

Here is the brief for Tuesday 22 December 2020.

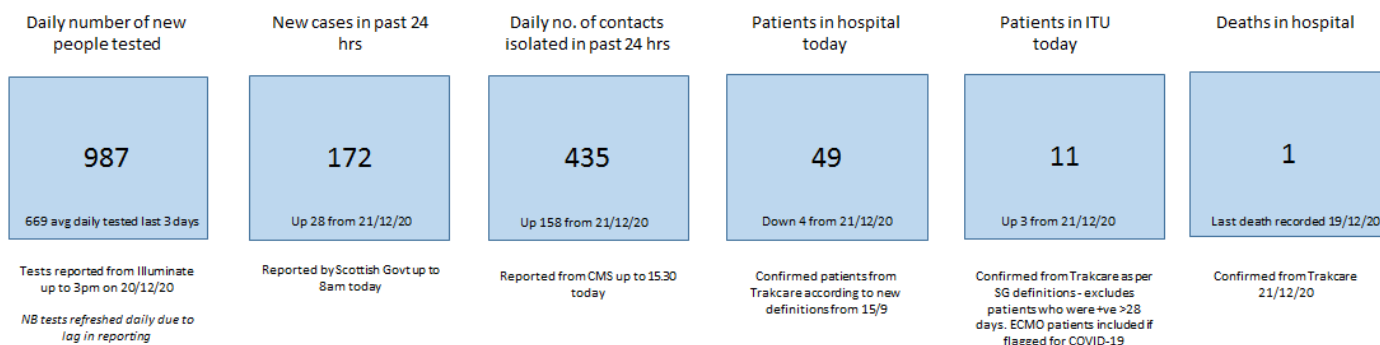
Restrictions – current and future – and what they mean for you The decision to move most of the country into Level 4 restrictions from Boxing Day has naturally been at the forefront of all our minds in recent days. It is worth remembering that both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire are currently in Level 3. This means there should be **no travel between the two areas**, except in very limited circumstances. We all need to stay in our local areas for things like leisure trips or shopping – lets support our local businesses (while we still able to do so) after what has been a very difficult year for them.

Level 4 restrictions & Hospital visiting The move to Level 4 restrictions on Boxing Day means we will only be able to arrange **essential visits** from 26 December. Examples of essential visits include but are not limited to:

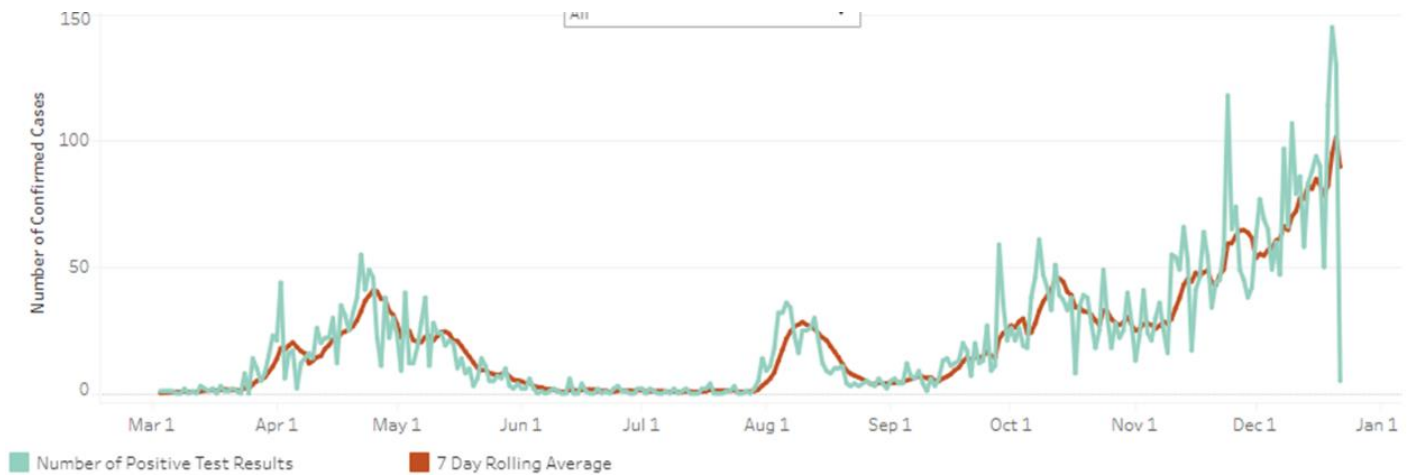
- A birth partner supporting someone who is pregnant during hospital visits
- For a person receiving end-of-life care – we expect this to be defined as flexibly and compassionately as possible, to support patients at the end of life spending meaningful time with their loved ones in their final days and weeks
- to support someone with a mental health issue such as dementia, a learning disability or autism where not being present would cause the patient to be distressed
- to accompany a child in hospital.

This will apply to all hospitals in Grampian and will be the position until the restriction levels are changed. The visiting team are providing support as required.

Grampian figures Here are the figures for today. Click [here](#) to see all the data published by Public Health Scotland, which includes neighbourhood figures for all local authority areas in Scotland.



Positive cases of COVID-19 have been rising in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire since November. In the second week of December the rate per 100,000 doubled in Aberdeen City, reflecting more closely the position seen in central parts of Scotland. This increase has continued, and with rising test positivity and the R rate, all indicators point to a sustained accelerating situation. This is illustrated by the epidemiological curve shown below and reflected in the high levels of occupancy in our acute and community hospitals and care homes.



