Issue 79 |24th June 2022

Elected Members Update

for local MPs, MSPs and   
Councillors

This fortnightly 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 -[**Twitter**](http://www.twitter.com/nhsfife)**,**[**Facebook**](http://www.facebook.com/nhsfife)**,**[**Instagram**](http://www.instagram.com/nhsfife)**.**

**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](mailto:fife.chiefexecutive@nhs.scot). Members are politely asked not to approach services or individual members of staff directly for responses.

We are mindful that Elected Members have raised the issue of recent correspondence with us, and specifically the length of time that it has taken to receive a reply in some instances. Whilst this is a relatively small number of cases, we apologise for any delay that impacts upon communications with constituents.

Delays are due to a combination of several issues, including staff and resourcing challenges within our patient relations department, which we often must liaise with around service enquiries or the care that constituents have received. We have recently recruited to several positions within patient relations – including a new head of service – and we are confident that Elected Members will see this reflected in an increased efficiency of response to any enquiry.

**Main updates**

**Continued pressure on Emergency Department**

Our Emergency Department (ED) at the Victoria Hospital continues to experience unprecedented and sustained pressure. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, our ED cared for around 180 patients each day and over the last fortnight it has regularly triaged, assessed, admitted, treated, or discharged 250-300 patients each day; this increase causes significant challenges within our hospital system and leads to delays in both patient assessment and admission, if required.

Conversations are ongoing with partners, including the Scottish Ambulance Service and the Fife Health and Social Care Partnership, to identify solutions that will help alleviate the pressures on our hospital system. We are also being proactive in progressing several other projects, which are designed to support the delivery of urgent care, including:

* Undertaking research to better understand the reason for the significant increase in people requiring care in the ED.
* Redesigning our urgent care service to integrate more efficiently across primary, secondary and community care.
* Building upon the work being done by our Flow and Navigation Centre to better support, appoint, and refer patients to the most appropriate place for their care.
* Undertaking a pilot with community pharmacy that allows the service to refer patients with minor injuries directly to the Flow and Navigation Hub for appointment.

**Ongoing issues at local GP Practices**

As has been well documented, a national GP shortage is impacting the efficient provision of primary care in some areas of Fife. Whilst in some practices this has been mitigated through measures such as strengthening multi-disciplinary teams (allied health professionals, physiotherapists, mental health nurses etc), in other practices the challenges have been more acute. NHS Fife is working closely with the Fife Health and Social Care Partnership and the practices themselves to provide support and guidance, where possible, and help them find solutions that will allow them to provide a high standard of ongoing patient care despite their difficulties. Below is a brief update around two practices that have been referenced by Elected Members in correspondence:

* **High Valleyfield Medical Practice**

Significant efforts have been made to try and recruit to GP vacancies at Valleyfield Medical Practice, but no additional permanent appointments have yet been made. Salaried and locum GPs continue to provide cover, supported by a multi-disciplinary team including Advanced Nurse Practitioners, Pharmacists, Physiotherapy and Mental Health Nurses. The practice has taken actions to maintain patient access, including an upgraded telephony system with additional lines, reviewed appointments system, and changes to repeat medication ordering arrangements.  NHS Fife took part in a public meeting on Tuesday night to provide an update to the local community and the Fife Health and Social Care Partnership [will write to all practice patients next week](https://www.nhsfife.org/news-updates/latest-news/2022/06/update-on-services-at-valleyfield-medical-practice/) providing them with the current position and future plans for primary care services in the area.

* **Methilhaven Surgery**

Methilhaven Surgery will formally be handed back to NHS Fife on the first of August after the practice partners gave notice of their intention to terminate their General Medical Services contract.The current premises on Methilhaven Road is owned by the GP partners and is listed for sale. Arrangements have been made for the surgery to relocate to temporary premises within Randolph Wemyss Memorial Hospital.

