

Dear Colleagues,

The current rate of covid infections is putting a significant strain on the health and social care system through a combination of presentations to primary care and hospital, some of us being off with covid, and self-isolation.

It's a triple whammy with a changing pattern of service areas being short of staff while dealing with increased demand. Thank you to everyone across all sectors for the ongoing efforts to maintain services for our residents.

Belatedly, happy World Social Work Day. You have worked tirelessly to keep people safe, in often difficult circumstances, with all the restrictions that existed over the last year due to covid. Thank you.

And yesterday brought an opportunity to raise the profile of what we are challenged with in Moray right now to a national figure, where a small group of us spoke to Jason Leitch, National Clinical Director of the Scottish Government. We covered in particular areas around primary care, acute hospital care, adult social care, children's social work and adult social work. Time was short, but Jason has expressed a desire to visit Moray in person, and I have said that we would welcome that.



Simon Bokor-Ingram
Chief Officer
Moray Portfolio

National workforce strategy published

Work is underway within the partnership to prepare a three year workforce plan to deliver on the ambitions of the newly published joint National Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care.

The strategy, co-produced by the Scottish Government and COSLA - the organisation representing Scottish local authorities – is based around five pillars of planning, attracting, training, employing and nurturing the workforce as the sector rebuilds from the pandemic.

Councillor Stuart Currie, COSLA's Health and Social Care spokesperson, said: "Scotland's Health and Social Care workforce has been at the forefront of the pandemic response for two years. Workers' dedication and professionalism has been immense. Partners working across Health and Social Care must now adopt a strategic approach to the recovery, growth and transformation of the workforce that supports the wellbeing of workers, a continued shift to prevention and the provision of high quality support and care for citizens."

View the national strategy [here](#).

Covid update

Rising covid case numbers in Scotland amid significant pressure on the NHS, with hospital occupancy at a 13-month high, has delayed the lifting of rules on the wearing of face masks until at least early April.

Cases of the BA.2 sub omicron variant – said to be significantly more transmissible – are around 80 per cent greater than the original omicron, according to Public Health Scotland figures.

Scotland has now seen infection levels rise for six weeks in a row, with 299,900 people likely to have had coronavirus last week – the equivalent of one in 18. This is the highest figure for Scotland since estimates began in autumn 2020.

In the week to 9 March, Moray recorded 1,377 cases, up 44 per cent on the previous week.

During her coronavirus update yesterday, the First Minister said it was “prudent” to keep the requirement for face masks in indoor settings, such as day care services and on public transport, to provide some additional protection at a time when the risk of infection was very high.

Ms Sturgeon said the government remained optimistic the risk of covid will move from medium to low over the

spring and expects mask-wearing will be converted to guidance in early April. Other legal restrictions, such as the vaccine passport scheme and covid measures in public places, will be lifted on 21 March.

For the next month - until Easter - there will be no change to the testing advice to the general public. If you don't have symptoms, you should continue to use a lateral flow test twice weekly. Social care staff should continue to test before each shift.

Dedicated PCR testing for symptomatic health and social care staff continues.

From 18 April the general public will no longer be advised to carry out twice weekly asymptomatic testing. Workplace testing, and in early learning and childcare settings, mainstream and special schools, and universities and colleges will also end. Health and social care settings will be the exception to this, with regular testing to continue, alongside other infection prevention and control measures, such as the use of PPE.

From the start of May, testing will become more focused on surveillance, outbreak management, and as part of clinical care and risk reduction

Shingles and pneumococcal vaccinations

Moray residents who are eligible for shingles or pneumococcal vaccination are being advised that from 1 April these will be administered in community vaccination clinics.

Those who are eligible for either jab (or both) will receive a letter offering an appointment. They do not need to contact their GP. For more information about either vaccine, visit <https://nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/immunisation/vaccines>

Celebrating World Social Work Day

The pivotal role played by social workers in empowering and protecting children, young people and adults in Moray was celebrated on World Social Work Day.

