

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
- COVID-19 surveillance indicators show a decrease in activity in week 8 of 2023. Hospital admission rates for COVID-19 are highest in the North East, with a rate of 15.66 per 100,000 population. Swab positivity for flu remained stable at 2.4% in week 8, compared to 2.5% in week 7. Highest positivity is in 15 to 44 years at 6.7%, a decrease from 7.6% in week 7 – 2nd March 2023
- Results for the latest Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey (week ending 21st February) show the estimated number of people testing positive for COVID-19 in private residential households as follows:
In England it was 1,298,600, equating to 2.31% of the population, or around 1 in 45 people
In Wales it was 68,100, equating to 2.21% of the population, or around 1 in 45 people
In Scotland it was 117,100, equating to 2.22% of the population, or around 1 in 45 people
In Northern Ireland it was 20,800, equating to 1.14% of the population, or around 1 in 90 people – 3rd March 2023
- The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has advised that a Spring COVID-19 booster programme for 2023 be prepared and offered to: adults aged 75 years and above; residents in a care home for older adults; individuals aged 5 years and over who are immunosuppressed – 7th March 2023
- Information for using the NHS COVID Pass to demonstrate your coronavirus (COVID-19) status when travelling abroad has been updated by UK Health Security Agency

Statement made by the Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay relates that the spring booster programme will end on 30th June, as will the opportunity for those who are not vaccinated to obtain a first or second dose of vaccine – 8th March 2023

- COVID-19 surveillance indicators showed a mixed picture in week 9 of 2023. Swab positivity for flu decreased slightly to 1.8% in week 9, compared to 2.5% in week 8. Highest positivity is in those 15 to 44 years at 4.6%, a decrease from 6.8% in week 8

The UK Health Security Agency, Office for National Statistics and the University of Oxford are thanking over 500,000 people from across the UK for their contribution to the COVID-19 Infection Survey which was originally set up in April 2020 and helped to provide weekly data on positivity levels and on details of new variants
– 9th March 2023

- From UK sequences collected, The UK Health Security Agency has released the latest variant prevalence figures as follows: 44% classified as XBB.1.5; 23% CH.1.1; 13% BQ.1; 7% XBB; 1% BA.5; 1% BA.2.75, the remaining 11% were form variants representing less than 1% of the total. Three additional variants are being monitored: XBB.1.9.1, XBB.1.9.2 and XBB.1.16
– 10th March 2023
- COVID-19 surveillance indicators show a mixed picture in week 10 of 2023. Hospital admission rates for COVID-19 continue to be highest in the North East, with a rate of 14.03 per 100,000 population. Swab positivity for flu remained low and stable at 1.9% in week 10, compared to the previous week. Highest positivity is in those 15 to 44 years at 5.5% an increase from 5.1% in week 9

Results for the latest Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey (week ending 7th March) show the estimated number of people testing positive for COVID-19 in private residential households as follows:
In England it was 1,322,000, equating to 2.36% of the population, or around 1 in 40 people
In Wales it was 68,200, equating to 2.21% of the population, or around 1 in 45 people
In Scotland it was 105,100, equating to 2.00% of the population, or around 1 in 50 people
In Northern Ireland it was 26,600, equating to 1.45% of the population, or around 1 in 70 people

Note: The Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey data collection will be paused from mid-March, and so 24th March will be the final weekly publication date
– 16th March 2023

- As China has increased its information sharing on testing, vaccination and genomic sequencing, from today, the UK Health Security Agency's voluntary, on-arrival testing programme of travellers from mainland China to London's Heathrow will end. Also from 5th April, people flying from mainland China to England will no longer require proof of a negative, pre-departure test – 17th March 2023

- The personal protective equipment (PPE) scheme whereby all health, social care and public sector workers are entitled to free provision for COVID-19 infection control is to be extended until 31st March 2024 or until the Department of Health and Social Care's stocks for COVID-19 control are depleted – *20th March 2023*
- COVID-19 surveillance indicators show hospital admission rates for those 75 years and over remain relatively high, with a further increase in those aged over 85 years in week 11 of 2023.
Hospital admission rates for COVID-19 continue to be highest in the North East, with a rate of 16.38 per 100,000 population.
Swab positivity for flu remained stable at 1.6% in week 11, compared to 1.9% in week 10. Highest positivity is in those 15 to 44 years at 4.2% – *23rd March 2023*
- Results for the latest Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey (week ending 13th March) show the estimated number of people testing positive for COVID-19 in private residential households as follows:
In England it was 1,493,200, equating to 2.66% of the population, or around 1 in 40 people
In Wales it was 74,500, equating to 2.41% of the population, or around 1 in 40 people
In Scotland it was 136,200, equating to 2.59% of the population, or around 1 in 40 people
In Northern Ireland (for week ending 7th March) it was 26,000, equating to 1.42% of the population, or around 1 in 70 people – *24th March 2023*
- The NHS COVID-19 app will close down on 27th April 2023. The number of active users has reduced since July 2021 and following the end of government-funded testing, fewer positive test results have been entered and therefore fewer notifications have been sent to 'close contacts.' Leading scientists estimate the app prevented around one million cases, 44,000 hospitalisations and 9,600 people dying during its first year alone – *28th March 2023*
- Latest Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey for antibody data in the week beginning 13 February 2023 shows the estimated percentage of people to have antibodies against SARS-CoV-2 at or above 800 nanograms per millilitre (ng/ml) for adults aged 16 and over as follows:
In England it was 77.7% (95% credible interval: 76.8% to 78.7%)
In Wales it was 79.5% (95% credible interval: 78.0% to 81.0%)
In Scotland it was 79.8% (95% credible interval: 78.5% to 81.2%)
In Northern Ireland it was 74.5% (95% credible interval: 71.3% to 77.6%)

