

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Core Brief

Information for staff across health and social care

Monday 23 March 2020

Latest News

Published test results today Monday 23 March show that a total of 9,264 Scottish tests have concluded. Of these 8,865 tests were confirmed negative with 499 tests positive. Fourteen people who had tested positive for coronavirus have sadly died.

Figures are updated and published at 2.00 pm every day on the Scottish Government Coronavirus (COVID-19) page at www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19.

Social Care at Heart of Response to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Councils have been asked to increase support for care at home, nursing homes and care homes to reduce delayed discharges and free up hospital beds. Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport Jeane Freeman has confirmed to COSLA that, subject to expenditure being aligned to local plans, the Scottish Government will meet additional costs to increase support and staff capacity in social care. The move aims to help the care system adapt to increased pressure placed on it by COVID -19, with many people requiring continued support for daily living, even if they have not contracted the virus.

Community Assessment Hubs

Patients with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms are now asked to dial NHS 24 on 111, day or night, if their symptoms worsen or do not improve after seven days. In addition, people are being asked not to call their GP or go to the surgery. If they require a sick note due to coronavirus, they will be able to get this from the NHS Inform website. This improvement provides patients with a straightforward dedicated route to clinical advice and support, as well as freeing up GP practices to treat and care for all non-COVID-19 health conditions.

Callers to the 111 helpline will be assessed and, if necessary, transferred to a local community hub staffed by clinicians from across the healthcare system to ensure patients get the best possible advice at the right time. Depending on their assessment, patients may be given advice to help them continue self-isolating at home or be given an appointment to attend a local assessment centre for further treatment.

NHS Inform's coronavirus webpage is still the fastest way for people to get the latest health advice and information. There is also a free NHS 24 helpline for people without symptoms looking for general information on coronavirus. For patients who do not have any coronavirus symptoms, they should continue to telephone their GP when open and not call NHS 24. In the out of hours period, when displaying symptoms other than coronavirus, people should only call 111 if you need urgent assessment and cannot wait until your GP is open.

Enhanced Role for Community Pharmacists

Community pharmacists are to perform an enhanced role during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Pharmacists will be able to support more patients, reducing the pressure on other parts of NHS Scotland through the extension of the Minor Ailment Service. The Scottish Government has also accelerated plans to expand access to Emergency Care Summary (ECS) data, which mainly contains medication information, to pharmacists.

NHS Boards have been asked to provide access to this information to pharmacists and pharmacy technicians working in communities. More than a thousand community pharmacies provide a range of NHS Pharmaceutical Care services on behalf of the NHS in Scotland.

Testing

Currently only high-risk (admitted) patients are being tested. This is partly because of laboratory capacity. Current capacity is limited, but it is our intention to increase this to 3,000 a day. This programme is being expanded to cover critical frontline NHS Scotland and social care staff, and workers in other critical areas. Guidance on this will be issued shortly. Surveillance testing is also being scaled up, which will give us a more accurate picture of how the infection is spreading in certain areas.

Protective Equipment

We recognise that staff across health and social care have concerns about the availability of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and are working to ensure staff have access to this where appropriate. NHS National Procurement is issuing a daily bulletin to NHS Boards and Local Authorities on supply issues.

Health Service Capacity

NHS Scotland is now on an emergency footing for at least the next three months. Our first goal is to double the **Intensive Care Unit (ICU) capacity** across Scotland. NHS Boards are working towards this by providing the necessary training for staff and by repurposing facilities.

Our contingency planning for the **supply of oxygen** both in hospital and in the community is in place. For example, we have ordered further new standard concentrators for use in the community, as well as further contingency to be called on if necessary.

Current **bed capacity** - NHS Boards are now taking all necessary steps to have available 3,000 free beds to cope with COVID-19. To achieve this, our normal programme of non-urgent elective operations has now been suspended and we are working to reduce delayed discharges by 400 by end March. This should free up certain staff for redeployment and guidance has been issued to NHS Boards on this

We are also looking at backfill posts, with a specific focus on encouraging and supporting **retired staff** to return to the workforce. Chief Nursing Officer Fiona McQueen has published Guidance on returning to registered professional practice to help with patient care in light of developments relating to coronavirus (COVID-19).

Social Care

Extensive work is already underway with our partners to put in place arrangements to increase social **care workforce capacity**. We have approved a range of immediate changes to the Scottish Social Services Council's approach to workforce regulation, which will support social services providers in focusing on their response to the pandemic.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport wrote to the social care sector on 13 March with updated Health Protection Scotland guidance. The Chief Medical Officer has also developed targeted and clinical advice for nursing and residential care residents for Coronavirus (COVID-19). We are exploring the scope to use social workers and other health professionals employed by public bodies.

School Closures and Key Workers

Precise arrangements for the **children of key workers** will depend on decisions made by local authorities. However, Local Authorities should be putting in place provision to ensure children of key workers have continuing access to appropriate learning and childcare. Keyworkers have been defined as:

- Health and care workers;
- Energy suppliers;
- Staff providing childcare for other key workers;
- Fire, police and prison workers; and
- Other workers without whom there could be a significant impact on Scotland.

While many people will believe they are a key worker – and many working across health and social care will be - if your staff can work from home then you should encourage them to do so.

Advice for Parents and Carers

Advice for parents and carers on managing the impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on their child's learning and family life is now available. Following school closures, a new hub of information has been created on parentclub.scot covering health information, advice on how to talk about Coronavirus (COVID-19) and ideas on helping children through this time. In addition; councils and head teachers can also advise parents and carers on the continued provision of education and childcare for key workers.

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.