

FM Covid-19 Update - Scottish Parliament – 14:30pm – 30/11/2021

Update on case numbers:

- 20,569 positive cases today (11.5% of all tests), 706 in hospital , 54 in intensive care, 10 deaths in 24 hrs (Total deaths now 9,572)
- Vaccination roll out continues to be positive and take places across 1st, 2nd and booster doses at pace.
- Scotland is most vaccinated part of the UK now across all doses
- 27,000 people in Scotland may be alive today due to vaccines according to WHO data
- Last week's statement was more positive and whilst case numbers fall, SG remain worried about Omicron variant

Overall trends:

- Average number of new cases each day falling, 15% in past week.
- Biggest decline in older age group, over 60s down 27% due to boosters
- Under 60 ages groups majority of cases and fallen by 13% in past week, and fallen across all ages
- Number in hospitals and intensive care all falling, so overall positive news for Scotland.
- NHS remains under significant and severe pressure, with case numbers higher than SG want.

Omicron Variant:

- Still being investigated, however concern it may be more transmissible than dominant Delta variant
- Further data and analysis needed to confirm this and assess impact on vaccine
- no evidence it is more severe than other variants at this stage.
- Hope that level of concern will diminish, not increase.

Omicron Presence in Scotland:

- 5pm yesterday there were 9 confirmed cases
- 5 in Lanarkshire, for in Glasgow and Clyde
- No one who has tested positive have required hospital care
- No travel history or links to travel or contacts in southern Africa
- All 9 cases are linked and trace back to private event on 20th November.
- Therefore, some suggestion of community transmission, however, no evidence of it being sustained or widespread.
- Surveillance work is looking at links to COP26, however, no link has yet been found.
- Highly likely that more cases will emerge.

Baseline COVID-19 mitigation measures:

- At this stage, no new protections will be put in place.
- Existing protections should be stepped up, face coverings, hygiene, testing, ventilation etc.
- 10 countries on travel red list , must enter managed quarantine for 10 days
- Anyone from outside UK, PCR required on or before 2nd day of arrival and self-isolate until then.
- SG want travel rules to be tightened on 4 nations basis, however, UK Gov have rejected this.
- Beyond temporary travel measures, SG hope no new restrictions will be required.

Vaccination:

- All adults over age of 18 should get booster
- gap between 2nd and booster reduced from 6 to 3 months
- those who are immune suppressed should get additional booster now.
- 12- 16-year-olds should now get second dose.
- SG Accepted JCVI recommendation and implementing operational response now.
- 1 million more people eligible for a booster compared to last week.

- 84% uptake of booster in over 60s
- Concern about effectiveness uncertain, even if it is, vaccination is still effective against dominant strain.

Next steps:

- Increase existing compliance
- Work from home if you can
- LFT before any and all mixing occasions, pubs, restaurants, shopping etc.
- LFT will be option from next week at venues required to operate vaccine certification
- LFTs will be made available by local authorities in more locations.
- New tests require nasal swab only, not throat swab, so easier to use.

Closing:

- New variant is a potential blow and a concerning development
- Even if worries are confirmed, we are in better position than this time last year thanks to vaccines.
- We know how to stem transmission, so everyone should redouble steps to prevent transmission.
- Follow baseline measures, enhance testing and work from home if you can.
- Necessary to avoid tighter restrictions in weeks and months ahead.

ENDS