




Adult and Health



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COVID-19 - General

[Guidance for festive period agreed by four nations](#)

A four nation approach to the festive period has been agreed by Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The joint agreement was described by the Scottish Government as a “cautious and limited relaxation of the rules” on household meetings to support people over Christmas. A maximum of three households are to be able to meet in a “bubble” between 23 and 27 December. Households will be able to travel between local authorities and between the four nations during this time to form a bubble, and must only join one bubble. [Additional guidance](#) is available online.

[Scottish guidance for festive period](#)

The Scottish Government has published Scotland specific guidance for the festive period on forming ‘bubbles’. They states that whilst they “are providing guidance on how people can spend Christmas time with others to help prevent loneliness and isolation, our advice is that wherever possible you should keep in touch with friends and family members from other households through technology - or, if you decide to meet in person, you should minimise the numbers and duration, and if possible meet out of doors.” Recommendations include keeping any bubble to a maximum of eight people, children under 12 years old do not count towards that maximum, and members in a bubble should not change once it has been formed.



COVID-19

[Testing expansion update](#)

The Scottish Government has confirmed plans for the expansion of COVID-19 testing for hospital patients, health and social care staff, and communities in level 4 areas. The plans include:

- From next week, all emergency admissions will be tested for COVID, and twice-weekly lateral flow testing will be introduced for all patient-facing healthcare staff working in hospitals, COVID-19 Assessment Centres and the Scottish Ambulance Service. Testing will be introduced for all elective admissions to hospital from mid-December.
- In the social care sector, testing will be expanded over the coming months for designated visitors, visiting professional staff, and care at home workers.
- Care home visitor testing will be initially introduced in up to 12 care homes across four local authority areas from 7 December, with full roll-out planned for January.
- To facilitate Christmas visiting in all care homes, PCR testing will be provided for those that do not have access to lateral flow testing by that time, with guidance on visiting arrangements over Christmas to be published shortly. Testing for the other two social care groups will also commence in January.

[Latest data on COVID-19](#)

Public Health Scotland has released its weekly COVID-19 statistical report. By Sunday 22 November, there had been 89,084 confirmed cases, with 6,903 in the latest week. In the week ending 22 November, there were 522 admissions to hospital with confirmed COVID-19 and 44 patients were treated in intensive care. 589 people aged 5-17 tested positive.

[Regional approach to restrictions \(England\)](#)

The UK Government's Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock made a statement to the House of Commons setting out the regional approach to COVID-19 restrictions with a tougher tier system.

Care Homes/Care at Home

[Christmas care home guidance for older residents criticised \(England\)](#)

Guidance for care homes in England during the festive period has been criticised by the Alzheimer's Society. The Guardian reports that the guidance states care home residents over 65 will not be allowed to join their families at Christmas, despite the easing of restrictions. According to the guidance, visits should only be considered for residents of working age, due to the increased risk of exposure to coronavirus. Gavin Terry, head of policy at Alzheimer's Society, said: "We have to put a stop to people with dementia tragically dying from loneliness and urgently need to see a national



rollout of testing and visits to care homes, to keep the spirit of Christmas alive for people with dementia.”

[Health Secretary confirms public inquiry on care homes](#)

A number of questions on care homes were raised in the Scottish Parliament at Topical Questions this week. In response to a question about a public inquiry, Health Secretary Jeane Freeman confirmed that she had sought to take a four-nation approach to such an investigation but after receiving no response from other countries, had begun to take steps towards a public inquiry in Scotland. She added that the Lord President, the Lord Advocate and others would be involved in the inquiry.

[Impact of testing and vaccine on care home resources](#)

Carehome.co.uk has highlighted the concerns of providers in England about the impact of increased testing, visiting and the forthcoming vaccination programme on care homes. The Independent Care Group and the National Care Forum said introducing twice-weekly tests which will welcome up to two visits per resident and the roll out of the vaccine will add additional pressure to care homes, calling for greater financial support.

Mental Health

[Suicide rate rose in 2019](#)

National Records of Scotland has published data suggesting a rise in deaths by suicide in 2019. There were 833 probable suicides registered in Scotland in 2019, an increase from 784 in 2018. Six hundred and twenty men and 213 women took their own lives in 2019, with people aged 45-54 most at risk.

Older People


[Christmas 2020 to be “loneliest yet” for older people](#)

Research by Age UK suggests Christmas will be the loneliest yet for older people, with more than 157,000 over 65s in Scotland expecting to feel lonely over the festive season. Nearly 6 in 10 older people are also concerned that they won't see friends and family over the Christmas period.

