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Elected Members Update
for local MPs, MSPs and Councillors

This update is part of our on-going commitment to keep elected members informed of the latest developments at NHS Fife that may be of interest to you and your constituents. We would also encourage you to regularly visit and refer your constituents for the latest news and updates from NHS Fife on our [**website**](http://www.nhsfife.org): or follow us on our social media channels.

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**suggests this may be as high as one third of the adult population with 50% of those**

Launch of the High Risk Pain Medicines (HRPM) 3 year patie

**Enquiries**

To ensure accurate and timely responses from NHS Fife, all enquiries from elected members should be directed to the NHS Fife Chief Executive Office for response and co-ordination at fife.chiefexecutive@nhs.scot. Members are politely asked not to approach services or individual members of staff directly for responses.

**Main updates**

**Ongoing pressure on services**

Our hospitals remain extremely busy. The demand for inpatient beds remains very high, and this, coupled with the ongoing difficulties in ensuring the timely discharge of patients to social care services, is restricting of the flow of patients through the hospital system.

Emergency department presentations, including those referred to us by NHS 24, continue to be beyond what we would ordinarily expect at this time of year.

**Workforce capacity issues**

As is the case across the UK, staffing continues to present significant and ongoing challenges to healthcare provision. However, we remain clear that the safety of those in our care is our priority and are committed to ensuring our hospitals are safe and effective.

To help us manage workforce challenges, it is important that we monitor staffing levels across our hospitals very carefully. We have daily safety huddles each morning with representatives from each ward and department and mechanisms are also in place to ensure staffing is continually assessed throughout the day and night.

We are under no illusions about how much pressure our staff are working under at the minute. However, we are committed to providing every possible support we can to those working on our frontline, as we have done since the start of the pandemic.

**Use of agency staff**

The use of locum and agency staff has generally increased in Fife over recent years, as it has across other areas of Scotland.

There are several reasons for this, including an increase in staff absence and significant challenges in recruiting to vacant medical and nursing posts. We also require a larger complement of clinical staff than ever before, due to the residual challenges associated with Covid and the unprecedented demand we are seeing currently.

To put the challenges we are facing into some further context, the number of nursing and midwifery staff we employ has risen by around 11% over the last five years, with more than 250 additional staff recruited since the start of the pandemic. Within this landscape of increasing use of locum agencies nationally, this further serves to highlight the demands placed on post-pandemic healthcare services.

It is important that we are pragmatic in how we look to tackle the existing pressures on our workforce to maintain staffing levels. This has required us to increase our use of locum and agency staff, along with our local nurse bank, to support existing staff to provide patients in Fife with good quality, safe and effective care.

**National recruitment**

In recent weeks NHS Fife has had significant success in appointing 160 graduate nurses. These vital new recruits have been warmly welcomed and will take up posts providing frontline care and support for patients at sites across Fife.

**International recruitment**

We are currently taking forward a range of initiatives to help increase the complement of registered nurses and allied health professionals working in Fife, and international recruitment is a growing part of these efforts.

Since February 2022, NHS Fife has recruited 23 nurses and 2 radiographers to permanent roles through work with Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, and we remain on course to achieve our initial aim of recruiting 40 new nurses and three radiographers as part of the first phase of this partnership.

This work is ongoing, and it is expected that more international recruits will join the workforce later this year, and through 2023.

**Emergency department services at Queen Margaret Hospital**

Following calls from a small number of Elected Members to reinstate emergency services at Queen Margaret Hospital, we thought it may be useful to provide a short update around the recent history of the site, and a rationale as to why there are no plans to revisit the decision to consolidate to one site at the Victoria Hospital.

Acute inpatient and maternity services in Fife were consolidated onto a single site at the Victoria Hospital in Kirkcaldy in 2012. This was in response to the future challenges outlined in the *Right for Fife Strategy 2002-2012*, which included an extensive and robust public and staff consultation.

