Issue 78 |10th 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. Members are politely asked not to approach services or individual members of staff directly for responses.

**Main updates**

**Staffing and wellbeing concerns**

NHS Fife was asked by local media to respond to a letter sent to local MSPs and members of the healthcare union, UNISON, which raises concerns around staffing levels and subsequent safety. We remain clear and unequivocal that the safety of those in our care is our single biggest priority, and we are steadfast in our commitment to ensure healthcare services in Fife remain safe.

We work in partnership alongside our Employee Director and other staff-side colleagues, including UNISON officers, to consider feedback about services and to ensure we listen to our staff. Through various forums we engage with staff across Fife and take the necessary action jointly to address issues that are raised. The constructive challenge and support from staff side colleagues, as an integral part of our decision making throughout the pandemic, has been invaluable, as we have collectively faced the most difficult set of circumstances.

Within our acute hospital, a daily safety huddle takes place with representatives from every ward and clinical area to ensure staffing is in place across the entirety of the site, and this is monitored each day. We want to be clear to Elected Members that our staff are not prevented from reporting issues on our DATIX incident reporting platform. This system is used daily to record any issues so these can then be addressed and prevented from occurring in future.

There has been considerable effort throughout the pandemic to support the health and wellbeing of our workforce, and the safety of both staff and patients.  Many of the positive changes put in place have been developed and implemented in partnership with our colleagues from the trade unions and professional bodies, and we are grateful for their constructive challenge and support during the most difficult of circumstances.

Where staff have concerns about any aspect of their role, we listen, and there are well-established processes in place to ensure these concerns are captured, looked into, and addressed. This feedback plays a valuable part in helping us to improve the services we provide.

**Staffing Pressures**

We are acutely aware of the scale of pressures on staffing and have acknowledged this repeatedly and consistently during our public Board meetings and in our regular meetings with elected representatives. There have been, and continues to be, significant and severe pressures on staffing – this is despite significant recruitment over recent years, with the [most recent statistics](https://turasdata.nes.nhs.scot/data-and-reports/official-workforce-statistics/all-official-statistics-publications/01-march-2022-workforce/dashboards/nhsscotland-workforce/?pageid=6429) showing that we have a greater number of staff in post than ever before.

The situation remains, however, that nursing recruitment is extremely challenging, with the number of vacancies far greater than the number of qualified and available nursing staff. Despite recruiting extensively prior, and indeed during the pandemic, a high number of vacancies remain, due in no small part to the fact we now require a far larger nursing workforce than needed previously.

As part of these efforts, we have recently successfully recruited more than 70 healthcare support workers to help support our qualified nursing staff. Earlier this year, we also commenced our overseas recruitment programme, becoming the first Health Board in Scotland to welcome international recruits into the workforce as part of a new partnership with Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.  Whilst the numbers are relatively small at present, this pipeline provides a further opportunity to address the recruitment challenges alongside the range of other measures in place

As in previous years, we continue to achieve considerable success in attracting newly qualified nursing staff to join our workforce. This vital work has enabled us to recruit an additional 160 newly qualified nurses this year, who will beginning taking up post from September. We have also greatly expanded our nurse bank, with more than 850 additional bank staff recruited in 2021-22, and who continue to support our wards and departments across Fife.

We recently met with representatives from UNISON to discuss the concerns they have expressed, and to look at further ways in which we could work jointly to help ease the pressure on our workforce, beyond the measures and actions already in place. As we have done throughout the pandemic, we continue to work with our staff-side and union colleagues to provide every possible support to those staff working tirelessly on our frontline to care for those who need it most.

