

COVID-19 Recovery Committee

9th Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Thursday, 17 March 2022

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

A selection of the key announcements over the last couple of months are set out below:

- **26 January:** Government publishes Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) Scotland Bill
- **3 February:** UK Government announce the [Novavax COVID-19 vaccine Nuvaxovid has been approved by MHRA](#).
- **3 February:** Scottish Government announce a six month [extension to some temporary provisions made under UK legislation](#).
- **4 February:** Scottish Government announces that [more than 15 million COVID-19 PCR tests have now been carried out in Scotland](#) since testing began.
- **4 February:** Scottish Government announce [flu vaccinations are on offer again](#) until the end of March for those in high risk groups (the programme was paused in December so that health boards could prioritise the delivery of COVID-19 booster jabs).
- **9 February:** Scottish Government announce the [extension of the expiry date](#) for statutory coronavirus (Covid-19) restrictions and requirements to 24 September 2022. The restrictions will remain subject to review every three weeks.
- **9 February:** The Coronavirus (Discretionary Compensation for Self-isolation) (Scotland) Bill is [unanimously passed](#) in the Scottish Parliament.

- **10 February:** Scottish Government announce high school pupils and staff will not be required to wear face coverings in classrooms from 28 February 2022. Mitigations relating to assemblies and transition visits for learners who will start primary or secondary in August 2022 will also be eased.
- **16 February:** JCVI updates advice on vaccinations for 5 to 11 age group. The committee recommends a non-urgent offer to all 5 to 11 year olds of 2 (10mcg) doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech paediatric vaccine. The 2 doses should be given with an interval of at least 12 weeks between doses.
- **21 February:** Scottish Government announce second booster jabs will be offered to those aged 75 and over, residents in care homes and immunosuppressed individuals aged 12 and over. The people will be invited as they become eligible from at least 24 weeks after their last booster.
- **22 February:** Scotland's updated Strategic Framework is published. First Minister announces vaccine certification will no longer be legally required from Monday 28 February. Current legal requirements on the use of face coverings and the collection of customer details for contact tracing purposes are expected to be lifted on 21 March.
- **22 February:** Scottish Government announce children aged 5-11 to be offered COVID-19 vaccination appointments in community clinics from 19 March 2022.
- **28 February:** Scottish Government publish updated guidance for the use of face coverings in schools. Mitigations relating to assemblies and transition visits for learners who will start primary or secondary in August 2022 are eased from 28
- **5 March:** Scottish Government announce women who are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 will be able to resume NHS fertility treatment, following an updated review.
- **6 March:** Scottish Government announce spring booster jabs will be offered to those aged 75 and over and people at highest risk of severe COVID-19 disease from Monday 7 March.
- **8 March:** Scottish Government announce patients with COVID-19 symptoms will be asked to contact their GP instead of NHS 24 from the end of March.

Possible issues to discuss

- The Scottish Government's assessment of most recent trends in COVID-19 data – cases, hospitalisations and deaths – underlying causes and forecasts for coming weeks.
- The impact of reduced funding for certain COVID-19 related studies, such as React (Real-time Assessment of Community Transmission) study, Siren study (healthcare staff in hospitals), Vivaldi (care homes), Zoe (covid symptom) study, the CoMix (behavioural) study and the importance of the continuation of the

weekly [Covid infection survey](#) from the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) (see for example [this article](#), and [recent tweet from Prof Stephen Reicher](#))

- Members may wish to discuss some of the reports, reviews and actions [flagged up in the Scottish Government's recent strategic framework](#) (published 22 February)
 1. A **COVID-19 Outbreak Management Plan**, which aims to set out the process and methods for responding to future outbreaks, (to be published spring 2022).
 2. **Updated plans for Test and Protect** for the endemic phase, and how to transition (detailed transition plan to be published in March) This is expected to cover duration of the transition beyond March; detail on surveillance capabilities and contingency infrastructure scalable if required in the event of a future variant; and continuing provision of testing.
 3. **The Standing Committee on Pandemics** to provide a report on improved preparedness for future pandemics, (interim recommendations by July 2022)
 4. A **data and reporting strategy** (to be published in spring 2022). And possible establishment of a People's Panel.
 5. The next **review of international travel measures** will focus on what the response should be to the identification of a future variant of the virus
 6. **Vaccinations programme** – including for example efforts to ensure the vaccination programme reaches everyone, scenario planning, surge plans, and a long-term sustainable model
 7. Work to support **high risk groups**, and adult care homes, and tackling racialised health inequalities, and local inequalities
 8. Work with employers, trade unions, and organisations on **hybrid working**
 9. Actions on **Long Covid** – broadening understanding and helping develop treatments
 10. Support for **international vaccination, treatments and surveillance** - including support for the Governments of Malawi, Zambia and Rwanda, and calls for improvements in vaccine equity globally, fund support for equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines in Sub-Saharan African partner countries

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