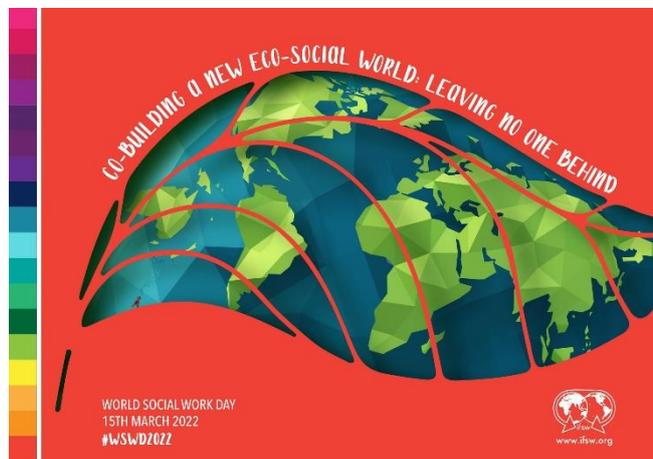
Jane Mackie, Chief Social Work Officer, said yesterday's event provided an opportunity to acknowledge the profession as a whole and to thank Moray's dedicated social workers for their work providing advice, guidance and support to individuals, families, parents and unpaid carers.

“Our social workers do an incredible job, often in very difficult circumstances, and it is important we recognise the vital role they play not just today but every day. Throughout the challenges of the past two years they have adapted to new ways of working to continue to fulfil their professional duties and support residents with care and compassion,” Mrs Mackie said.

“We remain committed to improving the experiences of people who need support and of our workforce. We are taking forward transformational change based on strong social work conversations to ensure we are listening to people to understand what really matters to them and to connect them to resources and support that empowers them to manage their own lives.”

Tracey Stephen, deputy Chief Social Work Officer, said: “World Social Work Day is an opportunity to come together to reflect on our shared values in what has been another difficult year and to thank Moray's social workers for all that they do to champion the rights of the individuals and families they work with.”

World Social Work Day was established in 1983 by the International Federation of Social Workers as a day for social workers, professionals in health and social care, and supporters from all over the world to promote and celebrate the positive outcomes and contributions of the social work profession. This year's theme is 'Co-building a New Eco-Social World: Leaving No One Behind'.



John Campbell, Provider Services Manager for Health & Social Care Moray, is co-chair of Social Work Scotland's Adult Standing Committee.

He said: “Social work and social care professionals play a key role, in close partnership with colleagues, in supporting over 500,000 adults a day in Scotland to lead positive lives that reflect their wishes, hopes and aspirations. Social workers also have a fundamental role in the protection of adults at risk of harm and abuse.

“World Social Work Day is a great opportunity to celebrate and recognise the profession and perhaps inspire people to consider a career in social work.”

Sensory awareness training

North East Sensory Services (NESS) is continuing to provide free sensory awareness training for Health & Social Care Moray staff to improve understanding of the practical and emotional impact of sensory loss.

The training – delivered through a combination of e-learning and video conferencing – introduces some of the ways in which people living with a sight and/or hearing loss might maintain their independence, and explores some simple ways in which professionals can be more supportive and inclusive of people with a sensory loss.

Further information and booking details are available on the NESS website [here](#).

Ukraine humanitarian effort

As the Russian military invasion of Ukraine has unfolded, so too has a humanitarian crisis that has separated families and forced civilians to flee their homes and take refuge where they can.

Communities across Moray have been quick to respond, rallying to collect donations of food, clothing and supplies to be transported across Europe.

It is now recognised, however, that given the changing needs of displaced groups and those people still living in Ukraine, the best way to help is to make a financial donation through established appeal mechanisms such as the Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) or the UNICEF UK appeal. This will enable experienced organisations to get essential aid to people directly in crisis zones, help people fleeing conflict and danger to get what they need, and support the local economy.

Moray Council has pledged its support for refugees leaving Ukraine and will work with COSLA, the Scottish Government and the Home Office on any planned resettlement programme.

