

Here is the brief for Tuesday 2 February 2021.

**Restrictions update** The First Minister updated the Scottish Parliament earlier on the current restrictions in place. You can read the full update [here](#), however, it has been confirmed the current restrictions will remain in place until the end of this month. On education, the Scottish Government have indicated there will be a phased return, from 22 February, as follows:

- Firstly a full time return of early learning and childcare for all children below school age;
- secondly, a full time return to school for pupils in primaries 1 - 3; and
- thirdly, a part-time return, albeit on a limited basis, for senior phase pupils to allow in-school practical work that is necessary for the completion of national qualification courses. Initially though, it is intended that there will be no more than around 5-8% of a secondary school roll physically present at any one time for these purposes.

In addition, the First Minister confirmed 35,000 first doses of vaccine were administered yesterday across the country, reflecting the opening of mass vaccination centres, including the Aberdeen centre at P&J Live at TECA.

**Twice weekly asymptomatic staff testing** A reminder that this programme is up and running and is open to all patient/client facing staff. If you are unsure whether you meet the criteria to participate in this programme, you can get more information [here](#). We would also encourage you to watch this [short video](#), in which Dr Hugh Bishop explains how the programme works and what you need to do.

**Update to resuscitation guidance – action required** There has been an update to the NHS Grampian COVID - Adult Resuscitation Guidance. Please can we ask that you familiarise yourselves with the current guidance, particularly in relation to PPE requirements and patient pathways. Can we also ask that if you have any resuscitation algorithms in your area dated 17th April 2020 that these are removed and replaced with the current guidance available on [Grampian Guidance](#).

**Working at Home** Under HMRC (Her Majesty Revenue & Customs) regulations you may be able to claim tax relief for additional household costs if you have to work at home. This includes working at home due to COVID-19. Full details are available on the [HMRC website](#). To make a claim you need to answer some set questions and then claim your tax relief online. To do this you will need to set up a Government Gateway User ID, if you do not already have one, and will need your National Insurance Number (noted on your payslip) and a recent payslip or valid UK passport. You can either claim tax relief on £6 a week from 6 April 2020 (you will not need to keep evidence of your extra costs) or the exact amount of extra costs you've incurred above the weekly amount (you will need evidence such as receipts). Where tax relief is applicable you will get this based on the rate at which you pay tax. For example, if you pay the 20% basic rate of tax and claim tax relief on £6 a week you would get £1.20 per week in tax relief (20% of £6). Your tax code will be adjusted accordingly, so you will pay less tax, thereby getting the tax relief at source.

**COVID-19 response and pensions** The Coronavirus Act 2020 (introduced on 25 March 2020) is still in force and it contains NHS Pension Scheme measures which immediately allowed recently retired NHS staff to return to NHS work or increase their post retirement NHS working commitments without their pension benefits being affected. In summary the temporary changes are:

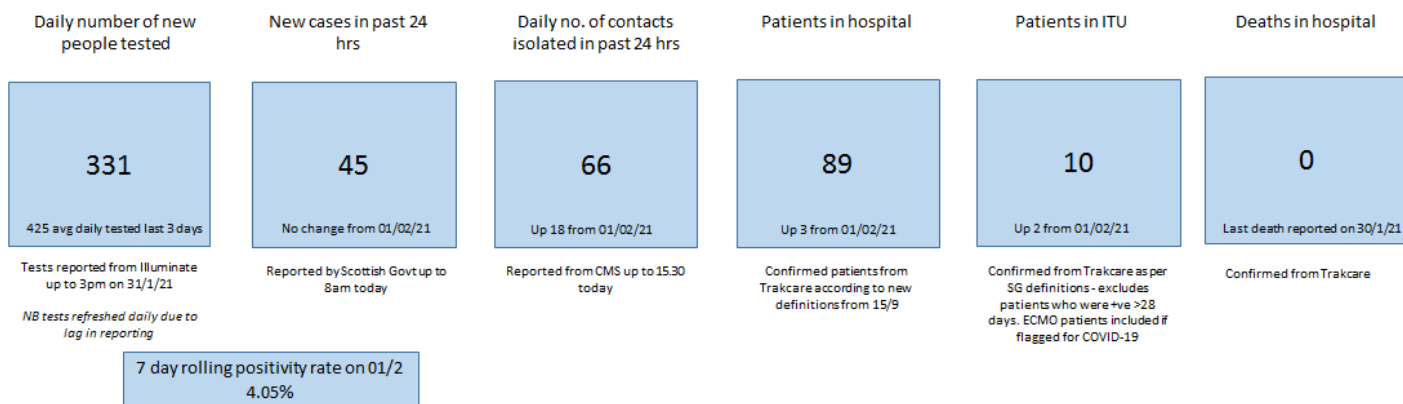
- Temporary suspension of the 16-hour rule in the 1995 Section which currently prevents those scheme members from working more than 16 hours per week in the first month following retirement. This allows 1995 scheme members to return immediately to NHS work after taking the minimum 24 hours break and continue working their existing hours, or increase them, whilst they are in receipt of their full pension benefits.
- Abatement for special class status members in the 1995 Section. This will remove a barrier for those with special class and mental health officers status aged 55 to 60 years old, who return to NHS work having claimed their pension benefits, in that their pension would not be suspended or reduced based on their earnings
- The requirement for staff in the 2008 Section and 2015 NHS Pension Scheme to reduce their pensionable pay by 10% if they elect to 'draw down' a portion of their benefits and continue working. This is where a scheme member has elected to 'draw down' a portion of their benefits and subsequently now wishes to increase their earnings or commitment to the NHS so that they are in excess of 90% of the level before draw down was taken.

Please see the Coronavirus Act 2020 - retired NHS staff returning to work [page](#) on the Scottish Public Pensions Agency website for more information on the changes which have been made to pension rules in response to COVID-19.

Members imminently retiring on Age, Voluntary Early Retirement (VER), or where benefits have been deferred, must take a 24-hour break in NHS employment/work to access their NHS pension benefits in full. The 24-hour break normally follows a member's last day of NHS employment. A scheme member can take their 24-hour break from employment on retirement any day of the week, including the weekend or a public holiday, regardless of their contracted hours/regular working pattern. To satisfy the 24-hour rule a scheme member must terminate their contract of employment.

Following the end of the COVID-19 outbreak, a 6-month notice period will be given to staff and employers at the end of which the relevant sections of the pension scheme regulations will take effect again. Staff and employers will therefore have 6 months' notice to readjust their working patterns.

**Grampian data** The local figures for today and the 7 day rolling positivity rate are shown below. If you click [here](#) you can visit the Public Health Scotland website, which includes neighbourhood figures for all local authority areas in Scotland.



**Thought for the day** If you follow any of the NHS Grampian social media accounts, you may have seen this lovely photo earlier today:



This is 75 year old Yvonne Hinsley from Lossiemouth, having a vaccine 'dry run' with her grandson, before her appointment at the Fiona Elcock Vaccination Centre yesterday. The family sent this photo in to say thank you to everyone working in health & social care, to raise spirits, and to reassure anyone nervous about getting their jab. In the midst of all the 'noise', it is vital we all remember Yvonne and everyone like her. We are making a difference to her and the many thousands of people living across north-east Scotland. What we do *\*does\** matter. Thank-you.

**Questions to ask? Information to share?** If you have particular questions – or are aware of questions coming from friends and family – please share them with us. We may not be able to answer every question and it may take us time to get a proper answer, but we will endeavour to respond and share the answers. You can get in touch with us via [gram.communications@nhs.scot](mailto:gram.communications@nhs.scot). Please also use that email address if you have items for consideration for future briefs.