

Here is the brief for Wednesday 20 January 2021.

Twice weekly testing Staff are reminded of the importance of carrying out their twice weekly lateral flow tests, even after you have been vaccinated. There is currently no evidence that being vaccinated prevents you from transmitting the virus to others, therefore regular testing and upload of results after each and every test to the national portal at www.covidtestingportal.scot remains critical in our fight against spread of the virus.

The Interim deputy Chief Medical Officer, Dr Nicola Steedman, has posted a video message that gives more detail on the importance of these tests, you can view this [here](#) (this is a Twitter link but you do not require an account to be able to view the video).

Do your Lateral Flow Test at home – Please! If you are someone who is being offered regular testing with the Lateral Flow Device the way you can dispose of the used device varies. If you do the test at home and it is negative the device can immediately be discarded into your normal household waste. If the test is positive the device should be put into a separate plastic bag and left there for 72 hours, after which the device, still in its bag, can be disposed of into your household waste.

If, on the other hand you were to perform the test in one of our hospitals you are not permitted to dispose of the device in either the orange or the black waste stream. This is because the device contains a chemical element prohibited in the orange stream, and potentially infected material that shouldn't be put in the black waste stream. So if you were to do the test in the hospital you would have to contact waste manager Neil Duncan (neil.duncan3@nhs.scot) in advance to arrange pick up and disposal of the device. For this reason it is strongly advised that you should carry out these tests at home.

Can you help? In NHS Grampian we are looking for the following staff groups to volunteer to participate in the SIREN Study.

	Medical & Dental	Nursing & Midwifery	AHP	Support Services	Other	Total
NHS Grampian	128	515	99	160	73	976

The SIREN study is a UK wide study being delivered across all four nations and seeks to understand if previous infection of COVID-19 protects individuals against future re-infection.

If you would like to take part in this study, you will need to be:

- A patient facing healthcare staff member who works in secondary care - this includes all staff who work in an area where patients are present.
- Willing to remain engaged with follow-up for one year, even if you move to another healthcare organisation.
- Able to attend the SIREN Hub (ARI concourse) for the duration of 12 months to give blood samples (monthly) and undergo a throat & nose swab (fortnightly)

You do not need to have been previously confirmed to have COVID-19 to take part. You can participate in the study whether you have had the COVID-19 vaccine or not.

If you are interested and want to find out more information or join the study, please contact the research team on: gram.NHSGSiren@nhs.scot

Acute Sector Update Acute sector interim deputy chief officer, Cameron Matthew has reflected on a tough start to the year and the inspiring efforts of our staff to care for our patients:

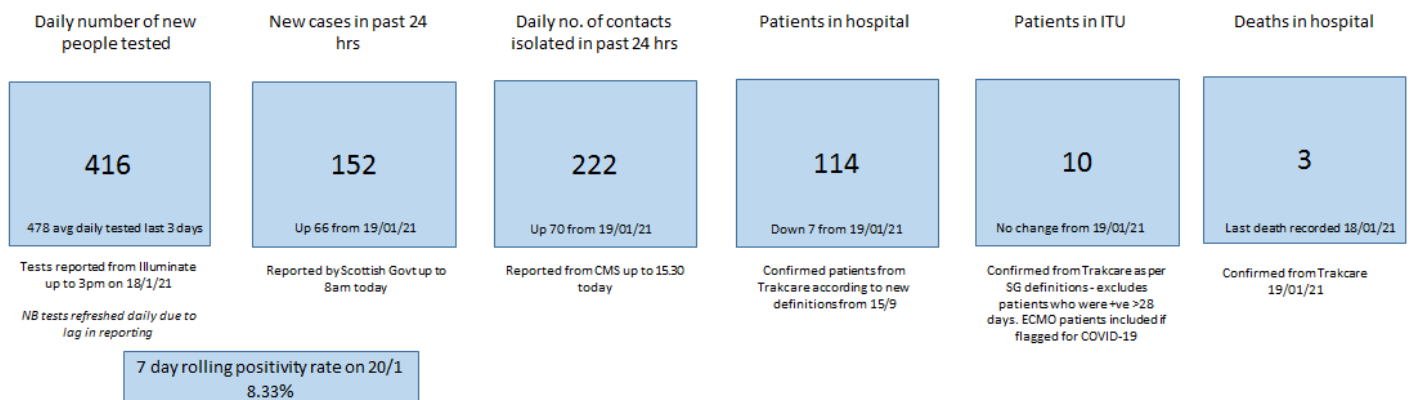
“It’s been an incredibly tough start to the year, but everyone across the Acute Sector has risen to the challenge magnificently. We’re just 20 days into 2021 and we’ve already seen the number of COVID-19 patients in hospital eclipse that of last year’s peak; very sadly, we’ve seen nearly 50 of those patients die within Grampian’s hospitals; we’ve seen huge staffing and capacity issues, due to other COVID-19 and usual winter pressures; and we’ve seen the associated rise in Emergency Department presentations due to winter weather. We really have been under pressure from all angles like never before – but each of you are continuing to save lives and improve others each and every day.

“So far in 2021 the numbers and pressures have provided a grim start, but our staff, and their inspiring efforts, have continued to give our patients and the organisation continued hope, belief and a massive sense of pride. We’re rapidly approaching a year into this pandemic and it’s absolutely understandable that fatigue, both physical and mental, has set in, for the vast majority of our staff. But, despite the immediate challenges we face, remember it’s not all doom and gloom - we have a far better understanding of COVID-19 and how to treat it than this time last year and, as has been said many times now, there is light in the tunnel. The vaccine is being rolled-out to our staff at pace, all residents and staff in care homes able and willing to receive it have done so and we are now seeing it given to other priority groups in the community.

