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Welcome to the first edition of our NHS Grampian newsletter, which aims to keep you informed through regular updates and articles of interest regarding the health and care of the Grampian population.

COVID-19 vaccines are more than 90% effective against hospital admissions from coronavirus.

COVID -19 Vaccination Update

We are sometimes asked whether the vaccine is losing its effectiveness. The short answer is **NO!** At the peak of the infection in early January almost all of hospital admissions for COVID-19 were in people who were not vaccinated. Last week the majority (60%) of hospital admission for COVID-19 were in fully vaccinated people. Does this mean that the vaccine is losing effect? The answer is a resounding 'NO'. Consider the example of road traffic accidents and seat belts. Before the introduction of compulsory seat belt wearing virtually all Road Traffic Collision (RTC) injuries were in people who were not wearing seat belts. Sometime after the seat belt legislation, nearly all RTC injuries were in people who were wearing seat belts.

This is not because seat belts became ineffective; it is because previously only around 10% of car occupants wore a seat belt, whilst afterwards more than 90% of occupants wore a seat belt. The number of RTC injuries fell dramatically. The analogy with COVID-19 and vaccination is clear. In early January hardly anyone had had two doses of vaccine (we only started in early December), now 84% of people over the age of 18 have had both doses. The explanation for the sharp increase in the percentage of hospital admissions is simply because the fully vaccinated population now far exceeds the unvaccinated. Like RTC injuries, the number of COVID-19 admissions has fallen dramatically. If you want to understand this topic a bit more, the BBC Radio 4 programme 'More or Less' covered it recently, you can listen again via this [link](#). There is also really useful discussion about this point in this [article](#).

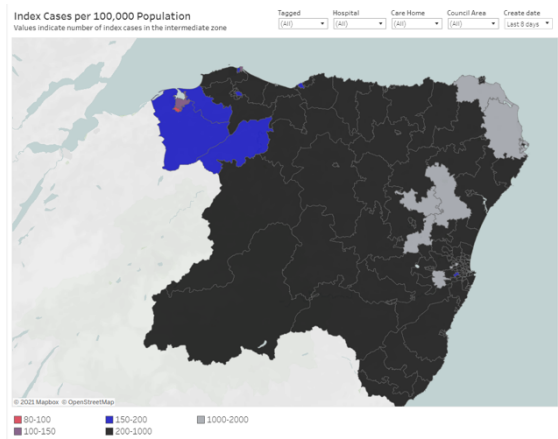
Public Health Update

COVID cases in Scotland are running at significantly high levels – higher than at any point in the pandemic, despite a small reduction in the rate of growth recently. Rates per 100,000 are 818 now compared to 154 one month ago. Almost all Scottish Boards are in the top 20 of Europe's hotspots and we have not yet hit the peak. With over 1.3 million people in Scotland unvaccinated and susceptible, there is likely to be continued growth in case numbers over the coming weeks.

The impact of rising cases on hospital admissions has really been brought into focus by an increase in bed occupancy in Scottish hospitals of more than 40% over the last 7 days - 2½ times greater than a month ago. Based on the previous trends, this could translate into between 2-4% being hospitalised. However, the pressure is being felt by GPs, NHS24, Ambulance, Hospitals and Care Homes, with surge and escalation plans already being invoked.

Grampian: Cases continuing to rise

COVID cases are rising in all Grampian local authority areas but at a slower rate than seen over the past fortnight. However, at more than four times the levels seen a month ago, this is cold comfort. And when we consider ourselves at less than 40% of the Scottish average, this feels rather academic when the case burden across the country is so clearly uncontained. The map below shows the levels being seen in communities - with rates between 1000-2000 per 100,000 population.



Infection levels and case numbers – key to understanding our progress

Estimates of the burden of infection are important to guide the pandemic response. Surveillance is one of the ways to do this and the latest national infection survey estimates that 1 in 45 people in Scotland have the virus. Where testing is high consistently, the results provide the best indication of new cases and trends, and we know that test positivity in Grampian continues to increase.

Complementary to both of these measures is waste water epidemiology, where viral RNA can be detected from sewage, a signal that the virus is circulating in nearby communities. In some communities in Grampian, the results we are getting from waste water sampling are significantly higher than the case numbers we are identifying from the test results of people living in these areas. This means there may be high levels of undetected asymptomatic infection, increasing the risk of spread.

In this map, the blue circles illustrate where case numbers and waste water samples are consistent. The red circles illustrate communities where waste water signals are significantly higher (northern Aberdeenshire, the City and into south Aberdeenshire).

Is worse still to come?

