

System pressures

System pressures were particularly high over the weekend and our thanks goes to all staff in hospitals and community settings for their dedication and continued commitment to the provision of care, support and treatment to those in need of assistance.

The level of Covid and non-Covid-related unplanned absence fluctuates on a daily basis. There is also a higher than normal level of planned absence with staff taking their annual leave to coincide with the school holidays. Annual leave is part of the work life balance and it important staff take the time to relax and recuperate.

The Care at Home Service experienced particular challenge in covering rotas and although every effort was made to minimise disruption, people were advised that their visit times could be different and they may not have one of their usual social care assistants. Family members were also asked to consider what additional help they could offer so staff were able to prioritise essential visits to individuals with no alternative support.

We are incredibly grateful for the continued understanding and support of families and communities in helping us care for people.

Infection rates rise

Although the number of deaths remains well below previous waves, Covid infections and hospital admissions are rising across the country, largely driven by the variant Omicron BA.2 which is now the dominant strain in the UK.

Covid-19 rates across Scotland increased for the sixth week in a row, according to Office for National Statistics (ONS) data. An estimated one in 16 people - around 6.3% of the population - are now thought to have the virus, up from one in 17 the previous week and the highest rate in the country since April.

Support for veterans

A Moray soccer scheme is one of 25 projects to be awarded funding from the Scottish Veterans Fund which over the last 14 years has provided £2.3 million to nearly 200 initiatives supporting veterans and their families in Scotland.

Elgin City FC has been awarded £3,864 which it will use to offer football matches for veterans at Borough Briggs. Other successful projects include employment support from Walking with the Wounded, outdoor therapeutic approaches and counselling from the Venture Trust and pastoral care provided by Veterans Chaplaincy Scotland.

The Scottish Government has appointed Susanna Hamilton, who served in the Royal Navy and worked with veterans in the Third Sector, as the new Veterans Commissioner.

Suicide Prevention Strategy

Suicide remains one of the main causes of death among people in Scotland, with two people dying by suicide each day. Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy.

The Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) will publish a new Suicide prevention Strategy and Action Plan in September 2022 to ensure fewer lives in Scotland are lost to suicide.

This strategy will be long term and outcomes focused and will replace the current Suicide Prevention Action Plan: Every Life Matters which was published in 2018 and is currently delivered through the National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group (NSPLG) and locally through the North East Suicide Prevention Group.

Views are now being invited on the draft Strategy and Action Plan. The consultation is being hosted via Citizen Space, the Scottish Government's online consultation platform. You can access the consultation using this link: <https://consult.gov.scot/mental-health-unit/suicide-prevention-strategy-for-scotland>

Covid booster to be offered

All adults over the age of 50 in Scotland and frontline health and social care workers will be offered a further Covid booster vaccine from September.

Following advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), the Scottish Government confirmed last Friday the priority groups for the pre-winter jab. They include:

- residents in a care home for older adults and staff
- frontline health and social care workers
- all adults aged 50 years and over
- those aged 5 to 49 years in a clinical risk group, including pregnant women
- those aged 5 to 49 years who are household contacts of people with immunosuppression
- unpaid carers aged 16-49 years

The Scottish Government has said letters will be sent out to eligible groups from next month inviting them to receive an additional dose. Health Secretary Humza Yousaf has encouraged those who are eligible to come forward.

He said: "The vaccination programme in Scotland continues to be a huge success and this is testament to the efforts of everyone involved in its delivery and all those who took up their appointment offers. The additional booster dose will improve your level of protection significantly and is the best way to protect yourself, your family and of course the NHS when we head into the busy winter months."

Where possible, boosters will be given at the same time as the flu vaccination to those who are eligible. Latest data shows 61,942 people in Moray have had their Covid booster – 73.6% of the eligible population.

Support for social security changes

Adult Disability Payment will be replacing Personal Independence Payment in Moray on 25 July.

From this date new applications can be made for Adult Disability Payment. People currently in receipt of Personal Independence Payment & Disability Living Allowance do not need to apply as Social Security Scotland will notify clients by letter to advise when the process starts to transfer their case to Social Security Scotland and then again once the process is complete.

Specially trained Client Support Advisers are available in Moray to help guide people through the application process. People can arrange to speak to an adviser at a time and place to suit them including at home, in a community venue or in hospital. Telephone and video call appointments are also available and all bookings can be made by calling 0800 182 2222.

During July and August the National Engagement Team is holding online information sessions for stakeholders who may advise and support people to claim Adult Disability Payment. These are bookable on Eventbrite using the links below:

- [Adult Disability Payment - General Policy](#)
- [Adult Disability Payment - Applications](#)
- [Adult Disability Payment - Decision Making and Supporting Info \(Public Sector\)](#)
- [Adult Disability Payment - Decision Making and Supporting Info \(Third Sector\)](#)
- [Adult Disability Payment - Special Rules for Terminal Illness](#)
- [Adult Disability Payment - Debt](#)

Stay hydrated

Although the amber weather warning for extreme heat did not reach Moray, the mercury still climbed to 28° Celsius in some inland areas, and spells of warmer weather than we are used to are forecast to be a feature in the coming years.

Drinking plenty of water is crucial for maintaining good health at all times, but it is even more important during this spell of hot weather. Dehydration in those of us who are older can contribute to a number of health issues including tiredness, headaches, feeling lightheaded and confusion. It's especially important for older people to drink enough water as many stop feeling thirsty, making it all too easy to forget to drink.

Drinking between six and eight glasses of water a day helps keep dehydration at bay as well as supporting mental and physical health and wellbeing. Getting into the habit of refilling your glass every time you go into the kitchen or keeping a topped-up refillable bottle beside you can act as a reminder to stay hydrated.