“For our staff we’re continuing asymptomatic testing and both this and the vaccine are incredible opportunities to help us beat the virus and see our lives, and health service, slowly return to normal. We would strongly encourage anyone that is eligible to take part in the testing or to get vaccinated do so. There is really no reason not to – it allows to protect our patients, protect your colleagues and ultimately protect yourselves and your families. Ultimately it is how we end this pandemic.

“Finally, we’ve said it many times and it will never be enough, thank you so much to each and everyone of you for your sustained and continuing efforts. Together we are getting through - we can do this, we are doing this and it won’t last forever. Until then look after yourselves, you are keeping NHS Grampian going.”

Grampian data The local figures for today and the 7 day rolling positivity rate are shown below. We’ve had some further queries about how the positivity rate is arrived at. It is a simple formula, which divides 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, whereas the figures we show you below only record new tests.



If you click [here](#) you can visit the Public Health Scotland website, which includes neighbourhood figures for all local authority areas in Scotland.

COVID-19 vaccine – new data Public Health Scotland have published their weekly COVID-19 report, which includes information on the progress of the vaccine programme. You can read the full report [here](#). In Grampian, between 8 December and 17 January, **30,240** people received their first dose of vaccine. All residents in older adult care homes who were fit to receive, and gave consent, have now had their first dose.

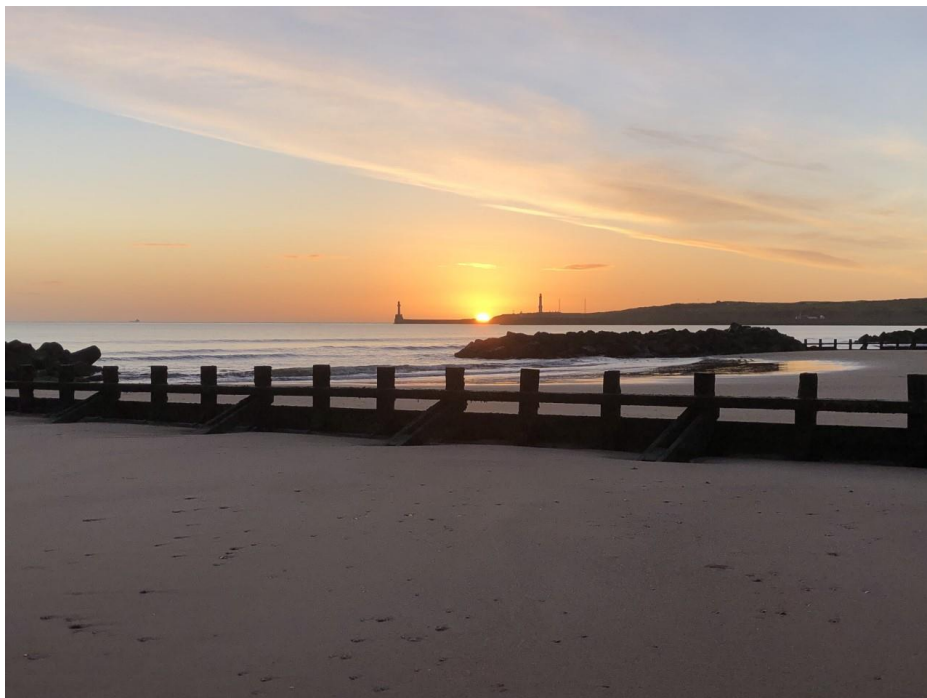
Health and Safety - Manual Handling It is recognised how difficult it has been for staff to maintain compliance with the NHS Grampian Manual Handling Policy at present. Many of the Manual Handling courses for Key Handlers were cancelled at the beginning of COVID-19 which has had a knock-on effect to Key Handlers being able to competency assess/ update staff within the timeframe of the Manual Handling Policy. A temporary change to extend the timeframe for 12 months has therefore been made to the Policy, as follows:

- Clinical staff - 12 months extended to a period of 24 months for competencies to be assessed and verified from date of previous assessment.
- Non Clinical staff - 12 months extended to a period of up to no more than 36 months for update training from previous updates, dependant on local risk assessment.

Any queries regarding the temporary changes please contact gram.healthandsafety@nhs.scot

Care Opinion Many of you will already be aware of Care Opinion, an online feedback forum for all aspects of health and social care. What you may not be aware of is that they present quarterly reports to Scottish Government, including information on their most viewed stories. We are delighted to report that this quarter the top three stories were all positive items for NHS Grampian, specifically [general surgery](#), [urology](#), and an incredibly moving story from [maternity services](#). These three stories represent the highest standard of care, and we know that care of the same standard is being delivered every day, in wards and clinics right across north-east Scotland.

Thought for the day – a new dawn Thank you to Dr Fiona Mair (Emergency Department, ARI) for sending in this beautiful photo, taken at Aberdeen Beach.



Questions to ask? Information to share? If you have particular questions – or are aware of questions coming from friends and family – please share them with us. We may not be able to answer every question and it may take us time to get a proper answer, but we will endeavour to respond and share the answers. You can get in touch with us via gram.communications@nhs.scot. Please also use that email address if you have items for consideration for future briefs.