COVID-19 vaccine update We have two key updates to share with you:

- Vaccination teams must follow the vaccine ordering and delivery schedule carefully bearing in mind the cut off times for orders. Pharmacy has continued to receive late orders and requests for supplies of vaccine out of the order schedule. Under normal circumstances, Pharmacy tries to be as flexible as possible, however, this vaccine is different to any other medicine currently supplied in NHS Grampian. Once orders have been received and collated in Pharmacy for the current vaccine, nationally agreed good practice is followed using a batch process which requires materials (worksheets, packaging, sundries and labels) to be prepared in advance of product being removed from the freezer before packing down into smaller quantities. Pharmacy only has one minute to extract the stock from the freezer followed by a packing down process inside a walk-in refrigerator. Please assist us by following the schedule, thereby ensuring we are able to distribute the vaccine as efficiently and effectively as possible.
- If you have submitted a clinic appointment request, please be assured you will get a response from the booking team. Please do not visit or call clinics in your area as this will make additional work for the teams working there – and in-person visits, when you do not have an appointment, will impact on the physical distancing arrangements. More information about the vaccination programme is available [here](#).

Annual leave 2020/2021 A message from Tom Power (Director of People & Culture) was circulated earlier, detailing arrangements to carry forward annual leave, up to the equivalent of an employee’s weekly contracted hours - from this year into 2021/2022. All staff are encouraged to read this carefully to understand what it will mean for them. It remains the default position that we should all endeavour to use our annual leave by the end of March 2021. The carry-over will only apply in areas where it will be difficult to ensure staff can be given their full annual leave entitlement. Any requests to carry over leave in this way should be made by the staff member to their manager by 13th January 2021 to support planning/stability of services. This applies to staff covered by the Agenda for Change agreement and the Executive and Senior Manager cohort. Arrangements with regard to the carry forward of annual leave remain unchanged for Medical Staff.

How do face masks/other PPE affect your skin? The Occupational Health Service know many of you may be experiencing skin or respiratory problems associated with prolonged use of surgical face masks (FRSM), FFP3 respirators, and other PPE. There is limited information about the extent of these problems, and we would be grateful if you could participate in a brief survey (3-5 minutes) to help us identify how many staff are affected and possible contributing factors. The information provided will be used to help in the development of a program to minimise the health impacts of PPE use. We invite all staff to complete this survey, regardless of whether they have experienced any difficulties. Please follow [this link](#) for our survey. You may use your smartphone or



tablet using the QR code shown but the best user experience will however be with a computer. This anonymous survey is conducted in collaboration with colleagues from the dermatology departments from Stanford University and Cleveland Clinic. If you have any queries, please contact Dr Markus Steiner on markus.steiner@nhs.scot.

Use of eye protection Current national guidance states staff caring for patients on medium risk (amber) pathway should wear eye protection if they assess there is a risk of blood or body fluid splashes / spray. This cannot always be anticipated in relation to onset of COVID-19 symptoms. All staff should now consider eye protection as part of their usual PPE ensemble whilst providing direct patient care within the amber pathway. By reducing unanticipated COVID-19 exposure events, it will help us to maintain safe staffing ratios by minimising staff contacts required to isolate.

Contact tracing self service As our contact tracers are getting increasingly busy it is going to be really helpful if any COVID-19 cases who receive a text message informing them that they have a positive result would complete all their contact details and places they have visited as soon as possible using the link to the self-service portal contained in the message. This greatly helps our contact tracers to complete cases more speedily as well as taking less time for the person to have to speak on the phone.

Thought for the day We hope you will forgive us in presenting this in two parts today, as there are a couple of things we really want to acknowledge. Firstly, the item on annual leave. One of the many things the pandemic has taken away from us is the ability to holiday as we would normally. We cannot meet up with many family or friends, explore other parts of the UK, or even jet off to sunnier climes. As a result, you might be left wondering 'what's the point?'. It remains vitally important to take time off work. None of us can give of our best if we are exhausted, so yet again, we are forced to rethink and get creative. Going for walks, reading, listening to our favourite music, catching up on all those Netflix programmes we meant to watch, phoning friends or even writing to them – all things we can still do. Most importantly, we all owe it to ourselves to properly disconnect. I am certainly guilty of sneaking a peek at my emails when I'm off and it does not make for a restful activity. Trust your colleagues to deal with things until you return, as you do for them.

Secondly, I wanted to talk about 'We're going on a bear hunt' by Michael Rosen (stick with me here). Any of you who have had small children in your home over the last 30 years will be familiar with this tale, but for those of you who don't know it, a family set off on a bear hunt and are faced with increasingly tricky and frightening obstacles. At every obstacle, the refrain is the same:

"We can't go over it. We can't go under it. Oh no! We have to go through it".

For me, this sums up our experience this year. There is no shortcut. We have to go through it, we are still going through it. We have all been changed by what we have experienced. We grieve for the things that should have been, possibly even for the people we have lost. We have found reserves of strength none of us knew we had. We have had days where we wondered if we could really keep going. There will come a time when we are looking back on this experience, instead of living through it. Until then, keep going, in the knowledge that you are doing an amazing and difficult thing.

Items for the brief? If you have something you would like to be considered for inclusion in this brief, please send this to gram.communications@nhs.scot. Messages should be clearly marked as 'Daily brief – for consideration'. Please be aware that space is limited, and items are prioritised based on subject matter and relevance to all staff groups.