

Community Resilience Group Weekly Briefing - 43 19 November 2021

Covid Update

Over the last 7 days there have been 1,043 new positive cases in Highland (to 15 November). This means the latest 7-day rate per 100,000 shows an increase from last week to 443 per 100,000 as of 15 November. We have seen week on week increases in the number of cases in Highland over the last 4 weeks therefore it is important to be careful and stick to the Scottish Government guidelines.

In terms of neighbourhood data, the map below and accompanying table, highlights the positive cases per 100,000 in communities across the Highland area. The test positivity rate on was 8.9% on 15 November, again a further increase from previous weeks.

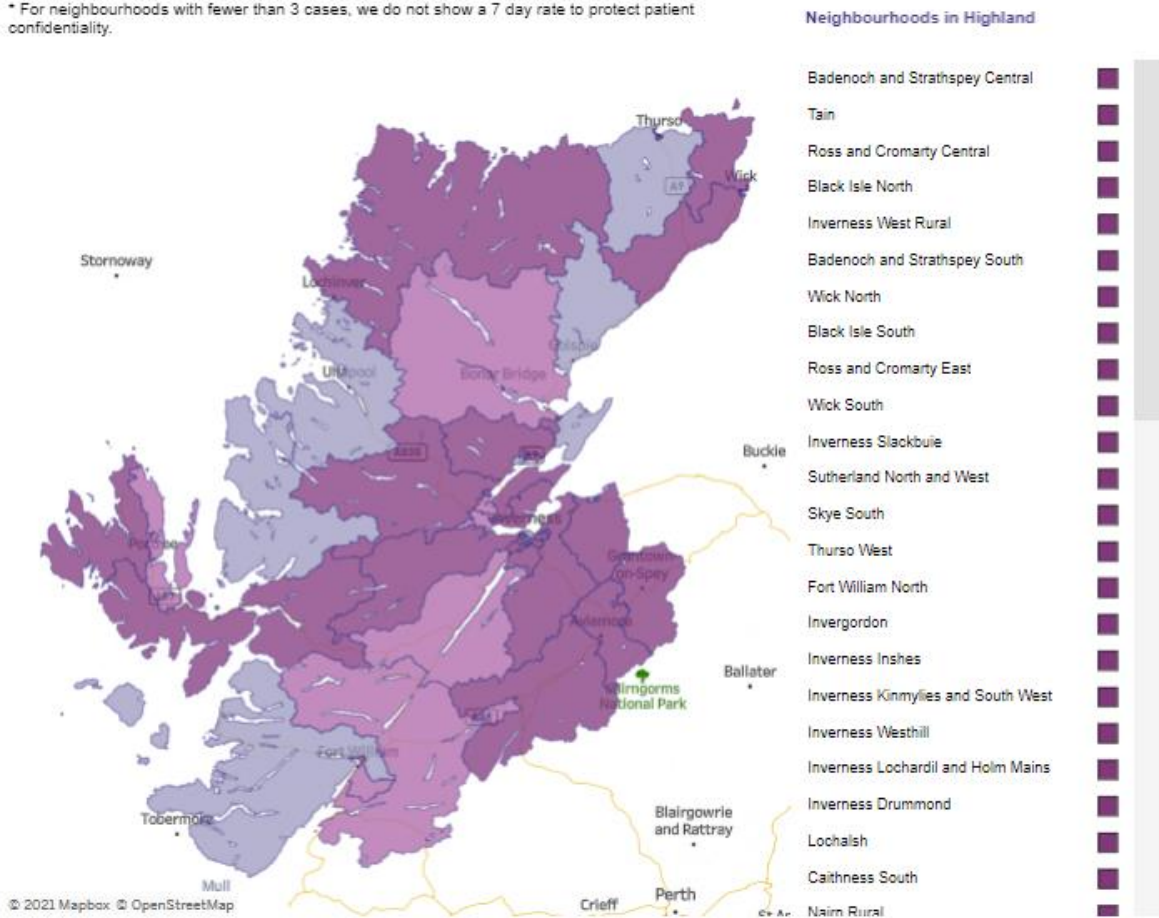
7 day positive cases in Highland based on people tested between 9 November 2021 and 15 November 2021

7 day positive cases	7 day positive rate per 100,000 population	7 day test positivity rate
1,043	443.0	8.9%

7 day positive rate per 100,000 population



* For neighbourhoods with fewer than 3 cases, we do not show a 7 day rate to protect patient confidentiality.



