing drop in clinics. Clinics will run between Christmas and New Year. Argyll and Bute is in a group of four highest performing local authority areas, with 61% booster coverage of everyone aged 12 and over.

South and Mid

An additional vaccination site in Inverness will go live w/c 20 December. This will be available to book via the portal. In addition we plan to run clinics in Dingwall, Tain, Invergordon, Aviemore and Nairn between now and 5 January, including w/c 27 December.

A significant number of GP practices are continuing to vaccinate lower cohorts, to maximise the protection given to the population.

Lochaber

Clinics are running until 23 December at the Nevis Centre in Fort William. Clinics will then be held on 29 and 30 December, and into January. Clinics in remote and rural areas of Lochaber are planned in the first two weeks of January. There are options both to book via the portal and to drop in.

Wester Ross

A number of GP practices are continuing to vaccinate their patients aged 18-49. In addition, large clinics are planned in Ullapool and Gairloch early next week, to vaccinate all those aged over 18. These have been communicated locally.

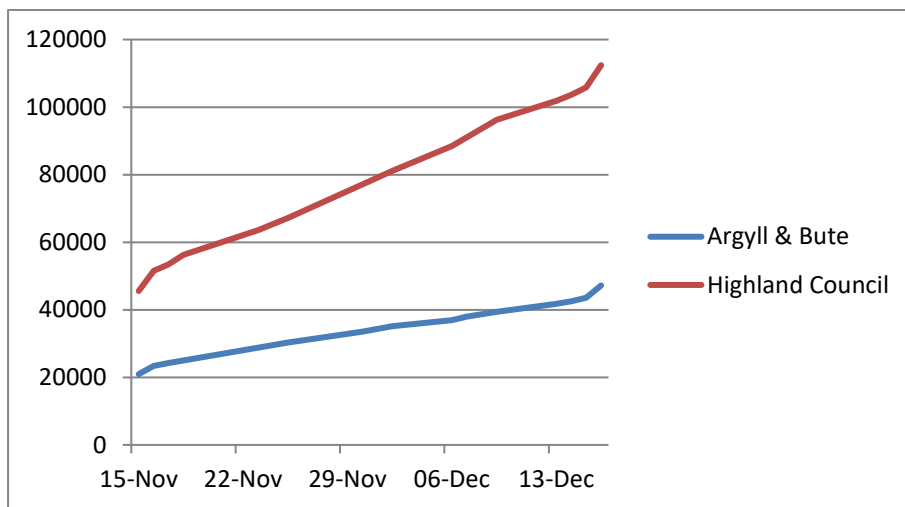
Skye and Lochalsh

Clinics are planned on Skye until 23 December, with options both to book via the portal and to drop in. Clinics will restart in early January.

Caithness and Sutherland

Board run clinics providing COVID boosters have been run since October. The GP practices in much of Caithness and Sutherland have agreed to vaccinate those aged 18-49, including many of the larger practices in Wick and Thurso, with a significant number of vaccinations planned w/c 20 December. Board run clinics will resume in January and will be available to book via the portal.

This graph shows the number of third doses or boosters administered.



Ward closures

Ward 7a at Raigmore hospital remains closed to new admissions and visiting following the detection of a small number of cases of Covid-19. Ward 5a has reopened.

Feedback

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