

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Core Brief



Information for staff across health and social care

Wednesday 25 March 2020

Issue 2

Latest News

Published test results yesterday Tuesday 24 March showed that a total of 9,968 Scottish tests had been concluded. Of these 9,384 tests were confirmed negative with 584 tests positive.

Latest figures today 25 March show that 22 patients who tested positive have now died. The Scottish Government is working hard to update the latest figures for test results. These will be available later on the Scottish Government Coronavirus (COVID-19) page at www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19.

New Social Distancing Measures

The First Minister has called for an immediate stop to public gatherings of more than two people in Scotland in a bid to flatten the curve of Coronavirus (COVID-19) spread and to protect the NHS. Following a meeting of the UK Government's COBR committee, an effective ban is in place on gatherings in public places, excluding household groups or in a work-related capacity.

In addition – as the First Minister had set out previously – all non-essential shops should be closed, as well as public spaces such as libraries, communal parks and playgrounds, and places of worship. The ban extends to ceremonial social events, such as weddings and christenings, with the exception of funerals which will be restricted to immediate family only. The First Minister was clear that these decisions are not taken lightly, 'but are essential for the protection of all of us.' From last night, the only permissible reasons to leave your home are as follows:

- to shop for basic necessities and that should be limited to once a day;
- to take exercise once a day - but alone or with your own household, not in groups;
- for medical reasons or to care for an 'at risk' person; and
- to travel to essential work if that cannot be done at home. Further guidance to employers will be provided shortly.

In agreement with Police Scotland, officers will be permitted to deploy 'soft enforcement' of these measures, prior to the Scottish Government taking legal powers from Thursday. The First Minister reiterated guidance for people to stay home and only venture outside when absolutely necessary. In line with existing advice, non-essential retail units are now required to close and shopping for basic necessities kept to a minimum.

At Risk Groups

Around 200,000 people who have specific forms of cancer, severe respiratory conditions, rare diseases, have received organ transplants, are on immunosuppression therapies or who are pregnant and have congenital heart disease are being asked to self-isolate within their homes. These people are at particularly high risk from Coronavirus (COVID-19) and this measure is intended to safeguard them and their families. People in these groups will be contacted in the next few days to explain what they and their families are being asked to do. They will also be provided with information on how to keep themselves safe as well as providing support for healthcare, access to medicines, services, food and supplies.

Other People at Risk

While the focus, for clinical reasons, has been on the high risk groups, broader support will be needed for other groups who have long-term clinical conditions and others who are at risk for reasons of finance, living circumstances or social factors. Many more people may need assistance and work will be taken forward with resilience partners in the coming days. This will include others in society that require special support in the current situation, including: homeless people; rough sleepers; asylum seekers and refugees; and others. Support will be provided to frontline homelessness services to help them support rough sleepers and people in emergency accommodation to self-isolate.

Problem Alcohol/Drug use

The Scottish Drugs Forum has developed national guidance on business continuity for the delivery of drug services. This was issued on 19 March. Further guidance is being developed by Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems on continuity for people with alcohol problems, which will be issued in the coming days.

Testing

The Cabinet Secretary has announced that prioritised testing for coronavirus (COVID-19) will allow key health and social care workers to return to work. The Scottish Government has published guidance for NHS Scotland to prioritise testing to enable health and social care staff to get back to work, based on the pressures local boards are facing. As testing capacity increases, this will be extended to other key workers.

Access to Protective Equipment

The Scottish Government and NHS Scotland is working hard to quantify Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) requirements across the system with a particular focus on the Scottish Ambulance Service and social care. All NHS Boards have received supplies of appropriate protective equipment, including facemasks, aprons, gloves and goggles, to distribute to GP practices as a precautionary measure. NHS National Services are keeping the position with supplies under constant review and work is ongoing to ensure stocks are maintained in order to continue to protect those who may need it.

Mental Health

It is important that people with mental health problems get the right help, at the right time, and in the right place. Throughout this time, some people may be anxious or experience

emotional distress. The Scottish Government and NHS Scotland are working with our partners, including NHS 24 through NHS inform, to provide good quality, up-to-date and trusted guidance for people who need to self-isolate.