Scotland has Moved Beyond Level Zero

From 9 August 2021 the whole of Scotland moved to beyond Level 0. You can find Scottish Government guidance for everyone on how to stay safe and prevent the spread of COVID-19 here.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-safe-and-protecting-others/>

Scottish Government messages this week

The First Minister gave a statement to Parliament on COVID-19 on Tuesday, 16 November 2021 providing an update of the current course of the pandemic

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/deputy-first-minister-statement-covid-19/>

Key messages included:

- There has been a gradual increase in cases over the past two weeks – from just over 2,500 new cases a day, to approximately 3,000 cases a day.
- This masks some distinct variations between different age groups, with cases amongst under 60s increased by 14% during the past week (much of this increase was in people under the age of 20) and cases in the over 60 age group fell over the past week - by 11%.
- The numbers reported in recent days here in Scotland illustrate the need for continued precautions. The challenging picture is repeated across Europe.
- Everyone aged 50 to 59 - together with unpaid carers and household contacts of the immunosuppressed and anyone eligible for a booster vaccine who has not yet had an appointment, can now book online at NHS Inform. (Note in Highland, people will be contacted by NHS Highland)
- The Government have agreed to keep the current regulations in place, with no immediate changes.
- The Government have considered, though not reached a final decision, on the possibility of future changes to the Covid certification scheme.

The First Minister also reiterated what we can all do to protect ourselves and each other:

- **Vaccination** - Get vaccinated if you are eligible and haven't yet done so, that includes going for a booster jab when you are invited. It is never too late to get vaccinated. And it remains the single most important thing any of us can do right now.
- **Testing** - Test regularly with lateral flow devices. These can be ordered through the NHS Inform website, or collected from a local test site or pharmacies. If you test positive, or are identified as a close contact, or have symptoms of the virus, please self-isolate and book a PCR test.
- Please comply with the **mitigations** still in place.
 - Work from home when that is possible, wear face coverings in indoor public places - shops and public transport and when moving about in hospitality.
 - Wash hands and surfaces thoroughly.

- And meet outdoors if that is possible. That obviously gets harder through the winter - but it is the case that outdoor environments are safer than indoors.
- And when you are meeting indoors, try to open windows – anything to improve ventilation will help.
- All of these precautions do still make a difference. They will protect us and those around us, and they will help to ease the burden on our NHS.

Covid-19 Testing

The chart below provides a helpful overview of the types of tests available (attached as pdf)

The 2 types of coronavirus test currently being used regularly are:

Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) for people with symptoms
Lateral Flow Device (LFD) also known as a rapid test and is for routine testing for people that do not have symptoms.

COVID-19 TESTING

WITH SYMPTOMS

PCR test

When to take a test

- If you have COVID-19 symptoms
- To confirm a positive lateral flow test result

How long does it take?

- PCRs are processed in a lab
- Results usually received within 48 hours

How to get a test?

Book Online https://bit.ly/Book_PCR_Test or call 119
It can take up to 72 hours to get the PCR Test result because they are processed in a laboratory.

LFD Rapid Test you can do yourself.

WITHOUT SYMPTOMS

Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test

When to take a test

- If you do not have COVID-19 symptoms
- As part of routine testing

How long does it take?

- Produce results within 30 minutes
- With regular use, LFDs help to detect infection early

How to get a test?

