

Community Resilience Group Weekly Briefing - 46 10 December 2021

Covid Update

Over the last 7 days there have been 608 new positive cases in Highland (to 09 December). This means the latest 7-day rate per 100,000 shows an increase from 237 per 100,000 as of 02 December to 258.2 per 100,000 as of 09 December.

What is noted this week, however, is that across Scotland there is an increase in the number of cases of the new variant Omicron. Extra caution is advised, as is sticking to the Scottish Government guidelines. Further advice in relation to this is found later in the briefing under the Scottish Government update and from Public Health Scotland.

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 6.8% on 07 December, the same rate as reported on 30 November.

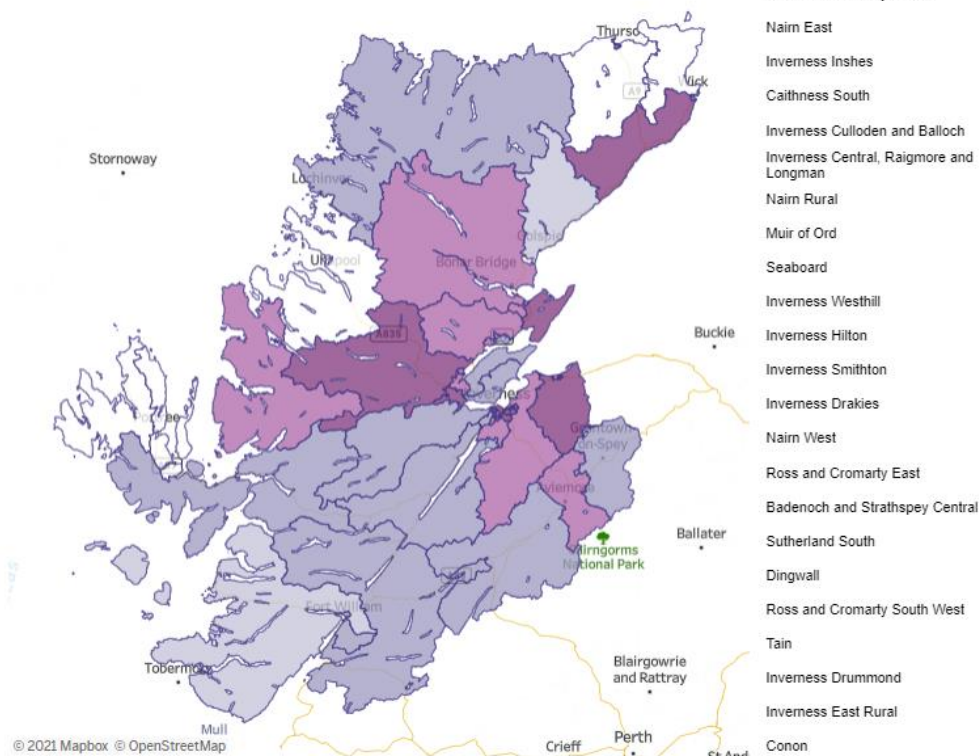
7 day positive cases in Highland based on people tested between 1 December 2021 and 7 December 2021

7 day positive cases	7 day positive rate per 100,000 population	7 day test positivity rate
608	258.3	6.8%

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 statements to the Scottish Parliament on Covid-19 on Tuesday 7 December 2021 and 10 December 2021.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-update-first-ministers-statement-7-december-2021/>

Key messages on 7 December included:

The First Minister announced that the new Covid Omicron variant is a "really concerning development" and urged people to take extra caution. She confirmed that current restrictions will remain in place, however it is vital at this stage to strengthen compliance with existing protections; the need for additional protections be reviewed on a daily basis due to the risk posed by the new variant.

- After a period of falling case numbers, Scotland saw an increase in cases in the under 60 age groups last week. More positively, the number of people in hospital with Covid, and the number in intensive care, has fallen further in the last week, however this should not give rise to complacency.
- The emergence of the Omicron variant is now an additional - and indeed very significant - cause for concern. In the days ahead, we expect to see a continued and potentially rapid rise in cases for Omicron to account for a rising share of overall cases. Health protection teams are working hard through contact tracing, testing and isolation to slow the spread of Omicron cases.
- The Scottish Government will strive to get the right balance between acting proportionately and acting preventatively to do what is necessary to keep the country as safe as possible.
- In line with the other UK nations, travel rules have been tightened. Anyone 12 years or over now required to take a COVID test before travelling to the UK from (outside the common travel area) in addition to the day 2 testing currently in place. Nigeria is added to the red list, making 11 countries on the red list.
- The Cabinet agreed to keep in force all existing protections, but also agreed that it is vital to strengthen compliance with these protections. It is time for all of us to go back to basics and ensure that we are taking all of the steps required to minimise the risk of getting or spreading this virus.

Everyone is being asked to make an extra effort to heighten compliance with current protections now through into January:

- LFD Test regularly, on any occasion before socialising, or mixing with people from other households.
- Wear face coverings on public transport, in shops, and when moving about in hospitality settings.
- Keep windows open when you're meeting people indoors.
- Follow all advice on hygiene.
- Working from home where at all possible. Employers are asked to enable employees to do so.

Vaccination remains vitally important:

- Additional vaccinators are being identified and trained. We have added the equivalent of 300 additional full-time staff to the vaccination workforce so far.
- We are also working to further increase vaccination capacity through increased use of drop-in centres and mobile vaccination units.
- We are also working to increase demand by encouraging even more people to take up the offer of vaccine.
- Anyone over 40 who has had their second vaccination 12 or more weeks ago is being encouraged to get a booster jab.

