
To: Renfrewshire Integration Joint Board

On: 25 March 2022

Report by: Interim Chief Officer

Heading: Chief Officer's Report

Direction Required to Health Board, Council or Both	Direction to:	
	1. No Direction Required	X
	2. NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde	
	3. Renfrewshire Council	
	4. NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde and Renfrewshire Council	

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an update to the Integration Joint Board (IJB) on key operational activity, including the HSCP's operational response to COVID-19. The report focuses on developments and activity since the last IJB on 22 January 2022.
- 1.2. The impact of the pandemic continues to fluctuate, evidenced through infection rates and hospitalisation figures which have again increased in recent weeks. However, for many people the severity of the virus appears to have significantly reduced and in response, the Scottish Government has published an updated Strategic Framework to set out the lifting of remaining legal restrictions in line with the objective of 'living with COVID'.
- 1.3. This paper also provides an update on operational services, including the agreement across NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde for the closure of all remaining COVID Assessment Centres, reflecting reduced demand.
- 1.4. The HSCP had anticipated that this report would be the last separate COVID update report to the IJB. However, in light of the current position of increased infection rates and subsequent hospitalisations, a further update will be provided to the IJB at the next meeting in June 2022.
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2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the IJB note:

- The implications of the Scottish Government's updated Strategic Framework and its overarching objectives (Section 4); and
- The updates provided on COVID services and the current impact of the pandemic on the provision of operational services (Sections 5 to 9).

3. Background

3.1. In January 2022, the IJB was updated on the significant impact of the spread of the Omicron variant over the Christmas and New Year period. Levels of infection in Renfrewshire and Scotland had reached 2,630 and 2,062 per 100,000 over a seven-day period and 1,562 people were in hospital with COVID on 16 January.

3.2. In the intervening period, levels of infection within the community decreased, but have again increased significantly as restrictions have eased. As of 15 March 2022, there are now 1,996 people in hospital in Scotland, and average cases per day have risen above 12,000. This level of cases and hospitalisation continues to place a high degree of pressure on acute services and subsequently on community health and social care as the level of hospital discharges increases. Nevertheless, it is clear that for the majority of people the overall severity of illness from COVID infection has reduced substantially.

4. Scottish Government's updated Strategic Framework

4.1. Reflecting the changing nature of the COVID pandemic, and the evidence gathered over the last three months that the Omicron variant causes typically less severe infection, the Scottish Government published an updated Strategic Framework on 22 February 2022.

4.2. As a result of this changing context, and the success of the vaccination programme and public health measures taken to date, the Strategic Framework sets out a staged approach towards easing protective measures which will support recovery from the pandemic and assist Scotland to 'live with COVID'. The overall objective in future will be to manage COVID-19 primarily through public health advice, vaccination, and treatment rather than legal restrictions. As such the following timelines were set out for the lifting of remaining legal restrictions:

- Vaccine certification no longer required from Monday 28 February, however any businesses wishing to continue to use the certification process voluntarily can do so.
- Current legal requirements on the use of face coverings, the collection of customer details for contact tracing purposes, and for businesses, service providers and places of worship to have regard to guidance on COVID and to take reasonably practicable measures were expected to be lifted on 21 March subject to the state of the pandemic. However, it was confirmed on 15 March 2022 that the requirement to wear face coverings would extend into April due to higher infection levels.

4.3. The approach to testing will evolve over coming months. From mid-April, people who are well and have no symptoms will no longer be advised to test twice weekly. People who test positive for COVID-19 will continue to be asked to self-isolate to reduce the risk of infecting other people, with any changes to current isolation periods being considered on an ongoing basis. Anyone visiting a care home or hospital will still be asked to do a lateral flow test in advance.

- 4.4. It has now also been confirmed that free access to lateral flow tests will end on 18 April except for those situations where testing continues to be advised for people working in health and social care or visiting vulnerable individuals in care home or hospital.
- 4.5. From the end of April 2022, the focus of testing will move from a population basis to testing for clinical care, surveillance and outbreak response. The general public will no longer be advised to test if symptomatic with guidance to stay at home if unwell. Test sites will also close at this time. Anyone visiting a care home or hospital will continue to be advised to do a lateral flow test in advance.
- 4.6. In setting out this strategic intent the Scottish Government also recognises that the future path of the pandemic is uncertain, with the possibility that new variants may emerge in future. Ongoing vigilance will therefore be required, with proportionate actions to be taken in response to any significant future changes.

