

Community Resilience Group Weekly Briefing - 53 4 February 2022

Covid Update

Over the last 7 days there have been 835 new positive PCR cases in Highland up to 03 February compared to 929 positive PCR cases up 27 January. The seven-day rate for this period is 354.7 per 100,00 population, compared to 394.6 per 100,000 population a week ago. From January, the Scottish Government made changes to their published data in line with their recent guidance that those without symptoms testing positive with a lateral flow device no longer need to get a confirmatory PCR test, meaning that current daily numbers capture fewer positive cases than before.

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 seven-day PCR test positivity rate on was 13.8% on 1 February compared to 13.2% on 25 January.

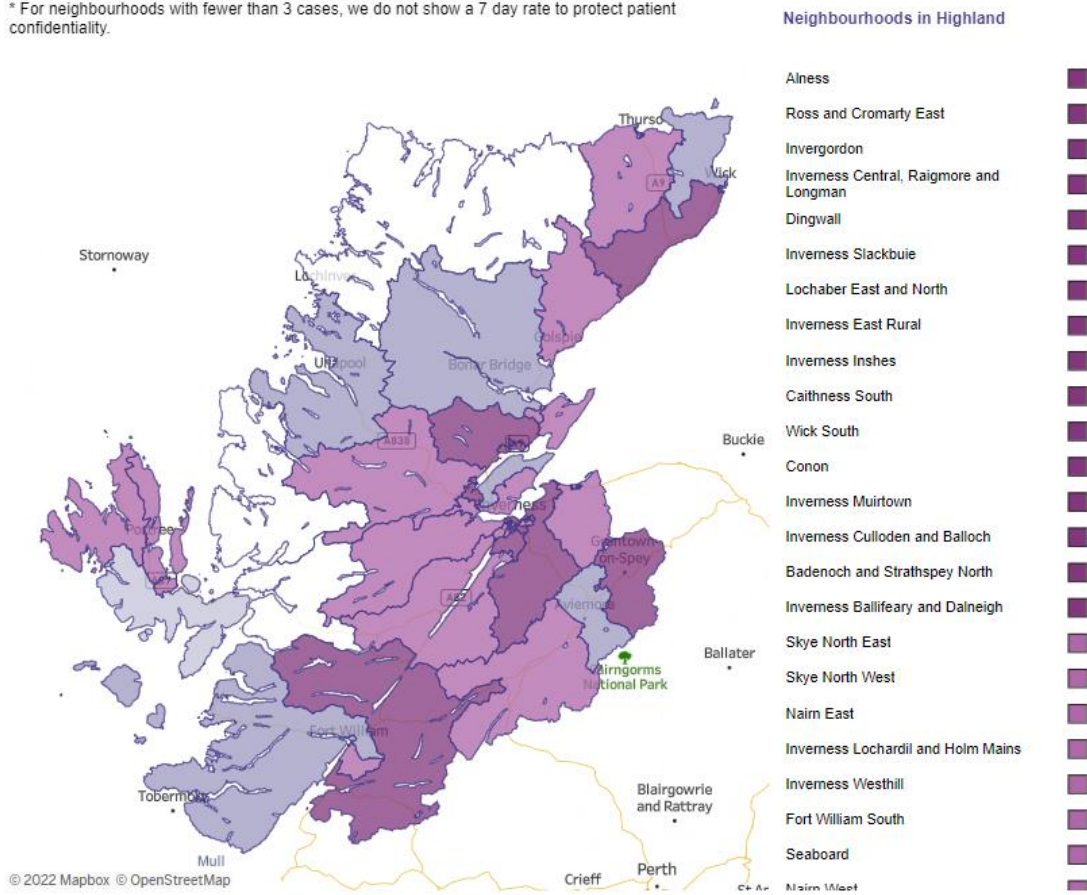
7 day positive PCR cases in Highland based on people tested between 26 January 2022 and 1 February 2022

7 day positive PCR cases	7 day positive PCR rate per 100,000 population	7 day PCR test positivity rate
835	354.7	13.8%

7 day positive PCR rate per 100,000 population



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



Scottish Government Guidance on Coronavirus (COVID-19): staying safe and protecting others

The Scottish Government revised its rules and guidance on how to stay safe and help prevent the spread of COVID-19 on 31 January 2022. You can find the most recent version here:

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

Scottish Government messages this week

The First Minister gave a Coronavirus (COVID-19) statement to the Scottish Parliament on 1 February 2022

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-update-first-ministers-statement-1-february-2022/>

Key Points include:

The First Minister gave a further update on the levels of and trends in COVID infections.

The most recent data continues to give grounds for optimism - the current situation is much less severe than originally thought; although case numbers remain high and the significant fall in the first three weeks of January has levelled off.

