

COVID-19 Recovery Committee

1st Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Thursday, 13 January 2021

SPICe: issues paper

This note highlights some issues Members may wish to take account of when the Cabinet Secretary speaks to the committee.

A timeline of recent activity

Some of the key announcements since the committee last met on Thursday 23 December are set out below:

23 December: Scottish Government announce [nightclubs are to close from 27 December](#), subject to a review after three weeks.

29 December: Scottish Government announce the [breakdown of £107 million support package for businesses](#) impacted by the spread of the Omicron variant.

Scottish Government announce that [priority for PCR test site slots will be given to essential workers, those at highest risk and anyone eligible for new Covid treatments](#). A [self-isolation exemption scheme](#) is also available for essential workers.

2 January: Scottish Government brings forward [second doses for young people](#). Following JCVI advice, 12-15 year olds can get their second vaccination from 12 weeks after their first dose.

3 January: Scottish Government publish details of the allocation of the [Healthy Islands Fund](#), aiming to promote healthy and resilient island communities.

Scottish Government advise all [secondary pupils to take at-home COVID-19 tests before they return to school](#) to limit the spread of Omicron.

Scottish Government announce details a financial package worth [£65 million for culture and major events](#).

5 January: Scottish Government announce [changes to self-isolation and testing](#). From 6 January, new cases can end self-isolation if they don't have a fever and test negative on a LFD on Day 6 and again at least 24 hours later. Asymptomatic people who test positive on an LFD will no longer be asked to take a PCR test to confirm the result.

Deputy First Minister also writes to the committee to confirm that the existing Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) scheme that supported critical industry to minimise the impacts of isolation related absence will end

FM also signals in parliamentary statement that longer-term work is underway "to consider the adaptations that are necessary to enable us to deal more proportionately and sustainably with any future phases of the pandemic". A revised strategic framework would be published over coming weeks "that will set out more fully how that process of adaptation can be managed, with a view to building greater resilience"

7 January: Public Health Scotland publishes [statistical report](#), which includes data on hospital admissions "because of" Covid-19. This showed an estimated 60% of hospital COVID-19 cases were admitted because of the virus (see separate stats paper for detail)

11 January: Statement from FM and three-week review

Possible issues to discuss

- The Scottish Government's **most recent understanding and modelling of the Omicron variant**, for example on transmission, health outcomes, vaccine effectiveness, and prevalence within Scotland and **implications of this** on hospital admissions, ICU admissions and deaths. Are we collecting the right data? What will the next peak "look like"?
- **Variant surveillance** – how will the integrity of surveillance for new variants be maintained given that PCR tests will not always be required following a positive LFD?
- **Test availability** – are there enough LFDs to support the change in testing regime? Views on charging for Lateral flow Tests?
- **Hospital admissions** – will Public Health Scotland now routinely publish data on the proportion of hospital admissions because of COVID-19?
- **NHS Pressures** – in light of some NHS boards calling in military help and declaring major incidents, can the Cabinet Secretary provide the Committee with a run-down of the position of the other NHS boards?

- **Wider workforce pressures** – Scottish Government’s assessment of current and forthcoming pressures on public services, due to Covid related absences, including health, police, fire and education. What is the estimated impact of reduced isolation times on the pandemic? And what would be the impact of further reductions? (see separate stats paper for figures on workforce absences)
- **Vaccine rollout** - progress, including in previously under vaccinated groups and areas; and what is future strategy for further boosters?
- **Ventilation** – progress in rollout of £25 million funding to deliver ventilation in businesses, and rollout of £10 million funding to schools; and SG assessment of quality of ventilation in different sectors in Scotland (eg education); and what is next
- **Vaccine certification** – the government’s thinking on the scheme, and possible next steps, including a formal review and evaluation? (PHS data shows that as of midnight 1 January 2022 the NHS Covid Status App had been downloaded 2,328,913 times)
- The rollout of **financial support to businesses culture and major events** most severely affected by restrictions and advice (the DFM wrote to the committee on 6 Jan with details of the allocation of £262m, of the £375m support package, to hospitality/leisure; wedding sector supply chain; wholesalers affected by hospitality cancellations; tourism; culture; events; public transport; taxis, and sport).
- The government’s assessment of the **behavioural response** of the Scottish public – for example in avoiding non-priority contact with others, mask wearing, testing and reporting results, isolating following a positive test, or working from home where possible
- Government thinking on the **forthcoming strategic framework**, as signalled by the FM – how will this differ from previous versions? Will it include a new statement of strategic intent?

NB: there are no **public questions** for this week’s session. A separate paper from the Participation and Communities Team reviews how it has worked and asks for feedback from Members.

Simon Wakefield and Kathleen Robson, SPICe Research,

10 January 2022

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