

COVID-19 National and Local timeline during 2023

- To retain awareness of any new variants appearing in the UK from abroad, The Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has asked clinicians who manage COVID-19 patients to establish whether any patients have recently returned from China and if so to take a specimen for PCR testing. Hospitalised patients returning from China will undergo enhanced genome sequencing – *3rd January 2023*
- For those 12 years and older travelling from mainland China to England, a COVID-19 test must be taken no more than 2 days before travel. Notification of a negative test result must be confirmed by the airline before travel. This applies to all direct and indirect flights from mainland China. From 8th January, some passengers travelling from mainland China to Heathrow Airport will be invited to take a voluntary test on arrival here to monitor for new variants – *5th January 2023*
- Latest update on COVID-19 variants identified in the UK shows that cases are primarily made up of BQ.1 and its sublineages. Two variants, CH.1.1 and XBB.1.5 (both variants in the Omicron family) appear to have a growth advantage in the UK and are most likely to take over from BQ.1 as the next dominant variant in UK. Neither have been designated as variants of concern by UKHSA – *11th January 2023*
- Results for the latest Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey show the estimated number of people testing positive for COVID-19 in private residential households as follows:
 - In England it was 2,189,300, equating to 4.02% of the population, or around 1 in 25 people
 - In Wales it was 157,000, equating to 5.16% of the population, or around 1 in 19 people
 - In Scotland it was 219,600, equating to 4.17% of the population, or around 1 in 25 people
 - In Northern Ireland it was 129,100, equating to 7.04% of the population, or around 1 in 14 people– *11th January 2023*
- COVID-19 surveillance indicators suggest at a national level, coronavirus activity has decreased in most indicators in week 1 of 2023.
 - Hospital admission rates for COVID-19 are highest in the North East, with a rate of 13.18 per 100,000 population
 - Swab positivity for flu has decreased to 12.2% in week 1, compared to 25.2% in week 52. The highest positivity is seen in 5 to 14 year olds at 17.0% – *12th January 2023*

- In response to reduced demand, the UK's polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing network is to be reduced from 3 labs to 2. Therefore, the Rosalind Franklin Laboratory will cease to process PCR tests – *17th January 2023*
- Support available from HM Revenue and Customs if your business is affected by COVID-19 in the form of email updates, videos and webinars – *18th January 2023*
- COVID-19 surveillance indicators suggest at a national level, coronavirus activity has decreased in most indicators in week 2 of 2023.
Hospital admission rates for COVID-19 are highest in the North East, with a rate of 8.83 per 100,000 population
Swab positivity for flu has decreased to 6.0% in week 2, compared to 12.2% in week 1. The highest positivity is seen in 0 to 4 year olds at 8.9% – *19th January 2023*
- The UK Commission on Covid Commemoration held its sixth meeting and agreed to produce a final version of the report to present to the Prime Minister by the end of March – *24th January 2023*
- The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has given interim advice to government on the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination programme for 2023. It suggests that plans should be made to offer those of higher risk of severe COVID-19 a booster vaccination this autumn. It further advises that those who are older and those who are immunosuppressed should receive an extra booster vaccine dose in the spring – *25th January 2023*
- COVID-19 surveillance indicators suggest at a national level, coronavirus activity has decreased in most indicators in week 3 of 2023.
Hospital admission rates for COVID-19 are highest in the North East, with a rate of 8.28 per 100,000 population.
Swab positivity for flu has decreased to 2.8% in week 3, compared to 6.5% in week 2. The highest positivity is seen in 5 to 14 year olds and those 15 to 44 at 4.5%
– *26th January 2023*
- COVID-19 surveillance indicators suggest at a national level a modest increase in coronavirus activity in week 4 of 2023.
Hospital admission rates for COVID-19 are highest in the South East, with a rate of 8.67 per 100,000 population.
Swab positivity for flu has decreased to 2.7% in week 4, compared to 3.0% in week 3. Highest positivity is in 15 to 44 year olds at 5.8%, an increase from 4.6% in week 3
– *2nd February 2023*
- COVID-19 surveillance indicators show hospital admission rates continue to rise, particularly in those aged 65 years and over in week 5 of 2023.

Swab positivity for flu has decreased to 2.7% in week 5, compared to 3.3% in week 4. Highest positivity is seen in 15 to 44 years at 5.3%, a decrease from 7.3% in week 4 – *9th February 2023*

- Latest update on COVID-19 variants identified in the UK shows that cases of the two new variants, CH.1.1 and XBB.1.5 (both variants in the Omicron family) continue to show a growth advantage in the UK and are likely to increase overall transmission as they become more prevalent. There is no increased risk of hospitalisation for people with CH.1.1 – *10th February 2023*
- Final day of vaccination for the autumn/winter booster jab for those older people at the highest risk of hospitalisation from COVID-19 – *12th February 2023*
- COVID-19 surveillance indicators show a mixed picture, notably hospitalisations, suggesting an increase in activity in week 6 of 2023. Hospital admission rates for COVID-19 are highest in the North East, with a rate of 12.39 per 100,000 population. Swab positivity for flu has decreased to 2.0% in week 6, compared to 2.8% in week 5. Highest positivity is seen in 15 to 44 years at 4.8%, a decrease from 5.2% in week 5 – *16th February 2023*
- UK Commission on Covid Commemoration are set to put their final recommendations to the Government in the Spring following almost 5,000 taking part in the consultation process across UK – *17th February 2023*
- Almost 17.5 million eligible people received their COVID-19 autumn booster vaccination between 5th September 2022 and the end date of 12th February 2023 – *18th February 2023*
- COVID-19 surveillance indicators show an increase in activity in week 7 of 2023. Hospital admission rates for COVID-19 are highest in the South East, with a rate of 12.47 per 100,000 population. Swab positivity for flu has increased slightly to 2.5% in week 7, compared to 2.0% in week 6. Highest positivity is seen in 15 to 44 years at 7.6%, an increase from 5.2% in week 6 – *23rd February 2023*
- Results for the latest Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey (week ending 14th February) show the estimated number of people testing positive for COVID-19 in private residential households as follows:
In England it was 1,223,000, equating to 2.18% of the population, or around 1 in 45 people
In Wales it was 55,300, equating to 1.79% of the population, or around 1 in 55 people

In Scotland it was 114,800, equating to 2.18% of the population, or around 1 in 45 people

In Northern Ireland it was 29,700, equating to 1.62% of the population, or around 1 in 60 people

UK Health Security Agency has produced a step by step guide to taking a COVID-19 PCR home test and provides information about registering your test

– 24th February 2023

- COVID-19 highlighted the need for increased testing capacity and quick, accurate results. A new piece of equipment called the *Automated Workcell* used in a purpose-built automated laboratory can now produce accurate results at high capacity but without the need for time-consuming manual processes and the need for qualified and specialised technical staff – 27th February 2023

[This summary presently covers the period to the end of February 2023 but will be updated on a monthly basis]

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