Other Health and Social Care

[Committee report on medicines](#)

The Scottish Parliament's Health and Sport Committee has published a report on supply and demand on medicines following its recent inquiry. A number of concerns were raised in relation to lack of data collection and follow-up care, questions over the role of Integrated Joint Boards, and the need to improve the GP contract on prescribing. The Committee concluded there could be a greater role for community pharmacists. On care homes, the Committee:

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- Recommended the Scottish Government work with the Home Office to consider further the approach to licensing in care homes as well as the fees payable for licences for different types of organisation.
 - Highlighted views expressed to the Committee on making greater use of the skills of nurses in care homes.
 - Recommended the electronic medication record system or an equivalent is introduced into all care homes.

[People at the Centre project on improving care](#)

Scottish Care has issued a call for views on behalf of the People at the Centre project. The project is funded by the Scottish Government and led by the Health & Social Care Alliance Scotland, working with the Care Inspectorate and Scottish Care. The consultation is inviting adults who live in care homes, or who access care at home support, to share their recent experiences of health and social care and wellbeing, and also to offer their suggestions about how health and social care support and services can improve now and in the future. This feedback will be used anonymously to form part of a report for the Scottish Government to inform decisions about changes to health and social care support.

[Online event to celebrate rural social work](#)

Iriss will hold a webinar on the unique potential of rural social work on Thursday 10 December. The event will include discussion on the opportunities presented by rural social work and will take account of issues arising from the pandemic.

[NMC bite-sized resources on The Code](#)

The Nursing and Midwifery Council has created a series of Caring with Confidence bite-sized animations. The resources explore how The Code, the professional standards of practice and behaviour for nurses, midwives and nursing associates, can support members. The first animation is about accountability and seven more topics will be covered including professional judgement, speaking up, person centred care and end of life care.

[Regulating managers of registered services](#)

The Care Inspectorate and the Scottish Social Services Council have issued a joint statement to set out their policy on the regulation of managers and clarify the position regarding applications for managers who do not hold relevant qualifications.

[Sharing Intelligence group publishes annual report](#)

The 2019-2020 annual report of the Sharing Intelligence for Health & Care Group has been published. The group includes Audit Scotland, the Care Inspectorate, Healthcare Improvement Scotland, Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland, NHS Education for Scotland, Public Health Scotland and the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The Group is a mechanism that enables the seven national



organisations to share, consider, and respond to intelligence about health and care systems across Scotland.

[Draft SDS standards published for consultation](#)

Social Work Scotland has published draft standards for Self-Directed Support and is seeking views from support people, carers, support organisations and practitioners who would be expected to implement the standards.

[Peter MacLeod to take part in ALLIANCE online interview](#)

Chief Executive of the Care Inspectorate, Peter MacLeod, will take part in the ALLIANCE's series of online discussions. The ALLIANCE is inviting its members and wider stakeholders to send in their questions for Mr MacLeod, ahead of the event on Wednesday 9 December.

[Designated care settings for discharged COVID patients \(England\)](#)

The Care Quality Commission is working with the Department of Health and Social Care, local authorities and individual care providers in England to provide assurance of safe and high-quality care in designated settings, which are part of a scheme to allow people with a COVID-positive test result to be discharged safely from hospitals. This is to help prevent the spread of the virus in care homes and will allow for a focus on the care that people who have contracted COVID-19 need. The CQC is using its Infection Prevention Control (IPC) framework to assist in the designation of suitable settings.

Other

[2020 Spending Review](#)

The Treasury has published the 2020 Spending Review and related documents. Speaking in the House of Commons, Chancellor Rishi Sunak announced an extra £3bn for the NHS and said public services would receive £55bn in total next year to deal with the consequences of the pandemic. NHS staff will receive a pay rise next year, but other public service workers will not.

[Accounts Commission report on City of Edinburgh Council](#)

A report by the Accounts Commission has found services provided by the City of Edinburgh Council have improved over the last four years, but more could be done to "maximise its potential to improve the city and the lives of local people". The Best Value Assurance report notes the council must continue to lead and progress its commitment to reducing poverty and inequality across Edinburgh. It also found Edinburgh Integration Joint Board has not yet developed the detailed plans needed to address significant financial pressures.

**Disclaimer**

This weekly bulletin is produced as an update on the key issues concerning adults and health.

Each item in the bulletin has a hyperlinked headline that will take the reader to the original source.

We collate items from our parliamentary and Scottish Government monitoring covering health and social care news from throughout the UK, and current research and policy development. We use a variety of sources for the bulletin, including alerts from [Newsdirect](#), [Community Care](#), [Children & Young People Now](#) and [ISD Scotland](#).

We aim to be representative rather than comprehensive, so we try to cover only the main Scottish stories, along with some stories from the rest of the UK. The purpose of the bulletin is to alert readers to items of interest. It should be noted that these items are the works of others and are neither authorised nor endorsed by the Care Inspectorate, with the exception of publications which are identified as Care Inspectorate publications.

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