Order online https://bit.ly/Free_Lateral_Flow_Tests_Scotland or call 119 or collect rapid LFD tests from your nearest participating pharmacy, if you do not have symptoms.
Visit https://bit.ly/LFDTest_Pharmacy

Symptomatic Testing (with symptoms)

If you do believe you have symptoms, please self-isolate and book a PCR test. Postal PCR kits are available through NHS Inform either online [here](#) or by calling 0800 028 2816.

In addition to the local support that is available, people can get support to self-isolate by calling the Council's helpline number: 0300 303 1362. This can include access to food and supplies to self-isolate and individuals may be entitled to a £500 self-isolation support grant.

Asymptomatic Testing (without symptoms)

It continues to be important that people test themselves even if they don't have symptoms. Taking a rapid LFD test twice a week can help stop new variants earlier, limiting the spread of the virus.

Test kits are available at pharmacies, or to order online from www.nhsinform.scot/testing, or by calling 119. Test kits are also available at Community testing sites. The details for where these are next week are outlined below.

Community Testing 22 - 26 November for those without symptoms (Asymptomatic)

The community testing programme offers rapid COVID-19 tests for people without symptoms.

Next week a mobile testing unit will be in Aviemore.

The mobile testing unit 'Testalot' will be in the Aviemore Retail Park, Grampian Road, Aviemore. Opening times will be;

- Monday 22 November 10am-3.30pm
- Tuesday 23 November 9am-3.30pm
- Wednesday 24 November 9am-3.30pm
- Thursday 25 November 9am-3.30pm
- Friday 26 November 9am-3pm

Just to emphasise that there are no specific outbreaks in this community, this is to support normalising testing across the area.

No appointment is necessary, and it will be open both for asymptomatic testing and to collect LFD test kits.

Please note that these drop-in sessions for community testing are only for people without symptoms. Anyone that becomes unwell should isolate immediately and seek a PCR test. PCR tests can be booked through NHS Inform online or by calling 0800 028 2816.

Those who attend a COVID-19 Mobile Clinic will also have the opportunity to enter a free monthly draw to win an Amazon Kindle e-reader (10th generation, with 6" backlit display) after completing an exit survey. The winner will be drawn by random at the end of the month.

I would appreciate it if you could encourage people across your networks to attend.

Covid-19 Vaccination Update

The latest update from NHS on the vaccine can be accessed at the following link: www.nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine.

For details of vaccination access for flu and Covid-19 and information about drop-in clinics that are operating in Highland please check the following link: <https://www.nhshighland.scot.nhs.uk/COVID19/Pages/Vaccination.aspx>

Vaccination Scams

Scammers are using mobile phone numbers to offer COVID-19 tests using a 'vaccinationpass' website which then demands payment.

If you receive a message, call, or link like this, do not respond. Instead, notify www.scamwatch.scot or call 0808 164 6000.

For free COVID-19 tests, visit nhsinform.scot/testing or call 119. You can also collect free test kits from your local pharmacy, or at testing sites.

The following chart from Trading Standards Scotland gives an overview of vaccine scams (also attached as pdf)

Covid-19 Vaccine Scams

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 vaccination programme, scam phone calls, text messages and emails offering vaccines have been reported across Scotland.

Scam messages often contain links to websites that look like the official NHS site - these bogus websites may ask for your personal details and request payment details.

The Covid-19 vaccination is free. If you are offered it at a price, it could be fake, stolen or non-existent.

How Can I Spot a Scam?

You will be contacted by NHS Scotland by letter or phone to arrange your vaccination appointment when you are eligible. The NHS will NOT:

- ⊗ Ask you for bank details
- ⊗ Ask you for any payment for the vaccine
- ⊗ Ask you to prove your identity by sending copies of personal documents such as passports
- ⊗ Ask you to register to receive the vaccine
- ⊗ Arrive unannounced at your home to administer the vaccine

What Can I Do if I've Been Scammed?

If you are unsure about a message you have received in relation to Covid-19, call the NHS Scotland national helpline on 0800 030 8013.

If you are concerned that you may have provided personal or financial information via a link in a scam message, contact Police Scotland on 101.

