Coronavirus – NHS Lothian under pressure

In common with several other health boards in Scotland, NHS Lothian has said that the increased number of Covid-19 cases and hospitalisation is putting pressure on their services.

There is a high number of staff who are required to self-isolate and the health board says this is causing serious capacity issues.

Jacquie Campbell, Chief Officer of Acute Services, NHS Lothian, said clinical teams were focussing on the most urgent and serious patients and said that some planned procedures were being postponed as a result.

She added: "Lothian is experiencing a high number of patients who have tested positive for COVID-19. We are seeing a rise in the number of patients admitted to hospital and in the numbers of staff who are required to self-isolate.

"As a result, we have to focus our capacity on the most urgent cases, which means that unfortunately we have had to postpone some planned procedures.

"We apologise to all of those patients who have been affected and would reassure them that their appointment will be re-arranged as soon as possible."

The seven day COVID-19 rate shows that around 568 per 100,000

people in Lothian are testing positive for the virus.

Jacquie asked people in Lothian to work together with the health service and make sure they use the right service at the right time by considering accessing their pharmacy, minor injuries service, their GP or calling 111 rather than automatically going to the Emergency Department.

She also echoed warnings from NHS Lothian's Director of Public Health, Dona Milne, who urged more people to get vaccinated and not to give up on vital COVID-19 safety precautions to protect themselves and their families.

Dona also urged people to stick with face coverings, handwashing and social distancing and underlined the importance of socialising outside rather than indoors wherever possible and keeping windows open if indoors.

She says vaccination and testing are critical and has been working with Lothian's four local authorities to encourage local business to put vaccination at the heart of their agenda and ensure their staff are encouraged and allowed to leave work for an appointment or to attend a drop-in clinic.

So far, a total of 1,039,907 vaccine doses have been administered in Lothian — 626,427 first doses and 412,580 second doses.

Dona said: "Covid hasn't gone away and can still cause serious illness. It is critical we remember that.

"We know that 1 in 3 people who have Covid do not show symptoms of the virus but can still transmit it, so we should all be testing ourselves twice a week to keep ourselves, family and communities safe.

"We need every adult over the age of 18 to get their vaccination as soon as possible. We have made it easier by creating a huge network of vaccination clinics that offer

drop-in and scheduled appointments and are operating in the heart of communities.

"We have also teamed up with Scottish Ambulance Service to take the vaccination bus to them and park it in shopping centres and other areas across Lothian.

"We know it can be hard for people to take time out of their working day, especially if they work in the retail and hospitality industry, so our clinics are running into the evening. We are also working with local authorities and we would like to ask businesses and local employers to support their staff with time off to attend a vaccination clinic so that we can get people vaccinated as quickly as possible."