

COVID-19 Recovery Committee

13th Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Thursday, 28 April 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

Some of the most recent key announcements and activities are set out below:

- **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.
- **14 March:** Scottish Government announce all international travel restrictions for people coming to Scotland [are to end from 4am on Friday 18 March](#).
- **15 March:** Scottish Government announce legal requirements to wear face coverings on public transport and most indoor public settings [will continue until at least early April](#). The remaining legal requirements for businesses and service providers will end on Monday 21 March.

The Scottish Government's [Test & Protect transition plan](#) is published. People without COVID-19 symptoms [will no longer be asked to take regular lateral flow tests from 18 April](#). From this date, free lateral flow devices (LFDs) will no longer be available except for any purpose for which testing continues to be advised. People with symptoms should continue to isolate and get a PCR test until the end of April.

- **17 March:** The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) [approve the use of Evusheld \(tixagevimab/cilgavimab\) for use](#) on adults who are unlikely to mount an immune response from COVID-19 vaccination or for whom vaccination is not recommended.
- **30 March:** Scottish Government announce the [legal requirement to wear a face covering on public transport and most indoor public settings will end on 18 April](#). Requirements for face coverings at weddings, funerals and places of worship will end on 4 April.

In addition, from 18 April most people without symptoms will not be required to take tests. Lateral flow devices for twice weekly testing will no longer be available. PCR tests for people with COVID-19 symptoms will be available until 30 April, when test sites will close.

- **31 March:** Scottish Government publish the [City Centre Recovery Task Force report](#), which looks at impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on city centres.
- **7 April:** Professor Andrew Morris is appointed as [Chair of the Scottish Government's Standing Committee on Pandemic Preparedness \(SCoPP\)](#), which will advise on future pandemic risks. The [terms of reference for the Standing Committee](#) are also published.
- **18 April:** Face coverings no longer a legal requirement in most indoor public spaces and public transport.
- **19 April:** Scottish Government [lodged a GIQ](#) announcing its intention to stop requiring COVID certification for domestic purposes but retaining it for international travel. The app will soon be turned off in line with the rest of the UK.

Possible issues to discuss

- The Cabinet Secretary's current assessment of the state of the pandemic, including on transmission, hospital admissions, ICU admissions and deaths.
- **Surveillance** – how will surveillance be maintained (including for new variants) given the changes to Test and Protect and the closure of test sites on 30 April?
- **Vaccine certification** – can the Cabinet Secretary explain the decision on stopping the use of COVID passports in domestic situations? The strategic framework previously said they would be retained when we are in medium risk levels and above.
- **Testing** - LFDs will only be provided free for those where there is a requirement to test. Will these be funded by the Scottish or UK Government and what is the projected cost?
- **NHS and 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. (see separate stats paper for figures on workforce absences)
- **Staff** – with the roll back in testing and lower demand on vaccination centres, what are the plans for the staff on these sites. Will they be re-deployed to other parts of the NHS or other public services?
- **Vaccine rollout** - progress, including in previously under vaccinated groups and areas; likely future strategy for further boosters?
- The government's assessment of the **behavioural response** of the Scottish public, especially since the lifting of the requirement to wear face coverings – are people voluntarily choosing to use face coverings?
- **Home working** – what is the Scottish Government's position on the need for home working?
- **Evusheld** – will the Scottish Government make Evusheld available for use on the NHS, or will this be considered by the Scottish Medicines Consortium?
- Long-COVID –Can the Cabinet Secretary provide an update on the Scottish Government's approach to tackling long-COVID?

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25 April 2022

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