- The biggest increase in the past week was in young people – 7% in the under 15s, although significantly lower than the 41% rise in that age group recorded in the previous week.
- Case numbers are still falling in all other age groups, although more slowly than was the case seven days ago.
- Public Health Scotland plans to report on Covid reinfections; reinfections are not currently included in 'new cases'. This will bring Scotland in line with similar reporting in England.
- Hospital occupancy has also fallen and the number of people with COVID in intensive care has reduced.
- These improving trends are a result of booster vaccination, the proportionate measures introduced in December, and the willingness of the public to adapt behaviour to stem transmission.
- This has enabled the Scottish Government, over the past two weeks, to remove most additional measures introduced in December.
- Guidance on home working has been updated to enable a partial return to the office, with hybrid working where appropriate.
- Requirements for overseas travel will also be eased. Fully vaccinated travellers will no longer need to take a test on their arrival into Scotland.
- It was confirmed that the remaining baseline measures for COVID protections would remain place for the next three weeks when they will be reviewed. These include:

- the COVID certification scheme, and the requirements to collect customer contact details in settings such as hospitality;
 - to wear face coverings in many indoor public places and on public transport, and follow hygiene advice;
 - for businesses and service providers to have regard to guidance and take all reasonably practical steps to minimise the incidence and spread of infection on their premises:
 - The public will continue to be asked to take lateral flow tests before mixing with people from other households.
- Revised guidance has been published, which effectively returns schools and early years settings to the situation before the emergence of Omicron. This eases requirements for bubbles or groupings within schools, and it is less restrictive in its advice on visitors to school and on school trips.
 - We have not yet reached the stage when face coverings no longer need to be worn in class rooms, although this may be close
 - Flu vaccinations have now resumed for higher risk groups, e.g. the over 65s.
 - COVID vaccination has started for 5 - 11 year olds at the highest clinical risk and also 5 - 11 year olds who are household contacts of someone who is immunosuppressed.
 - Booster invitations are now being sent to all 18 - 59 year olds who are eligible for the booster but haven't yet had it.

Covid-19 Testing

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 7 – 11 February for those without symptoms (Asymptomatic):

The community testing programme offers rapid COVID-19 tests for people without symptoms. Next week, there are no plans to deploy our mobile testing units to carry out assisted testing. Instead, we continue with our programme of Outreach Delivery, sending small teams to various locations throughout the Highland area to provide testing advice and to hand out test kits.

LFD Kits free to collect - Dates, times, and locations are as follows;

Monday 7 February	10am – 12 noon	Alness High Street, seating area off Bank Lane
	1pm – 4pm	Invergordon Library, High Street
Tuesday 8 February	10am – 12.30 pm	Fort William High Street
	1pm – 3pm	
Wednesday 9 February	9am – 12.30pm	Dingwall High Street, outside museum
	1pm – 4pm	
Thursday 10 February	8.30am – 12.30pm	Inverness Retail Park, Eastfield way
	1pm – 4pm	
	9.30am – 12 noon	Helmsdale – Bridge Picnic area car park
	1pm – 4pm	Dornoch Castle Street
	8.30am – 12.30pm	Nairn High Street
	1pm – 4pm	
Friday 11 February	8.30am – 12.30pm	Inverness High Street, Market Brae Steps
	1pm – 4pm	
	8.30am – 12.30pm	Inverness Inshes Retail Park
	1pm – 4pm	
	8.30am – 12 noon	Invergordon Library, High Street
	1pm – 4pm	Alness High Street, seating area off Bank Lane

For those with 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 119 if you can't book a test online.

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 clinics in Highland, including drop-in clinics and GP practices supporting the booster roll-out, please check the link below. There are also FAQs on how vaccinations are being delivered in the NHS Highland area. <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 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/>.

Community Council elections in Highland

Following the close of nominations at 12 noon on Thursday 1 February 2022, the following 12 Community Councils in the Highland area have now formed uncontested.

3 Community Council's did not establish as they failed to attract half the maximum membership.

You can find further details in the following link to a Highland Council press release https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/14341/community_council_elections.

Post Office card account customers to receive letters about their closure

The Department for Work and Pensions has started sending letters to customers who are receiving benefits or pensions payments via their Post Office card account (POCa). The following information may be of use for user services receiving any enquiries, please cascade as appropriate:

People are being informed the POCa service is closing and being asked for their bank account details so their benefits and pensions can be paid into this alternative account.

For those who don't have a bank account, they will automatically be moved over to a new system called the new Payment Exception Service (PES). This will deliver benefits using a digital voucher. People can choose whether they receive the voucher via a text message, an email or a re-useable plastic card.

People moved over to the new PES can continue to use the Post Office to collect their money with the added benefit of being able to access their money from over 28,000 PayPoint outlets across the country.

The Department will look to move everyone off the Post Office card account by Summer 2022.

There is a dedicated DWP customer service centre helpline for those who need help and guidance. Details are below:

Telephone: 0800 085 7133

Textphone: 0800 085 7146

<https://www.postoffice.co.uk/post-office-card-account/important-changes>

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