

Here is the brief for Monday 25 October 2021.

State of the pandemic Each day in the brief we share the blue boxes, highlighting some key measurements like positive cases, patients in hospital, and so on. We wanted to take a wider look at just what COVID-19 is doing across the Grampian region. Widespread high levels of community transmission are still evident. Between each case surge, the background rate of the virus in the population continues to steadily rise and is at some of the highest levels throughout the pandemic. This means the pressure on health & social care services is only likely to increase in the coming weeks.

Over the last 8 weeks we have observed rising cases in older age groups, and in the last 6 weeks, there has been a steep rise in admission to hospital of older age people with COVID-19. We are also seeing increasing clusters of cases in care homes and acquired in hospital settings. This is against a backdrop of high levels of other respiratory viruses traditionally associated with winter, such as colds, 'flu, and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). The 'flu immunisation and COVID booster programme will play a vital part in protecting the most vulnerable. If you have not had the opportunity to book into one of the staff clinics, we would strongly encourage you to do so, [using the online booking portal](#).

We all have a role to play to suppressing this virus. When meeting up socially with people from other households, outside is generally less risky than inside. However, as temperatures drop and the days get shorter, more of us will be heading indoors. If this is the case, good ventilation is vital. Regular, asymptomatic testing, using face coverings wherever they are required, and working at home if your role allows are important steps to take. Relatively small differences in transmission can make the difference between stable and growing case numbers across the region.

In light of everything outlined above, we're devoting the bulk of today's brief to a refresh of the key policies and procedures we should be following.

Got symptoms? Get a PCR test If you are experiencing any of the three classic COVID-19 symptoms it's really important you arrange a PCR test, [using the staff testing service online request form](#). It may be tempting to use a Lateral Flow Device, especially if these are readily available at home, but these should only be used for asymptomatic testing. This is because LFD tests have a lower sensitivity which mean you're more likely to get a false negative. A PCR test maximises the likelihood of correctly identifying COVID-19 infection. LFD tests are used as a surveillance tool, helping us spot cases of COVID-19 which might otherwise go undetected, because an individual doesn't have any symptoms.

It's really important to use the staff testing programme, rather than going to Aberdeen Airport (or other UK government testing sites). We are unable to 'chase up' results which are done through the UK government scheme, but we can follow up missing or delayed tests carried out in-house.

Asymptomatic Testing Firstly, a big thank you to everyone who is continuing to test twice-weekly – we appreciate each and every one of you who are sticking with the programme. In particular, we want to 'shout out' the teams in Mental Health & Learning Disability, who have a consistently high testing uptake across the site. You have all played a very important part in helping us keep track of what the virus is doing in the community. To date, twice-weekly testing has identified close to 4000 positive cases across Scotland. These are cases that might otherwise have gone undetected, potentially spreading the virus even further.

With all the factors outlined at the start of today's brief, we are strongly encouraging all of you to take advantage of the asymptomatic testing scheme, if you aren't already. Along with being vaccinated, testing remains our best defence in keeping each other safe. It's free, straightforward, and gives you additional peace of mind. Whether you've just started testing, or you've been testing since the scheme started, you must record your results, whether positive or negative. By doing so, we can continue to provide you with important updates on what is happening with the virus.

[If you haven't already signed up to the lateral flow testing programme, please click on this link and select the relevant staff link to request your kit.](#)

Self-isolation and return to work guidance for health & social care staff Guidance was issued at the end of August, which made it possible for health & social care staff to end self-isolation early and return to work (subject to certain conditions) even if you are a household contact of a confirmed case (e.g., partner/child/housemate). Please remember, all of the rules about self-isolation within the household should be rigorously adhered to. If there is only one member of the household who is a case, then they should be isolating (that is, keeping quite apart from other household members) within the house. However, if there is more than one case in the household it may be that it is the asymptomatic staff member who needs to isolate from everyone else. This applies, where possible, to sleeping arrangements, use of toilet facilities, mealtimes, use of the kitchen etc. [Here is a link to a video explaining all the requirements for self-isolation.](#)

You must commence self-isolation as soon as you are told you are a contact of a confirmed case. However, as health & social care staff you can be exempted from self-isolation as a close contact and return to work if you are over 18 and meet the following criteria:

- Are fully vaccinated. This means you've had both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine (vaccine must be approved by regulators in the UK or EU or USA), and the second dose was more than 14 days prior to exposure to the case
- Have no symptoms of COVID-19 and do not develop any symptoms
- Book a PCR test and have a negative result confirmed (the sample must have been taken AFTER contact with the confirmed case.
- Take a daily lateral flow device (LFD) test for 10 days following last exposure to the case.
- **All** test results (even if they are negative) should be reported to your line manager as well as logging them through the [NSS COVID testing portal](#).
- You do not work with immunosuppressed patients – for example in oncology settings or patients at high clinical risk. If you do work with immunosuppressed / high clinical risk patients, you will be asked by your line manager to work within other areas
- You continue to follow infection prevention and control guidance.

If you develop symptoms, or return a positive LFD test, you must immediately isolate, and arrange a further PCR test

If you are confirmed to have COVID-19, you must complete 10 days of self-isolation, without exception.