**Director of Public Health Annual Report**

The Director of Public Health Annual Report: Health and Wellbeing in Fife 2020-2021 is now available to view on the NHS Fife website:

https://www.nhsfife.org/media/37123/nhs-fife-director-of-public-health-report-2020-and-2021.pdf

**Emergency department waiting times**

Following Public Health Scotland’s publication of the [latest Emergency Department waiting times,](https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/nhs-performs-weekly-update-of-emergency-department-activity-and-waiting-time-statistics/nhs-performs-weekly-update-of-emergency-department-activity-and-waiting-time-statistics-week-ending-22-may-2022/) we have been asked by various media outlets to comment on the latest run of figures, which show NHS Fife regularly performing in the mid 70 percentile. To provide some context as to this performance, many of our highest daily attendances at our Emergency Department have come in recent months, and despite this [we continue to better the national average for 4-hour performance, as we have done in 16 of the previous 17 weeks](https://www.nhsperforms.scot/hospital-data/indicator-hospital?hospitalid=44&indicatorid=2).

In addition to seeing far higher numbers of people presenting, we are also seeing greater numbers of those who are frail or more acutely unwell. This means that patients are requiring a greater level of care and are often remaining longer in hospital, which adds additional pressure to services and leads to some patients waiting longer in our Emergency Department.

It is important to remember also that those patients waiting remain in the expert care of our clinical team and are continually monitored throughout. Crucially, patients are triaged by our Emergency Department staff on arrival, with those who are most acutely unwell prioritised and seen very quickly.

**Orthopaedic waiting times**

The quarterly waiting times statistics were published on 31 May 2022 and are available here:- <https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/nhs-waiting-times-stage-of-treatment/stage-of-treatment-waiting-times-inpatients-day-cases-and-new-outpatients-31-may-2022/>

Much of the media coverage of these statistics has centred on waiting times for elective orthopaedic procedures, such as knee or hip replacement. In Fife, patients requiring elective procedures are waiting considerably longer than they would have done prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which is reflective of the situation across the country.

Despite this, Fife remains in a better position that many other areas, having steadfastly continued to carry out as many of these procedures as possible through the pandemic. At present, NHS Fife are carrying out elective orthopaedic surgery for all but the lowest priority patients.

Fife also benefits from having one of the most forward-thinking and innovative orthopaedic teams in the country, becoming the first board in Scotland to carry out both hip and knee replacements as day-cases, which has enabled us to see greater numbers of patients and shorten the length of time patients are required to remain in hospital. The Fife Orthopaedic National Treatment Centre at the Victoria Hospital remains on course to be completed later this year, and while initially conceived to help future proof the elective orthopaedic programme against rising demand, will provide us with much needed additional theatre capacity.

**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).

**Covid vaccination**

**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**

**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**

**Jubilee Plaque**

To commemorate the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II, NHS Fife has commissioned a memorial plaque which will take pride of place in the new £33 million Fife Orthopaedic National Treatment Centre at the Victoria Hospital in Kirkcaldy when it is completed later this year.

The design of the new plaque mirrors one commissioned to commemorate Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee in 1897, when a foundation stone and plaque were laid at the site of the former Infectious Diseases Hospital to mark the 60th anniversary of Queen Victoria’s accession to the throne.

Both plaques will go on permanent display in the new courtyard seating area of the new National Treatment Centre, serving as a tribute and lasting reminder of over a century of public services, and the evolution of healthcare provision to the citizens of Fife.

**Pride Month**

NHS Fife recognises that many people experience discrimination through social exclusion and harassment because of their Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion and Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.

At NHS Fife we take our responsibility seriously to challenge and change this to achieve the highest standards in equality. We are committed to being a proactive agent for change and that is why we see equality and diversity at the heart of everything we do.

By investing in equality and diversity NHS Fife aims to improve services and patient care.

* Ensure that our staff and service users are in a safe, inclusive, and accessible environment
* Ensure that our services are accessible to all communities across Fife
* Promote health and well-being for all people
* Attract, train, promote and support a workforce that is diverse and representative of general society

**BBC Filming**

To coincide with the publication of the latest quarterly statistics, we allowed BBC Scotland to visit Ward 10 at Victoria Hospital, which cares for patients undergoing elective orthopaedic procedures. The reporter spoke to patients who had recently undergone surgery to learn about their experience, and spoke to consultant in trauma and orthopaedics, Mr Andy Ballantyne, about how patients were being prioritised and what is being done to minimise waiting times.

The BBC Scotland feature is available to view here: - <https://youtu.be/FNhTY2QUYKc>

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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