




# Adult and Health



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## Covid-19 - General

### [Updated social care testing guidance](#)

The Scottish Government has updated the 'Coronavirus (Covid-19): social care and community based testing guidance' to reflect changes to testing for staff and residents. From August 2023, following a clinical review, it has been agreed to pause all Scottish Government COVID-19 routine testing guidance in health, social care and prison settings. An exception to this pause is for individuals in hospital, prior to being discharged to a care home or a hospice: this routine testing will remain.

### [Review of Vaccine Taskforce performance](#)

The UK Government's Department of Health and Social Care has published a review of the Vaccine Taskforce's performance against its three strategic objectives, from establishment in April 2020 until closure in September 2022. Whilst assessing to what extent the Taskforce achieved its objectives, the review also seeks to draw out learning that can be applied to future government programmes.



### [Scottish Covid Inquiry holds preliminary hearing on health and social care](#)

The Scottish Covid-19 Inquiry held a preliminary health and social care hearing on 28 August 2023. During the preliminary hearing, the Inquiry screened a short film intended as formal and lasting recognition of the suffering caused by the pandemic to the people of Scotland.

### [UK Covid inquiry to start second investigation in October](#)

The UK Covid-19 Inquiry has confirmed that they will hearing evidence for its second investigation, examining core UK decision making and political governance (Module 2), on Tuesday 3rd of October.

### [Autumn vaccine programmes brought forward \(England\)](#)

The UK Government has announced that vaccine programmes are now due to start on 11 September in England for adult care home residents and those most at risk receiving vaccines first. The precautionary measure is being taken as scientists from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) examine the variant BA.2.86, and advice suggests speeding up the vaccine programmes will deliver greater protection.

## **Alcohol and Drugs**

### [Alcohol-specific deaths](#)

The National Records of Scotland has published statistics on the number of deaths from alcohol-specific causes in 2022. In total, reportedly, 1,276 deaths were attributed to alcohol-specific causes last year, 31 more than in 2021.

### [People prescribed opioid substitution therapy in Scotland](#)

Public Health Scotland's (PHS) has published a Scottish Public Health Observatory (ScotPHO) update on the estimated numbers of people prescribed opioid substitution therapy (OST) in Scotland. Amongst other findings, the data reportedly shows that in 2022/23 OST was prescribed to an estimated minimum of 29,161 people in Scotland.

### [Home Affairs Committee reports on UK drug law and policy](#)

The House of Commons' Home Affairs Committee has published a report on UK drug law and policy, covering the drugs legislative framework, 10 year drugs strategy, county lines, Project ADDER, health-led harm reduction, criminal justice-led harm reduction, cannabis, and Northern Ireland. Recommendations include an increased public health response, reviewing the classification of the most commonly used controlled drugs, and prioritising support for people with a chronic heroin dependency into treatment and recovery. The report also recommends that the UK Government replicates Scotland's medication-assisted treatment standards in England to ensure that a consistent, minimum standard of care is available to people accessing opioid substitution treatment, and also discusses the proposals for a safe consumption facility pilot in Glasgow.



## Care Homes/Care at Home

### [Demand for care at home services](#)

Public Health Scotland (PHS) has published information on the 'Demand for Care at Home Services', which includes the total number of individuals waiting for an assessment for social care services, the number of people waiting for a package of care at home and the number of hours of care that are being waited for. Amongst other findings, the number of people estimated to be waiting on a social care assessment to enable them to live independently at home or in the community was just over 6,200 on 7 August 2023, and the estimated number of people assessed and waiting for a care at home package was just over 3,800 on 7 August 2023.

## Equalities

### [Progress on human rights for disabled people](#)

The Scottish Human Rights Commission will give evidence to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRC) on the "lack of progress" on human rights protections for disabled people. Their evidence will reportedly highlight changes in the legal and economic situation for disabled people such as cost of living, the Covid-19 pandemic and leaving the EU, and the need for action to ensure their rights are fully protected. Other areas highlighted include the challenges in social care, lack of progress in the National Care Service proposals and need to embed human rights in the draft proposals, and lack of meaningful engagement and participation of disabled people in policy choices that affect them.

### [Hub launches to improve health and social inequalities](#)

Public Health Scotland is highlighting the launch of a 'Scottish Prevention Hub' between themselves, the University of Edinburgh's Futures Institute, and Police Scotland, that will aim to improve national public health. A major focus of the group will be to convene wider partner and stakeholder involvement, working together to address some of the nation's big health and wellbeing challenges, by building shared understanding, knowledge and resources.

## Justice

### [Overview of data on deaths in prison custody](#)

The Scottish Government has published an overview of data published by the Scottish Prison Service on deaths in prison custody in Scotland. The report is the first in a series of data and evidence publications, presenting a high level overview of data previously published by the Scottish Prison Service on deaths in prison custody between 2012 and 2022. Overall, the analysis reportedly shows that there has been an increase in the number of deaths occurring in prison custody over the period analysed, with a number of factors including an aging prison population leading to increasing deaths from disease and illness and the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.



### [Review of community sentencing options for people with substance use problems](#)

The Scottish Government has published a summary of the key findings from a review of community sentencing options for people with substance use problems. The review of Drug Treatment and Testing Orders (DTTOs) and Community Payback Orders (CPOs) with drug treatment requirements reportedly suggests that overall and on average court ordered treatment is less effective than voluntary treatment, but still likely to produce more positive outcomes for people than custody. Beyond that, the evidence on how best to maximise the potential benefits, and minimise the potential harms, of court ordered drug treatment in response to offending behaviour is growing but remains uncertain.

### **Learning Disabilities**

#### [Free monthly legal advice sessions for people with learning disabilities](#)

The Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities (SCLD) will hold free monthly legal advice sessions at their Glasgow office with the Legal Services Agency, for both people with learning disabilities and their families.

### **Older People**

#### [Digital inclusion for all ages](#)

The Chief Executive of Age UK, Paul Farmer, has written a blog examining the ways older people are being excluded by technology, and what digital inclusion for all ages should look like. Mr Farmer highlights digital inclusion programmes that help older people with the basics of how to get to grips with a mouse or tablet, before moving on to help people access support in a safe way, including tips on how to avoid scams. Digital Champions are also listed as a way to ensure trained staff and volunteers can support older people in their community.

### **Other Health and Social Care**

#### [Improvements to Care Inspectorate Digital Portal](#)

The Care Inspectorate has listened to feedback from users and will soon be launching improvements to our Digital Portal. We will publish guidance documents when the changes are available to support portal users with the changes, which include:

- A designated provider area on the portal where you can manage your provider details.
- Ability to make applications to register new care services on behalf of your provider. Your provider information will be pre-populated in the application form so you do not need to enter it again.
- New portal access permissions. User accounts can have access as a provider or as a service. This means the right people have appropriate access and the provider has control over who can access and change information on behalf of the provider or a service.



### [Proposals for care workforce strategy \(England\)](#)

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) has published 'A strategy for the care workforce', examining the challenges facing the childcare and social care sectors, and proposing a new care workforce strategy for England, "developed with trade unions and informed by the voice and experiences of care workers." The four key areas identified by the TUC include worker voices in collective bargaining arrangements with National Partnership Forums in social care and childcare, collectively bargained sectoral agreement on fair pay and working conditions with £15 per hour minimum wage, training pathways and frameworks, and staffing levels to be based on care and education needs.

#### **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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