Since this consolidation more than a decade ago, the model of emergency care has evolved, including the introduction of Minor Injury Units across Fife. The largest of these units is located at the Queen Margaret Hospital and provides 24/7 care to those requiring interventions for a wide range of injuries and medical issues. Attending a Minor Injuries Unit also provides tangible benefits for patients, significantly reducing the likelihood of a long waits for treatments that are not life threatening and reducing the need to travel for many people.

NHS Fife champions clinically led services and service development. Our clinicians and senior medical and nursing leaders are unanimous in their belief that an additional Emergency Department at Queen Margaret Hospital would result in significant clinical risk to the population of West Fife.

An Emergency Department does not operate in isolation and requires the back up of multiple acute services to run safely, such as acute medicine, critical care, general surgery, obstetrics, and anaesthesia.

The decision to move all acute and maternity activity onto a single site was clinically driven. It was taken to improve and modernise services, whilst ensuring medical staffing levels could be sustained into the future – it was not motivated by any lack of financial resource.

In the past decade significant investment has been made in Queen Margaret Hospital to enable the site to be remodelled to provide the vital services it offers - this includes state-of-the-art surgical and diagnostic services, outpatients (including local cancer services), a minor injuries unit, and a range of community and children’s services.

Queen Margaret Hospital is at the forefront of pioneering surgical innovations nationally, becoming the first site in Scotland to perform cutting edge surgical techniques in urology, ophthalmology, gynaecology, and breast cancer surgery. Furthermore, elective surgery at Queen Margaret Hospital continued throughout almost the entirety of the pandemic, which was made possible by the fact that the hospital is distanced from the main acute hospital wards. Queen Margaret Hospital continues to play a vital role in the delivery of healthcare in Fife.

As healthcare services continue their recovery from the pandemic and set about urgently tackling the backlog of surgical procedures and outpatient appointments built up over the course of the last two years, Queen Margaret Hospital will continue to have a pivotal role to play, both now and in the months and years to come.

NHS Fife has no plans to revisit the decision to consolidate services to one site at the Victoria Hospital, which, our clinicians are unanimous in their agreement of, would be clinically unsafe, unsustainable, and result in poorer health outcomes for the people of West Fife.

We remain committed to ensuring sustained investment and development in our facilities and services offered from Queen Margaret Hospital.

**Cancer waiting times**

The most recent statistics [from Public Health Scotland](https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/cancer-waiting-times/cancer-waiting-times-1-april-to-30-june-2022/) show that NHS Fife met the 31-day performance target for those requiring treatment for cancer, with 97.6% of patients beginning treatment within the timescale against a target of 95%. The 62-day performance target has proven more challenging due to issues affecting a small number of key specialities. Despite this, 84.5% of patients still began treatment within 62 days of initial referral compared to 76.3% nationally, with a median wait of 41 days from referral to commencing treatment compared to 47 days across Scotland as a whole.

Fife operates a Rapid Cancer Diagnostic Service, which aims to improve clinical pathways for patients with possible cancers and offer earlier access to diagnostic testing to enable patients to be diagnosed at an earlier stage in the disease. More than 900 patients in the Kingdom have already been referred to the service since it was launched in June 2021.

It is unusual for any patient to wait a significant length of time to commence treatment for cancer where this is required. Where this does happen, it is almost always for clinical reasons.

We recognise the importance of early intervention in improving outcomes for patients with cancer and we are working continually to minimise the time it takes to detect and diagnose these in order that treatment can be initiated as soon as possible.

**Health impacts of Mossmorran flaring**

Following a recent BBC report into the impact of flaring in Iraq, and links to increased cancer incidence, we were asked to provide a comment on the potential health implications of flaring at Mossmorran petrochemical plant.

We responded by saying that analysis has been undertaken over several years by our Public Health department. The [most recent report,](https://www.nhsfife.org/media/32734/191030-nhs-fife-mossmorran-health-impact-summary-final.pdf) published in 2019, includes an overview of earlier investigations and provides a detailed report on the health impacts of flaring at Mossmorran, following concerns raised by local communities in the vicinity of the plants.