With sustained high case numbers in recent days we continue to track our ‘worst case’ modelling scenario, suggesting that the peak of new cases may still be some weeks away. The translation to hospitalisations may be around 60% of the levels seen in January but with continued pressure until well into the winter period until December.



So what next?

The approval of vaccine passports in high risk events and settings should help to reduce the risk of transmission and may lead to a spurt in vaccination uptake. In the coming week, we expect to hear the decision about vaccination in 12-15 year olds and the extent of any vaccination booster campaign. All of these are important and will lead to ongoing resilience for health and the economy. However there is no doubt that we are in a ‘brace’ situation, doing our best to manage the health harms and impact of COVID during the autumn and early winter period.

Locations w/c
13 September

Community	Van Location	Weekday	Time
Torry /Balnagask	Torry Library/Shops	Monday	1-2pm
Milltimber	Deeside Christian Fellowship Church, 25 Binghill Drive	Monday	3-4pm
Mastrick	GreenFern Shops	Tuesday	1-2pm
Kingswells	Kingswells Ave Shops	Tuesday	3-4pm
Northfield	Byron Shops	Wednesday	1-2pm
Cults	Dunmail Avenue, Car Park	Wednesday	3-4pm
Kincorth	Kincorth Community Centre	Thursday	1-2pm
Peterculter	Leisure Centre, Coronation Road	Thursday	3-4pm
Cove	Loriston Avenue Shops	Friday	1-2pm
Bucksburn	Davie's Fishbar	Friday	5-6pm

Making testing accessible: We have launched a new Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test kit collection service with Aberdeen city council. Each week, local authority community wardens will be in a range of locations across the city, distributing LFD kits. They will also be able to help people to understand and access the support available to help them isolate if they test positive, as well as access other services that provide support for general physical and mental wellbeing. They can be found wearing their high visibility jackets at locations on a weekly basis (see table opposite). It is early days, but this is already showing very positive results.

Latest messages and useful links



Health communications: Keeping up to date with new evidence and communicating this widely helps to inform and build trust. This week we shared information from the largest study of Long COVID or post-COVID symptoms which was reported in the media. The BBC headline that ‘it is nowhere near the scale feared’ is based on the lead author’s comments about earlier studies that reported much higher prevalence. He concludes however ‘they are not of trivial importance’. This study is interesting because it took into account that children may have had symptoms simply because of the tough year they have had (i.e. not because of infection). The study found that 14% more children reported 3 or more symptoms at 12 weeks after COVID-19 compared to those without a positive test. More of the key points is available in our Daily Brief <https://www.nhsgrampian.org/siteassets/COVID-19/temporary-documents/COVID-19-staff-brief---10th-september-2021.pdf>

Self-isolation support

If you or any of your family test positive for COVID-19 and need support to manage through the ten day self-isolation period, remember they can contact the Grampian COVID-19 Assistance Hub either via their [website](#) or by calling 0808 196 3384 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm).

If you live with someone who is a COVID case. It is possible for the contact to carry on as normal once they receive a negative PCR test subject to certain conditions. The rules about self-isolation within the household should be 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 person 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. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2ScwQkv-mo>

COVID recovery – consultation

The Scottish Government is consulting on proposals, which ask if certain temporary provisions, introduced in light of the pandemic, should be maintained beyond March 2022. We would therefore appreciate it if you would share the link amongst your networks.

To view the full proposals and contribute your views please click on this [link](#). The consultation is open until 9 November.

Vaccination certificates

The Scottish Parliament has approved the use of Coronavirus vaccination certificates to enter some events and higher risk venues. The measure will come into effect on Friday 1 October. From Thursday 30 September, people will be able to use the NHS Scotland Covid Status App which also has a QR code, to access venues where certification is required. Venues will have a separate app to use for verification. Under 18s and adults who are ineligible for vaccination will be exempt.

It is currently possible to download (or otherwise request) a PDF of your vaccination status from the NHS Inform website. This function will be switched off on 30 September.

Anyone unable or unwilling to use the App can request a secure paper record of vaccination, which cannot be edited, and which will come with enhanced security features such as thermodynamic ink to prevent forgery.

Proof of vaccination will be required to enter: nightclubs, adult entertainment venues, unseated indoor live events, with more than 500 people in the audience, unseated outdoor live events, with more than 4,000 people in the audience, any event, of any nature, which has more than 10,000 people in attendance.

Useful links:

- <https://www.covidvaxgrampian.com/>
- <https://www.nhsgrampian.org/covid-19/covid-19-public-information/subpages/covid-19-community-testing/>

Information and updates can also be found in the NHS Grampian Daily Brief ([click here](#)).