Report scam messages to Advice Direct Scotland on 0808 164 6000 or via their ScamWatch tool at www.scamwatch.scot

Where Can I Find Trusted Information?

NHS Scotland:
www.nhsinform.scot/covid-19-vaccine
NHS Inform Helpline: 0800 030 8013

Scottish Government:
www.gov.scot/coronavirus

Advice Direct Scotland:
www.consumeradvice.scot

Highland Communities Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund

The Highland Communities Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund application is now live!

The Highland Third Sector Interface (HTSI) has just over £700k to support local, grassroots community activity that meets the overarching national ambitions for the funds and the local priority areas. The Fund will provide significant investment into community support for adults. This investment complements the children and young people's community wellbeing supports currently being rolled out across Scotland.

Find out more here: <https://www.highlandtsi.org.uk/hcmw-fund>

Nature Restoration Fund

The Highland Council is inviting communities to apply for a share of a new fund to support nature restoration projects.

The Nature Restoration Fund (NRF) is a new capital fund, established by the Scottish Government, designed to help support projects that will deliver nature restoration, safeguard wildlife, and tackle the causes of biodiversity loss due to climate change.

To find out more including the criteria and how to apply for grants of between £2,500 and £20,000 click here -

https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/14114/highland_council_invites_applications_for_new_nature_restoration_fund

Investing in Communities Fund

The next round of the Investing in Communities Fund (ICF) will be available to support projects from 1 April 2023, which we expect to open for applications towards the end of March or early April 2022.

In advance of the fund opening, we are hosting information sessions to provide an overview of the fund's aims, eligibility criteria and the application process.

[Tuesday 30 November 2021 - 10.30am - 11.30am - Register Now](#)

[Wednesday 8 December 2021 - 2.00pm - 3.00pm - Register Now](#)

You will be able to access a copy of our presentation slides on our [ICF webpage](#) prior to the first event so that you have the opportunity to consider any questions you may wish to ask during these sessions. The current version of the fund's guidance note and FAQ will also be accessible on our [ICF webpage](#) by mid December 2021 to ensure that you have access to all of the details.

If you encounter any problems completing the registration process please email:

InvestinginCommunities@gov.scot

TENANT GRANT FUND

The Scottish Government has set up a Tenant Grant Fund to provide financial help to tenants in social housing and in the private sector who are at risk of becoming homeless because they have fallen behind with rent payments during the pandemic.

The grants will help tenants who have struggled financially as a direct result of the pandemic, allowing them to reduce or pay-off any rent arrears they have built up. The grants do not have to be repaid and are available to tenants in Council, Housing Association or Privately-Rented accommodation.

Payments are being administered by local authorities and the Highland Council has received an allocation of funding which is only available until 31st March 2022. The scheme is designed to be flexible but there is an eligibility criteria set by the Scottish Government:

- The grants are limited to helping with rent arrears that built-up between 23rd March 2020 and 09th August 2021
- Grants can be used to make a full or partial payment of arrears depending on individual circumstances
- Grants will be targeted towards current tenants who are at risk of becoming homeless and do not have any other way of clearing the arrears
- Payments will be made to landlords rather than tenants on the strict condition that the payment will be used to credit the tenant's rent account, and that any ongoing proceedings to end the tenancy will be ceased.

From **Monday 15th November 2021** we are in a position to consider enquiries relating to the Tenant Grant Fund. Initial enquiries can be made by tenants, landlords or third party organisations that are supporting either a tenant or landlord. Enquiries should be direct to the email address below. On receipt of an enquiry, an Officer will make contact as soon as possible to collect the information required to assess eligibility for the Fund and to explain how the process will work. Please note that we may not be able to respond to your enquiry immediately but we will make contact as soon as possible.

If you feel that you or your tenant may be eligible for assistance from the Tenant Grant Fund, please email hannah.cox@highland.gov.uk or Dominika.Moszczyńska@highland.gov.uk .