**Autism assessment**

Following requests for further information on the progress of work undertaken to improve access to autism assessments, we can provide the following update from colleagues in the Fife Health and Social Care Partnership, which has oversight of mental health services.

In November last year, a range of actions were agreed to support the more efficient provision of autism assessment, including the development of a neurodevelopmental pathway pilot to streamline and improve access, additions to the multi-disciplinary workforce, and outsourcing elements of assessment for a limited time to allow increased capacity while recruitment was undertaken.

To date, an additional 2.4 WTE psychologists have been recruited against a target of 3.5 WTE and the recruitment of additional speech and language therapy staff is ongoing. These new members of staff have commenced remote clinics and are backfilling for existing clinics during holiday periods to ensure there are no breaks in assessments. These new recruits are also triaging in the pilot of the Neurodevelopmental Pathway and working on both diagnostic groups, as well as pre and post-diagnostic groups and resources.

The commission of an external provider has been concluded and the availability of additional assessment capacity has been outsourced. Referrals are now being received by the organisation, Healios, and assessments undertaken.

**Reduction in number of procedures**

Following the publication of statistics which showed a 36% reduction in the number of operations being carried out on pre-pandemic levels, we were asked to respond to various media outlets as to why this is the case. We outlined that in some specialities we are currently unable to perform the volume of procedures possible prior to the pandemic, due largely to the enhanced infection prevention measures introduced because of Covid-19. Patients requiring elective procedures are prioritised based on national guidelines to ensure those patients with the greatest clinical need are seen first.  We are continually working on ways of increasing capacity across our elective surgical programme, and while we are in a better position than many other parts of the country, it will take time to re-establish the surgical capacity we had prior to the start of the pandemic. Later this year we will also see the completion of the Fife Orthopaedic National Treatment Centre at the Victoria Hospital in Kirkcaldy, which will provide us with much needed additional theatre capacity in this speciality.

**Fife’s first medical student graduation in 50 years**

Last week, medical students from the University of St Andrews became the first in 50 years to graduate from its School of Medicine. The [ScotGEM](https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/subjects/medicine/scotgem-mbchb/) programme is designed to develop doctors interested in a career as a GP and is tailored to meet the current and future needs of our NHS. ScotGEM, which focuses on rural medicine and healthcare improvement, is taught in collaboration with NHS Fife, and run jointly with the University of Dundee.

**Director of public health annual report**

NHS Fife has now published its annual report by the director of public health. ‘Health and Wellbeing in Fife 2020-2021’ is now available to view on our [website](https://www.nhsfife.org/media/37123/nhs-fife-director-of-public-health-report-2020-and-2021.pdf) and captures the key issues impacting on health and wellbeing in Fife and highlights ambitions for the future and areas where there are concerns emerging.

**Warnings issued following dead birds appearing on Fife shoreline**

NHS Fife is working alongside partners following confirmation of avian flu on ​Edinburgh and East Lothian coastlines. Dead and ill sea birds are also appearing on Fife shores, and we have issued warnings around the importance of following [guidance](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu) for those who walk in these areas:

* Don't pick up or touch dead or sick wild birds
* Keep pets/dogs away from dead or sick birds
* Don't feed wild waterfowl
* Don't touch wild bird feathers or surfaces contaminated with wild bird droppings
* If you keep poultry or other birds, wash your hands and clean and disinfect your footwear before tending to your birds

Dead wild waterfowl should be reported to DEFRA's hotline on 03459 33557 and for the removal of dead birds, Fife ​Council can be contacted on 03451 55 00 22.

**Community hospital use**

NHS Fife is working alongside the Fife Health and Social Care Partnership to assess and evaluate community hospital services – services delivered at sites such as Adamson, Glenrothes and St Andrews – to ensure that patients continue to receive the best possible care in the best possible place. We are clear that this is an ongoing project aimed at improving and building upon local service provision at community sites.