The report concluded that the considerable degree of physical and psychological disturbance caused by the flaring may well have affected the health of local people in the widest sense, however, it found no evidence to suggest significantly higher incidences of cancers in the areas surrounding the Mossmorran site.

**Mask wearing and distancing in hospital**

Staff and visitors are no longer required to wear face coverings or observe two metre distancing in non-clinical areas of our hospital sites.

Distancing and fluid resistant surgical masks will still be required in clinical areas.

This decision has been taken by NHS Fife in partnership with staff-side colleagues in response to current infection rates and to support the health and well-being of staff in relation to mask fatigue.

**Nursing and midwifery online careers event**

NHS Fife is hosting an interactive online information event on Thursday 20th October for people interested in a career in nursing or midwifery.

The event will include sessions from professionals across specialties such as mental health nursing, midwifery, children’s nursing, and more. There is also an opportunity to speak with students who are already on their nursing journey and working towards their degrees.

More information is available [here](https://www.facebook.com/nhsfife/posts/pfbid0MxeYaK74cuZRGhRAkfFSYkcrXEV7x5aTRFq7wCnxP8uS2BRM5ajsqbSLpCSG3Xsdl).

**Speak up week**

NHS Fife marked Speak Up Week (3rd-7th October) with a range of awareness raising activities aimed at highlighting the importance of speaking up within the NHS in Scotland.

The week used internal networks to raise awareness of how staff can raise concerns or issues, and the mechanisms and support that are available.

Encouraging our staff to speak up reflects an organisation that is open, which wants to learn from any concerns or issues and, importantly, values the opportunity to address them.

**Vaccination**

**Covid vaccination**

Everybody aged 5 and over (on 31st of August 2022) is eligible for two doses of the Covid-19 vaccine. The number of additional doses they may be eligible for depends on their age and if they have any additional risk factors.

Those eligible for vaccination will generally be invited via appointment letter – a helpful information table around scheduling can be found [here](https://www.nhsfife.org/media/37610/fvcv-eligibility-table-v30-15-aug-2022.pdf).

Constituents aged 50 to 64 with no additional risk factors should wait to be contacted about their winter vaccination appointment. If a constituent is unsure whether they should receive an appointment letter, they can check whether they are eligible or book an appointment [here](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Chamiltoncr%5CDesktop%5CELECTED%20MEMBERS%20BRIEF%5C2022%5Cnhsinform.scot%5Cwintervaccines).

**Children’s covid drop-in clinics**

Drop-in vaccination clinics for children aged 5-11 take place at locations across Fife this week and next. A full list of confirmed clinics is available [here](http://www.nhsfife.org/dropin).

**Flu drop-in clinics for pregnant women**

Drop-in flu vaccination clinics for pregnant women are taking place at both Queen Margaret and Victoria Hospitals on the 22nd and 23rd of October. The sessions, which are being held at each site’s antenatal clinics, are available to all pregnant women who can turn up without a prearranged appointment. More information is available [here](https://www.nhsfife.org/news-updates/latest-news/2022/10/drop-in-flu-vaccination-clinics-for-pregnant-women/).

Sharing our messages

We appreciate the support of elected members in sharing our health messages and note that you have already been engaging with the topics we have suggested on social media - we are grateful for your support.

Help us to help you keep your constituents informed

NHS Fife would ask our elective representatives to share our regular updates and guidance via their own channels of communications with their constituents. By supporting us you can help to ensure that we can reach as many people as possible across Fife in a timely manner.

Accessible information and translation

NHS Fife continues to provide interpreting and translation services for patients despite there being no face-to-face interpretation currently. These assets and further information can be found [here](https://coronavirus.nhsfife.org/accessible-informationtranslation/).

Additional vaccination information/stats

You can find out about the numbers of people in Scotland who are vaccinated along with data about case numbers, and hospitalisations by accessing the Scottish Government [Daily Update](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-daily-data-for-scotland/) or by visiting Public Health Scotland’s [Daily Dashboard](https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/phs.covid.19/viz/COVID-19DailyDashboard_15960160643010/Overview)

All Information correct at time of publishing. Issued by the communications team.