It would be helpful if you could provide a basic overview of the situation in your email but there is no need to provide full details as these will be collected by the Officer who responds to your email and through the application form.

Connecting Scotland, Fast Track Extended for digital devices

Connecting Scotland has extended its Fast Track scheme due to high demand.

They have enough devices available to keep the scheme open for a few more weeks. They don't have a fixed new deadline yet but are likely to keep applications open until early/mid-December. Further details will follow.

More info at: <https://connecting.scot/organisations>

Detail of applications:

We are now inviting 'fast track' applications from organisations working to tackle poverty and inequality. If you apply through this process you are committing to distribute devices and provide basic monitoring information within 14 days of receipt. This means you should already know who you plan to support prior to applying.

Organisations can apply for support for **up to 10 people** they are currently working with. This support can include:

- Digital devices – iPads and/or Chromebooks
- Internet connectivity – a mobile WiFi hotspot with 24 months unlimited data
- Training and support – for staff and volunteers to become 'digital champions' to support people to use the internet confidently and safely

Fast track applications are intended for organisations who can identify specific people they are currently working with that meet the eligibility criteria and have capacity to deliver devices to them quickly this autumn/winter.

What people are eligible?

Organisations can apply for support for people that they work with that meet both the following criteria:

- They are digitally excluded – they currently do not have access to an appropriate device and/or internet connection at home; and
- They are from a low income household – they cannot afford to buy a device or pay for internet access from their household income.

The priority target groups are:

- Older people (aged 60+)
- Disabled people
- Single parents
- Families on low incomes
- Care leavers

Applications will also be accepted for other groups where there is strong evidence of the impact of digital exclusion.

Getting online will help them access public services, take part in learning, connect with family and friends and contribute towards reducing social isolation and loneliness.

Who can apply?

If you are a public or third sector organisation that works with the target groups in Scotland, you can apply for devices. Teams working within a local council can also apply.

Individuals and private sector organisations cannot apply.

You can apply for a maximum of 10 devices in each application. However, organisations may submit multiple applications from different team members. It is preferable, but not essential, for the applicant to be the same person that will deliver the devices and support to the beneficiary.

If you have previously been awarded devices from Connecting Scotland, you may reapply, provided you have [submitted the required monitoring and evaluation](#) data on who has received them.

All organisations must be able to:

- Demonstrate they have identified specific people they are currently working with that meet the criteria for support
- Understand what type of device is best for those people (a Chromebook or iPad) and whether they also require an internet connection (MiFi) to be provided
- Commit to distributing the devices and **provide basic monitoring and evaluation** data on who has received them within 14 days of them being delivered to you
- Provide support for at least six months to end-users to help them develop their digital skills and confidence through the **Digital Champions model**, including taking part in a 2.5 hour remote Digital Champion training session, if appropriate

A full list of roles and responsibilities can be found in the [template grant agreement](#).

SCVO will provide support for successful teams and organisations.

Previous applicants to Connecting Scotland must have successfully completed the distribution of their previous devices and submitted the required monitoring information for their application to be considered in this round.

Food Support for Groups

We know that a number of you continue to provide support to the most vulnerable in your communities and that most of you already have well defined routes for

accessing food to provide this support or are supporting individuals to access their shopping or community fridges/food tables.

If you are struggling to access food to continue support to vulnerable people locally, please do contact us through the policy mailbox and we can look at ways that we can support your group going forward.

Contact: policy6@highland.gov.uk

Helpful Links

Welfare Support Team -

www.highland.gov.uk/directory_record/102970/benefit_advice

Self Isolation Support Grant - www.highland.gov.uk/info/20016/coronavirus/940/self-isolation_support_grant

Energy Advice

energyadvisors@hi.homeenergyscotland.org

AbilityNet - IT advice or support AbilityNet
Helpline 0800 048 7642.

Covid Resilience Grant Support -

www.highland.gov.uk/directory_record/1422811/supporting_community_resilience/category/155/grants_for_community_groups

HTSI Community Group Helpline

Telephone Number 01349 808022