

Core brief

**Message from Jane Grant, Chief Executive
(31 December 2021, 9.00am)**

In my final Core Brief of 2021, I would like to thank all of our staff who have been working throughout the festive period, ensuring that every one of our patients has been well cared for and their loved ones supported. I hope that as many of you as possible have been able to have some downtime, and for those of you who will get some time off over the New Year, that you can enjoy it when it comes.

2021 has been a significant challenge. We all hoped that this year would see an end to COVID-19 and a return to normality, but this will now need to be our aspiration for 2022. As we move ahead to next year, I remain hopeful that there is light at the end of the tunnel and as the next few months pass, we will experience a significant wane in COVID, coupled with greater opportunities for our Health Service to recover, our staff to recuperate and our communities to flourish.

Nevertheless, it is important that I also take this opportunity to note that we are currently seeing an upsurge in hospitalisations alongside record numbers of COVID cases in our local communities, with almost 5,000 recorded in one 24 hour period earlier this week. We are also starting to see a rise in our inpatient numbers over the last few days and given the rapid spread of the Omicron variant, we are working hard to ensure our services are prepared for a further increase in cases, along with the usual winter pressures, over the next few weeks.

I absolutely appreciate that as with Christmas, staff will be planning to see loved ones over New Year and this will mean more of us coming together in our own or other people's homes. If you are seeing family and friends over Hogmanay, please remember to follow the guidelines, particularly around getting together with no more than three households, carrying out a negative LFT beforehand and if you can, encouraging the people you are spending time with to do the same.

Our vaccination teams have been continuing the push to give as many people as possible the opportunity to be vaccinated, which, as you know, is one of the primary ways that we can curb levels of COVID infection. To that end, if you are able to help, by encouraging friends or family members who are due their booster to come forward earlier, that would be of great benefit to them and to our local communities as a whole. It would also be a great way for those yet to receive their booster to see out 2021 and move into the New Year as protected as possible.

Finally, as we head ever closer to the bells, I want to thank you all; for the role each of you played in our collective achievements; for really digging deep throughout the year; and for doing all you could to support your patients and your colleagues. It is a real privilege to work alongside you all and I would like to wish every member of staff the very best for the New Year. I sincerely hope that 2022 brings with it positivity, peace and solace for us all. Thank you.