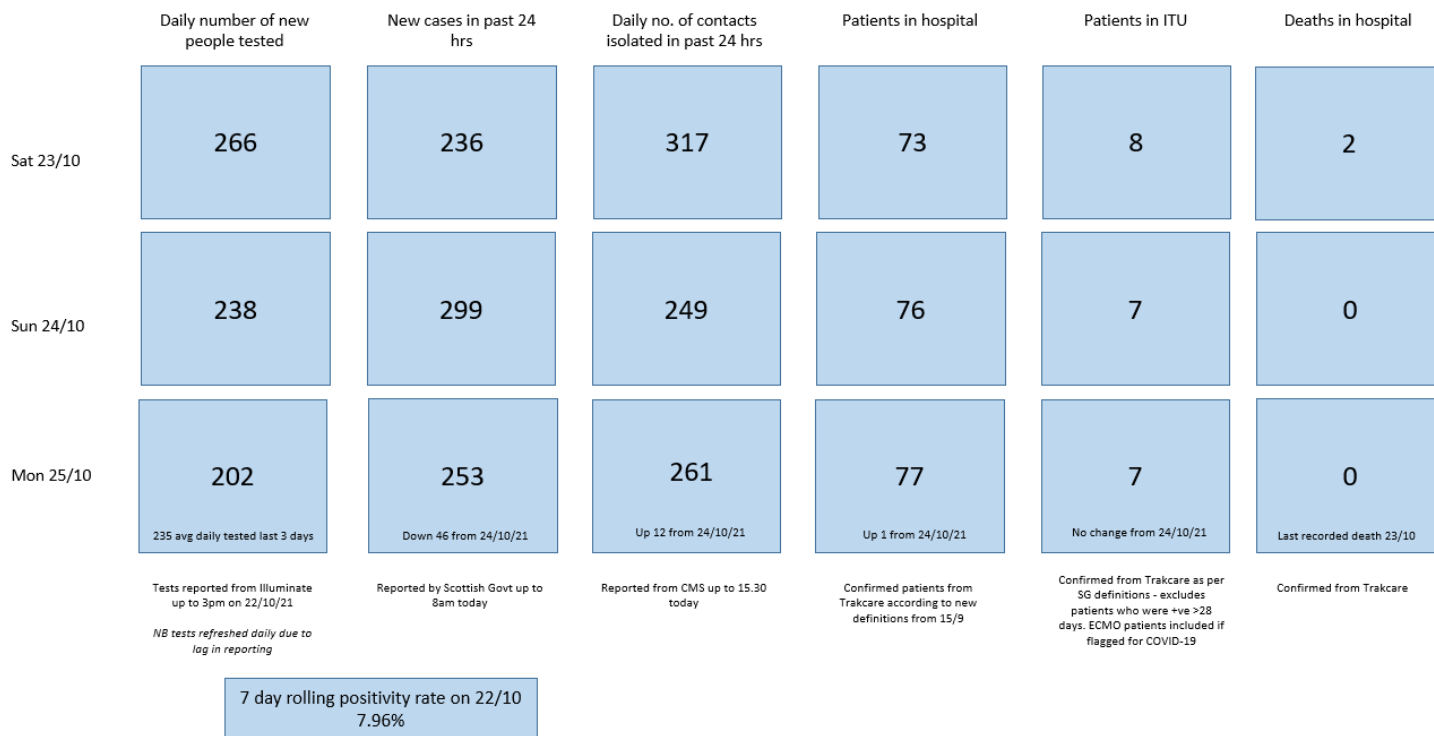
'Drifting' back to the office? NHS Grampian is continuing to recommend and support working at home until 31 March 2022, for all staff who are able to do so. Working at home should not be to the detriment of your wellbeing. If you find this is the case for you, please discuss with your line manager in the first instance to see what adjustments to working arrangements can be made to support you. Any use of an NHSG workplace must follow Safer Workplaces guidance, such as regular review of the Your Health and Wellbeing Review document, available on the [Safe Workplaces](#) website.

Proper use of PPE If your role requires the use of PPE, it is vital you keep your skills sharp. The Infection Prevention & Control team offer regular training sessions on the correct way to don and doff PPE. Dates and book information below:

Tuesday 26 October/ Wednesday 10 November/ Tuesday 23 November/ Wednesday 1 December

All sessions start at 11am. You can book your place by emailing gram.ipc-donn-doff-training@nhs.scot
These sessions are supplementary to (not a replacement for) mandatory training on Turas. Turas training comes in two parts, 1) Droplet precautions and 2) AGP precautions and both should be completed annually.

Grampian data The local update for today (and across the weekend) is shown below.



[The Public Health Scotland daily dashboard is available to view via this link.](#)

Grampian Winter Pride parade A big thank you to everyone who came along to support the Grampian Winter Pride parade along Union Street yesterday. It was a riot of colour which certainly brightened up a grey Sunday morning! Check out our social media accounts (NHS Grampian is on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) for photos from the event.

Tuneful thought for the day There's a lot in today's brief. The idea was to draw together all the things you probably mostly know, but might not be certain of, in one place, as a handy point of reference. We hope it's helpful, rather than overwhelming. The sheer volume of information we have had to process and (attempt to) retain through the pandemic is quite staggering. That sense of knowledge overload has inspired today's song choice – [In The Deep by Bird York](#)

“Thought you had all the answers...now you're out there swimming, in the deep”

If you want to request a song for tune of the day, follow up on items included in this brief, or suggest an item for sharing, drop us an email via gram.communications@nhs.scot