Isolation and distancing will have an impact on the mental well-being of the population and so mental health support is being developed to help individuals maintain good mental health. It is also recognised that there are specific groups who are more at risk as a result of Coronavirus (COVID-19) and work is being undertaken with our partners to ensure they are cared for and supported. Enhancing the support available will be key and we are building on existing services such as the 'Breathing Space' helpline to ensure people are getting the help they need, when they need it.

Health and Social Care Workforce

Staff across health and social care continue to work incredibly hard at this time of unprecedented challenge. Their hard work, commitment and professionalism is to be admired and there is no doubt that they deserve our thanks. But staff also need to look after themselves. Our NHS Scotland and social care staff are being asked to work in unfamiliar settings. Many will be asked to learn new skills and to work in new roles. Many may be personally impacted by the virus and some will be caring for their own families. This is no small ask. Staff are being urged to take care of their basic needs – eat and drink regularly and healthily. Allow time for sleep, rest and respite between shifts. Engage in physical activity and always take regular breaks during shifts.

Community Pathway Hubs

Monday's Core Brief provided information on the setting up and resourcing of community assessment hubs. From 8.00 am on Monday, all NHS Boards had set up and resourced Community Hubs, with NHS Highland covering the three island NHS Boards. NHS 24 has made the necessary adjustments to its systems to connect with Community Hubs. The aim of the new hubs is to:

- help people get advice quickly, and be managed safely (where it is appropriate to do so) in their local community;
 - take triaging burden from General Practice and reduce the risk of individuals with symptoms visiting their GP practice; and
 - better manage demand and capacity through a whole-system approach.
-

Pregnant Women

Whilst current evidence does not seem to suggest that pregnant women are more susceptible to this virus than the general population, we do know that, in general, pregnant women are more susceptible to infection and therefore, as a precaution, pregnant women have been advised to take particular care to minimise their social contact. All pregnant women will continue to receive maternity care throughout their pregnancy but care may be offered in alternative sites or using phone or telehealth consulting where appropriate and to reduce the chance of infection.

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) has produced updated COVID-19 advice for pregnant women that pregnant women up to 28 weeks gestation, including healthcare workers, can continue working. This can be found at:

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/coronavirus-pregnancy>

Health Service Capacity

Delayed Discharge

We continue to work with health and social care partnerships to drive reductions in delayed discharges. The latest daily reporting shows a reduction of 257 delays since 4 March, representing good progress.

Staff Who Have Left the Service

Staff who have left their professional register within the last three years as a Registered Nurse, Midwife, paramedic, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, diagnostic or therapeutic radiographer, or as a biomedical scientist, are being urged to consider returning to work in NHS Scotland as a registered practitioner, on either a full-time or part-time basis, now or at any point over the coming months. Any contribution returning practitioners can make will be very welcome.

Students

The Government is also working closely with Higher Education Institutions, NHS Boards and others to consider what role students might be able to play. Plans for students will be set out in the coming days with an assurance that there will be no detriment to students' positions.

Recent News Releases

All news releases can be found on the Scottish Government website at: www.gov.scot/news.

[COVID-19 testing to get key workers back to work](#)

[Enhanced role for community pharmacists](#)

[Planning for Brexit](#)

[Increased support for social care](#)

[Support for business water bills](#)

[New NHS 24 arrangements](#)

Sources of Information

Information for the public on COVID-19, including stay at home advice for people who are self-isolating, can be found on NHS Inform at: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus>

Health Protection Scotland **guidance for healthcare workers and for non-healthcare settings** is continually being updated and added to. This can be found on the Health Protection Scotland website.

Resources

The public **Communications Toolkit**, resources and digital assets are continually being updated as the situation changes. These can be found on the NHS inform website. Please keep revisiting the site for the latest assets.

The information contained in this bulletin is accurate at the time of sending but, given the fast-moving nature of this situation, may change rapidly as new information becomes available.