5. COVID and Winter Flu Vaccination Programmes

- 5.1. The previous update to the IJB noted that the delivery of COVID and flu vaccination programmes had been successfully completed for all residents who were eligible within older adult care homes, and for those who are housebound. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde have lead responsibility for mass vaccination clinics and have continued to deliver vaccinations to those coming forward.
- 5.2. The HSCP's mobile vaccination team has continued to deliver vaccines to housebound residents where they have been identified however the number of vaccinations being provided has now decreased significantly. In addition, the team has sought to provide targeted vaccination clinics to vulnerable individuals to increase uptake, including within Renfrewshire's Alcohol & Drug Recovery Services for service users accessing Opiate Replacement Therapy (ORT); young people within secure accommodation units; and those that are homeless through 'back packing' clinics within homeless accommodation services and a mobile bus vaccination clinic in Ferguslie at the end of February 2022.
- 5.3. In addition, in February 2022, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) agreed to extend the offer of vaccinations to children aged between 5 and 11 years old. This was confirmed by the Scottish Government on 16 February 2022, with appointments offered from mid-March. Children will only be offered the Pfizer vaccine and in most cases will receive a dose equal to a third of the amount administered to adults.
- 5.4. In addition to extending vaccinations to this age group, it was also confirmed that those aged over 75, older adult care home residents, and the immunosuppressed are now eligible for a second booster vaccination. For those over 75, appointments will commence from mid-March and for the immunosuppressed booster doses will be available from mid-April. There is a requirement for there to be a six-month gap between vaccine doses.

6. Care Homes

- 6.1. There are 23 Care Homes for Older People in Renfrewshire, three of which are operated by the HSCP – Montrose, Hunterhill and Renfrew. These Care Homes continue to see infection levels within staff and residents fluctuate.
- 6.2. At the time of writing, over half of these care homes have currently identified at least one staff member or resident with a positive COVID test in the preceding fourteen days. However, positive cases identified continue to be predominantly mild.
- 6.3. Through enhanced governance arrangements, the HSCP continues to ensure a timely and robust response to identified infections, including the deployment of supporting resources where necessary and appropriate, and the provision of expert clinical and care support to residents. The Clinical and Care Governance oversight meetings now convene on a weekly basis however this will remain under review.

7. COVID Assessment Centre

- 7.1. The COVID Assessment Centre (CAC) established at Linwood Health Centre in March 2020 has continued to provide a service for patients who are experiencing COVID respiratory symptoms. Demand for the service fell following the peak of Omicron infections, with a proportion of attendees attending the centre with COVID for assistance with other conditions, rather than for COVID. In addition, staffing of the CAC has continued to be challenging due to clinical staff and GP availability.
- 7.2. Recognising the decreased demand for CAC services, it was agreed across NHSGGC that all COVID Assessment Centres would close across the Board area. All remaining centres, including Linwood, are scheduled to close on 25 March 2022.

8. Day Support and respite

- 8.1. Day centres and respite services have continued to remain open to provide support to those in greatest need, supported by welfare calls, community outreach and digital engagement for those not currently attending a centre.
- 8.2. At the time of writing, 2m physical distancing remains in place across open day centres to support infection control. These arrangements are kept under ongoing review in line with the Scottish Government's updated Strategic Framework and subsequent guidance, and changes will be made in agreement with Renfrewshire Council.

9. Mental Health Inpatient Services

- 9.1. Mental Health inpatient services across Renfrewshire and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde are currently experiencing very high demand and the impact of COVID infections continues to be managed. At the time of reporting, no wards in Renfrewshire are currently closed to admissions as a result of COVID outbreaks. This follows the reopening of one ward in early March following an outbreak across a number of patients. All of those who tested positive in this outbreak were asymptomatic or experienced mild symptoms.

- 9.2. In support of the above measures to mitigate the spread of Omicron, patients admitted to Renfrewshire Mental Health wards continue to be tested for COVID-19 and isolated until a negative result is confirmed. Staff in the Mental Health wards are tested regularly using two methods, PCR tests and Lateral Flow Tests.
- 9.3. The staffing position continues to be very challenging across mental health inpatient wards in NHSGGC, including Renfrewshire. Actions are in place to complement available staffing through use of the Nurse Bank, Agency staff and support, where possible and appropriate, from other services within the HSCP.
- 9.4. From Tuesday 25 January, adult mental health inpatients have been able to benefit from the support of one interchangeable visitor each day. Renfrewshire continues to provide flexibility wherever possible by arranging daily booking slots in all wards to ensure that every patient has access to a visitor for a limited period of time.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – No implications from this report.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – No implications from this report.
3. **Community Planning** – No implications from this report.
4. **Legal** – No implications from this report.
5. **Property/Assets** – No implications from this report.
6. **Information Technology** – No implications from this report.
7. **Equality and Human Rights** – No implications from this report.
8. **Health & Safety** – No implications from this report.
9. **Procurement** – No implications from this report.
10. **Risk** – Risks and issues arising during the COVID response and the Partnership's operational delivery are tracked and managed on an ongoing basis.
11. **Privacy Impact** – None from this report.

List of Background Papers: None

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