

Here is the brief for Friday 6 August 2021.

Self-isolation for health & social care staff By now you will all be aware of the changes to the self-isolation policy for close contacts, due to come into force from Monday. Implementation of these changes in health & social care is subject to further clinical guidance from Public Health Scotland. For the time being, we have been asked to continue following the existing policy. **However, Scottish Government have confirmed that, from Monday, there will be no requirement for services to be 'in extremis' before they can ask staff to return to work.** The rules health & social care staff are expected to follow, in this event, are different from those applying to the general public, as follows:

- The individual is fully vaccinated, defined as at least two weeks (14 days) post a MHRA, EMA or FDA approved vaccine at point of exposure
- **The individual is, and remains, asymptomatic**
- The individual only returns to work if they **do not have** on-going household exposure
- The individual undertakes initial PCR testing and the result is negative
- The individual has a negative LFD result prior to starting work **each day** up until day 10 following the day of the last exposure
- All negative test results should be reported to the individual's line manager **as well as** logging them [through the NSS portal](#)
- The individual continues to adhere with infection prevention and control (IPC) and relevant personal protective equipment (PPE).

Anyone identified as a close contact must commence their self-isolation immediately. All the above conditions must be met to support the return of an identified close contact to the workplace before their isolation period is complete

It remains the case that anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 MUST self-isolate for 10 days.

Change is in the air The removal of almost all COVID-19 restrictions on Monday is a major change for all of us. With this in mind, we are turning the rest of the brief over to our Director of Public Health, Susan Webb:

The lifting of most legal COVID-19 restrictions was announced this week with a significant note of caution. Most of the surveillance indicators that we rely upon point to an improving situation, but we remain in a situation of sustained high community transmission. There are many factors at play, and we are unsure what impact the return to school, workplaces, and further easing of restrictions may have. It is because of this that the situation remains fragile and consequently, difficult to predict. The risks have not gone away.

Our experiences over the past 18 months have changed us all. From a public health perspective, who would have thought that there would be so many people at home who have become so knowledgeable about infection control, epidemiology, immunology, behavioural science?

There is a strong sense that we need to move on; in that well-used phrase 'live with the virus'. It feels the right time to be thinking in this way particularly as we move closer to population immunity thanks to vaccinations. We are also well prepared through surveillance systems, a testing infrastructure, contact tracing and support for isolation. The announcement this week to extend vaccination to 16 and 17 year olds gives further hope for widespread immunity.

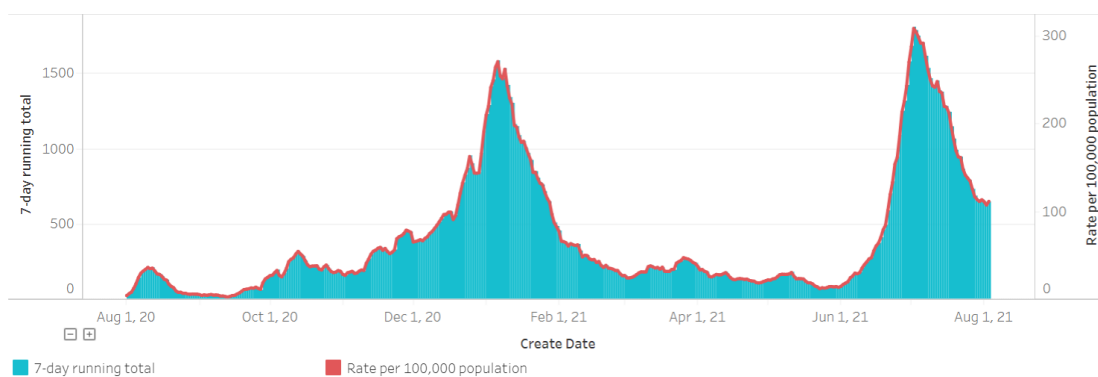
Careful, cautious, sensible These are the watchwords to remember. There has never been a more important time to continue basic actions to reduce risks. It is no understatement to say that the individual behaviours of our population have meant we are in a more sustainable and hopeful position today. Many surveys indicate that people will continue with basic protective measures until we are in a more secure position. That's what I want to encourage – for a little while longer - not permanently.

So as things are changing, here are the things that can make all the difference:

- Wear a face mask in crowded situations and settings (don't leave home without it)
- Use LFD testing before you go to places where the risk of transmission is high (visiting vulnerable people; going to crowded places, where ventilation is poor)
- Take part in the staff twice-weekly asymptomatic testing programme. Encourage friends and family to test twice a week too – they can collect kits from local pharmacies or have them delivered to their home.
- Get vaccinated – the most important thing of all to bring about a normal way of life
- Wash your hands frequently – it protects you from more than COVID-19

Things you may not have thought about! The requirement for physical distancing is removed in most places **but** the definition of being a close contact has not. This means if you are within 2 metres of someone who has tested positive, for longer than 15 minutes, you will be asked to self-isolate and get a PCR test.