Testing and isolation:

- If you have symptoms of Covid, please get a PCR test and self-isolate until you get the result.
- If your result is negative, you can end isolation at that point if you are double vaccinated. If positive, you must isolate for the full ten days.
- Household contacts of close contacts suspected of Omicron variant will be asked to isolate and seek a PCR test. If positive, isolate for 10 days **(as of 11 December this has been revised to apply to contacts of any Covid variant)**.
- Everyone is asked to do a LFD test before mixing with other households, including visiting others, going to social places such as pubs and restaurants and shopping.
- Regular testing helps early detection of the virus, remembering that we could be carriers of the virus without having symptoms.

By slowing the spread of the virus in general and Omicron in particular, we give ourselves the best possible chance of enjoying a Christmas that is more normal, but also safe - and of avoiding a new year hangover of spiralling cases.

Update 10 December 2021

In a briefing today, the First Minister outlined new rules around self-isolating.

As Omicron is becoming dominant, The First Minister has today announced a national policy change to isolation advice that will set out that:

- all positive cases must isolate for 10 days
- all fully vaccinated adults and under 18 non-household close contacts are required to isolate until they receive a negative PCR test – partially or unvaccinated adults should isolate for 10 days;

- all **household close contacts** are required to isolate for 10 days with no exemptions for age, vaccination status or a negative PCR test.

This third point is a departure from pre-Omicron isolation policy and will come into place from Saturday 11 December. **This national guidance change will supersede any Omicron specific advice that has been in place.**

Public Health Scotland issues a request for the public to defer Christmas parties – separate advice from Public Health Scotland is attached with the briefing.

Covid-19 Testing

The chart below provides a helpful overview of the types of tests available.

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 by calling 0800 028 2816 or online <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/test-and-protect/coronavirus-covid-19-how-to-do-a-pcr-test-at-home>.

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.

Community Testing - Assistive Outreach: a new approach to Community Testing for those without symptoms (Asymptomatic)

An additional strand to support the asymptomatic community testing programme has been introduced. To date, three Council mobile units have been used in communities across Highland to support the testing programme. Over time we have seen the number of people coming forward for testing decline, but the number of people asking to take away test kits for use at home has increased.

In a change of approach, the Scottish Government has asked NHS and their partners to introduce Assertive Outreach – a more direct approach to engaging with communities in areas of enduring transmission, areas where testing may be low, and having a presence in public spaces such as shopping centres and railway and bus stations. We will be offering free lateral flow test kits and testing advice. During Week commencing 13 December there will be a presence in the following public spaces:

Next week, our schedule for Assistive Outreach will be in the following public spaces, 13 to 17 December:

DATE	OUTREACH TIMES	AREA
13/12/2021	AM	Dingwall High Street
13/12/2021	AM	Nairn High Street
14/12/2021	PM	Dingwall High Street
14/12/2021	PM	Nairn High Street
15/12/2021	AM	Inverness Town Centre
15/12/2021	AM	Inverness Railway Station
16/12/2021	PM	Inverness Town Centre
16/12/2021	PM	Inverness Victorian Market
17/12/2021	AM/PM	Inverness Town Centre/Victorian Market
17/12/2021	AM/PM	Inverness Railway Station
17/12/2021	AM/PM	Inverness Bus Station

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>

From 30 November those aged 16 and 17 in Scotland are to be offered a second dose of the vaccine.

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 information on vaccination scams and other Covid-19 related scams, visit the Trading Standards Scotland website <https://www.tsscot.co.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-scams/>.

Winter Readiness

A separate briefing has been prepared and is attached with key information and contacts that may be of interest to resilience groups. It includes a quick guide with contact numbers – also attached separately for handy reference.

For anyone in need of urgent Covid-19 related support over the festive period, such as emergency food supplies or prescription collection or other emergency support arising from the need to self-isolate, the Council's free helpline for Covid-19 will remain open over the festive period:

Tel. 0300 303 1362.

This helpline is available Monday – Friday 9-5pm. It is available for emergency calls out with this time and this includes the Christmas period and bank holidays.

SSEN Distribution to provide enhanced support to customers and communities affected by Storm Arwen (Press Release attached)

SSEN to voluntarily increase statutory compensation payments by 20%, recognising the exceptional impact of the once-in-a generation event. Customers will receive up to an additional £210 depending on how long they were without power.

An additional £500,000 will be added to the 2022 SSEN Resilient Communities Fund, supporting more community resilience projects across the north of Scotland.

Met Office Weather Warning for 11-13 December

Very strong winds are expected to affect northwestern Scotland for a short time on Sunday night and early Monday morning. Weather warnings have been issued for medium impact Yellow Warnings of Wind for the Western Isles, coastal parts of Highland, Orkney and Shetland for this period:

- A Yellow Warning of Wind for Western Isles, Tiree, Coll, Skye, and coastal areas of the northwestern mainland. Valid 21:00 Sunday to 0600 Monday, assessed as low likelihood of medium impacts
- A Yellow Warning of Wind for the coastal parts of Caithness and Sutherland, Orkney and Shetland. Valid 00:00 to 12:00 Monday

The picture currently is currently described as very uncertain with low forecaster confidence, This confidence will improve over successive days, please see the Met Office [website](#) for full details.

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