**Covid vaccination**

*More than 880,000 doses of Covid vaccination have been administered across Fife, with almost a quarter of a million people receiving their full course and booster, or third dose.*

**Relocation of Dunfermline clinic**

The Covid vaccination clinic within the Kingsgate will [relocate to Dunfermline East Church](https://www.nhsfife.org/news-updates/latest-news/2022/06/vaccination-clinic-to-relocate-to-new-site-at-dunfermline-east-church/) next month.With many public health restrictions lifted, and the retail sector continuing its recovery, it has become necessary to find a new clinic to service much of West Fife. Dunfermline East Church has been chosen due to its considerable size, dedicated parking, and good public transport links due to the large supermarket nearby.

**Guidance published on autumn vaccinations**

The Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has published interim advice on autumn COVID-19 booster vaccinations. The guidance advises that boosters should be made available for more vulnerable adults and frontline social care and health workers, to maintain their protection over the winter. NHS Fife is carefully considering this guidance and how best to incorporate it into future vaccination planning. The full guidance can be viewed [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/jcvi-provides-interim-advice-on-an-autumn-covid-19-booster-programme).

**Drop-in clinics and appointments**

A mixture of children and adult drop-in clinics are being held this week. More information on mobile clinics and drop-in sessions can be found [here](http://www.nhsfife.org/dropin). We continue to encourage anyone eligible for any dose of the vaccine to book their appointment via the [online booking portal](https://vacs.nhs.scot/csp) (people who need to recover their username can do so [here](https://vacs.nhs.scot/csp?id=recover_username)) or by calling 0800 030 8013.

**Test & Protect**

**Staff on fixed-term contracts**

Following the end of fixed-term contracts for some test and protect staff, we have made concerted efforts to support these staff to find roles elsewhere within NHS Fife and Fife Health and Social Care Partnership, where their skillsets and experiences from the programme will be put to good use. All the contact tracing practitioners who were seconded to test and protect have already returned to their substantive posts, and for the remainder of those on fixed-term contracts, we are in the process of supporting them to find another position. A small workforce has been retained within Public Health, this was determined by contract type and service length. Throughout this time, we have kept staff up to date with developments and will continue to do so.

**Testing**

Most people no longer need to take a coronavirus test and should follow guidance on staying at home if unwell. Testing remains available to [specific groups](https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19#testing) in order to protect highest risk settings and support clinical care. The latest information on testing, isolation, and further support is available [here](https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19/).

**Other news**

**Staff wellbeing hub**

A new [permanent staff wellbeing hub](https://www.nhsfife.org/news-updates/latest-news/2022/06/new-staff-wellbeing-hub-opens-at-queen-margaret-hospital/) has opened at Queen Margaret Hospital in Dunfermline to provide a calming environment for staff to recharge away from busy hospital wards and departments. During the initial phase of the pandemic, a network of temporary staff hubs was established in healthcare sites across Fife. These hubs aimed to provide somewhere for staff to relax, get refreshments and take breaks away from their clinical areas. Permanent wellbeing hubs are currently being developed at hospitals across Fife, with the new hub created at Queen Margaret Hospital the first to be completed. The creation of the new facility cost around £65,000, with funding provided jointly by the Fife Health Charity and NHS Charities Together, which was brought to prominence by the incredible fundraising efforts of the late Captain Sir Tom Moore.

**Appointment of new vice chair**

The Cabinet Secretary has approved the appointment of Alistair Morris as our new Vice-Chair of the Board, replacing Rona Laing who retired earlier this month. Alistair has been a Non-Executive Board Member since August 2019 and has taken up the role with immediate effect.

**Hospital visiting restrictions remains at two visitors**

Restrictions on hospital visiting in most areas have now been relaxed to two visitors each day at any time. Visiting was previously limited to a single visitor to reduce the risk of Covid spreading, but with a reduction of confirmed cases in our hospitals and across the wider community, these restrictions are being gradually relaxed. More information is available [here](https://bit.ly/3Gfu30c).

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:

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