Is our corner still turned on COVID in Grampian? This week we have seen a slow reduction on case numbers although the last two days may be pointing more towards a plateau (a situation similar at national level across Scotland).



Public health response Our surveillance work continues relentlessly so that we can act quickly on signals and changes. This guides us and informs our health protection response. The big things we are focusing on right now are:

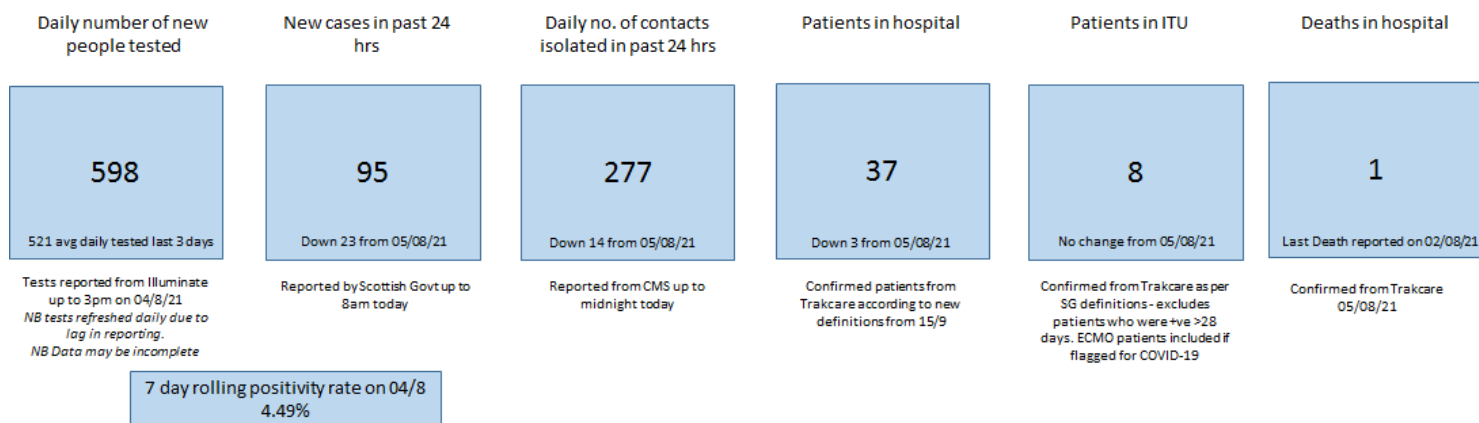
- Return to schools: communicating with parents as policy is announced and what it means for them, particularly testing, face coverings, ventilation, and vaccination
- Promoting 'Risk of exposure' testing – going out: get tested and helping people get into a regular habit for LFD testing
- Surveillance testing amongst general health and social care workers

- Outbreak response particularly in vulnerable settings such as care homes

And of course, providing practical support as the detailed guidance is published following the removal of legal restrictions.

Our life beyond zero Is our way of life really defined by numbers? Of course not. We have moved on and the announcements this week indicated significant steps towards doing the things we have missed. Our continued good progress is dependent upon our response to these changes – don't get carried away with the victory cries just yet. Be careful, cautious, and sensible.

Grampian data Here is the local update for today, including the 7-day rolling positivity rate. As a reminder, this rate is arrived at by dividing the number of positive tests in the past 7 days by the number of tests carried out in the past 7 days. Repeat tests are included in both categories. The figure for the "daily number of new people tested" is only for the number of tests for people who have not been tested previously.



A national update is available on the [Public Health Scotland daily dashboard](#).

PPE 3 week look ahead:

PPE Summary - Predicted Equipment Remaining at the end of each week

	FFP3 Mask	type IIR mask	Covid Gowns	Theatre Gowns	Visors + Goggles	Aprons	Gloves
August 2, 2021	248,982	155,748	8,914	5,786	30,597	928,234	2,628,307
August 9, 2021	250,555	152,996	8,908	6,137	30,754	928,234	2,628,307
August 16, 2021	252,127	150,244	8,902	6,489	30,910	928,234	2,628,307
August 23, 2021	253,700	147,492	8,896	6,840	31,067	928,234	2,628,307

■ Stock < 0
 ■ Stock <= 2 Days
 ■ Stock <= 5 Days
 ■ Stock > 5 Days

Tune of the day If it's not too 'on the nose' we leave you today with [Changes by David Bowie](#). The brief will be back on Monday, if you're working this weekend, stay safe, and we hope you all get a little time to rest and recharge.

Get in touch! If you've got a question, an item to share with people working in health & social care, or just want to suggest a tune of the day, we want to hear from you! Drop us a line via gram.communications@nhs.scot.