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Epidemics (Scotland): NHS Scotland facing huge pressure in Covid surge, BMA warns

Wednesday 7 July 2021, by [BROOKS Libby](#) (Date first published: 7 July 2021).

Self-isolation of vaccinated medical staff could be one area to review, doctor suggests.

The Scottish government has days to act to relieve “very high pressure” on healthcare, according to the chair of BMA [Scotland](#), after a second health board flagged acute workforce pressures as a result of rising Covid cases and large numbers of staff having to self-isolate.

Lewis Morrison said the decision by Raigmore hospital – the biggest in the Highlands – to cancel all non-urgent surgery and outpatient activity after it reached capacity on Tuesday was “a weather vane rather than an isolated example”.

Morrison told BBC Radio Scotland: “Raigmore is an example of what might well happen in other places if we don’t take some action to deal with what is a very high level of pressure on healthcare, both in general practice and in hospitals, combined with rising Covid cases leading to a large number of staff having to self-isolate.”

Asked if Scotland should follow England in [scrapping self-isolation](#) for those who have been double-vaccinated, he said he would rather make the case specifically about healthcare staff: “Do we have the evidence to support fully vaccinated staff who are contacts continuing to work with some sort of change to the testing regime?”

While warning that any changes must be evidence-based, he said the situation was urgent. He said: “Within the next few days a decision needs to be made to ensure the continuity of healthcare services in areas under these kinds of pressure.”

On Wednesday morning, Scottish Labour called on ministers to intervene as it was revealed that [NHS Lanarkshire](#) was considering scaling back its elective care services and had asked the public to attend emergency departments only “as a last resort”.

In a message to NHS Lanarkshire staff, the chief executive, Heather Knox, said: “The challenges caused by pressures on our emergency departments, rising Covid numbers and workforce pressures, are causing difficulties for staff across both acute and community services.”

Data released by the World [Health](#) Organization at the weekend revealed that half of the top 10 areas in Europe with the highest rates of Covid-19 were in Scotland.

The latest figures from the National Records of Scotland, published on Wednesday, showed that last week there were 21 deaths where Covid-19 was mentioned on the death certificate, an increase from 17 last week.

Earlier on Wednesday, the education secretary, Shirley-Anne Somerville, said the Scottish

government “is looking very seriously” at whether to follow England on changes to self-isolation advice for children ahead of schools returning in August.

Later on Wednesday, first minister [Nicola Sturgeon](#) told the BBC that the planned easing of Scottish restrictions on 19 July and 9 August were “not set in stone” and that it was important to chart the route out of lockdown “at a sensible pace”.

“Nothing, against a global pandemic of an infectious virus that has got more infectious and transmissible with the Delta variant, can be set in stone.

“But to set dates in stone while we still face that virus would not in my view be responsible. My job is to take hard decisions that get us as safely as possible to that end point.”

The delayed move to level zero planned for 19 July will mean the general indoor physical distancing requirement should be reduced from 2 metres to 1 metre, and the outdoor requirement to physically distance should be lifted altogether.

From 9 August, the Scottish government aims to remove remaining legal restrictions, including social distancing indoors, by which time all over-40s should have had their second vaccine for at least two weeks.

Data last week showed that the 80% of new cases were among the under-44s, with with a total of almost 2,000 football-related cases emerging from test and protect data last Wednesday.

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P.S.

- The Guardian. Wed 7 Jul 2021 14.35 BST:
<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jul/07/nhs-scotland-facing-huge-pressure-in-covid-surge-bma-warns>

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