In Great Britain it was 20.9% (95% credible interval: 14.5% to 29.4%) for children aged 8 to 11 years and 51.3% (95% credible interval: 46.2% to 56.5%) for children aged 12 to 15 years

Updated information now available from the Department of Health and Social Care for those needing help and support with Long Covid – *29th March 2023*

- COVID-19 surveillance indicators show hospital admission rates have decreased in almost all age groups in week 12 of 2023. The highest admission rates are for those 75 years and over, with those aged 75 to 84 years at 45.5 per 100,000 population and those aged 85 years and over at 113.56 per population. Hospital admission rates for COVID-19 continue to be highest in the North East, with a rate of 13.65 per 100,000 population, a decrease from 16.38 the previous week. Swab positivity for flu remained low and stable at 1.5% in week 12, compared to 2.0% in week 11. Highest positivity is in those 15 to 44 years at 4.2%

New guidance for COVID-19 testing to come into effect on 1st April whereby Government-funded testing will continue to protect the most vulnerable and those in high-risk settings. All testing will use lateral flow device (LFD) tests. In NHS settings, polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests may also be used to support clinical diagnosis – *30th March 2023*

- In line with the government's strategy of living with COVID-19, the COVID-19 Antivirals and Therapeutics Taskforce ended today – *31st March 2023*
- The UK Commission on Covid Commemoration has delivered its final report to the Prime Minister – *4th April 2023*
- Travelling to England from another country now means you do not need to complete a UK passenger locator form before you travel; you do not need to take any COVID-19 tests before you travel or after you arrive. This applies whether you are vaccinated or not – *5th April 2023*
- COVID-19 vaccine surveillance reports (week 39, 2021 to week 14, 2023) published by UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA). The report contains updates on vaccine effectiveness, vaccine coverage, vaccination in pregnancy, vaccine impact on the proportion of the population with antibodies to COVID-19, and vaccination status by the time of admission through SARI-Watch (national surveillance system in England that captures data on laboratory confirmed COVID-19 hospitalisations) – *6th April 2023*
- UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has released a review (up to 26 January 2023) which identifies and summarises evidence on the coronavirus (COVID-19) Omicron variant infection period (82 studies), and the difference in transmission from people with asymptomatic compared with symptomatic COVID-19 infection (10 studies) – *12th April 2023*

- Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has produced its final publication of PPE distribution statistics (England) due to changes to the provision of free PPE after 31 March 2023. From 1 April, PPE will be provided until DHSC's stocks are depleted or until the end of March 2024 (whichever is sooner).

The main statistics show that from 25 February 2020 to 31 March 2023, DHSC distributed 27.1 billion items of PPE, predominantly for use by health and social care services in England. In the first year 25 February 2020 to 24 February 2021, 8.49 billion items were distributed. This compares with around 2.04 billion items distributed between 1 January and 31 December 2019 to all NHS Trusts and some social care organisations – *13th April 2023*
- UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has published its latest information on SARS-CoV-2 variants in UK. From UK sequences collected from 3 April 2023 to 9 April 2023, variant prevalence was classified as follows: 44% were classified as variant XBB.1.5, 8% as CH.1.1, 4% as BQ.1, 27% as XBB with the remaining 17% being lineages or variants representing less than 1% of the total samples.

Variant XBB.1.16 which shows increased growth in India but low prevalence in UK, is being monitored – *21st April 2023*
- UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has amended its guidance for COVID-19 testing for hospices in line with changes to testing from 1 April 2023. Most patients and non-patient-facing staff who have symptoms of a respiratory infection no longer need to take an LFD test for COVID-19. Only patient-facing staff and eligible patients for COVID-19 treatments need to take an LFD test if they develop symptoms.

The use of PCR tests is no longer part of the testing for admission into a hospice setting. Admissions from hospital will be tested by LFD within 48 hours before discharge. Admissions from the community no longer need to test prior to admission – *25th April 2023*
- Early release from self-isolation using LFD tests has proved beneficial: due to this policy, over 700,000 individuals were able to leave self-isolation at some point from day 6 onwards after 2 negative lateral flow device (LFD) tests instead of a full 10 days of self-isolation – *27th April 2023*
- The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has produced a report on deaths of people with a positive SARS-CoV-2 test in England from 29 April 2020 up to 31 December 2022. The findings showed marked disparities in COVID-19 deaths by age, sex, ethnicity, and deprivation level. In the first year of the pandemic, disparities were observed between different geographical regions but diminished over time.

Since the start of the pandemic to the end of December 2022, there were 20,453, 216 reported cases of COVID-19 in England. In this period, 177,180 people died within 28 days of a positive SARS-CoV-2 test. This represents a mortality rate of 313 per 100,000 population.

Since the start of the pandemic, the highest recorded number of daily deaths was 1,255 on 19 January 2021. In 2022, the highest recorded number of daily deaths was 302 on 19 July 2022. The report provides further detailed data for two time periods: [2020-2022: from the first COVID-19 death in March 2020 to 31 December 2022] [2022: the most recent full calendar year from 1 January to 31 December 2022] – 28th April 2023

- COVID-19 surveillance indicators show hospital admission rates have decreased in almost all age groups in week 17 of 2023. The highest admission rates are for those 75 years and over, with those aged 75 to 84 years at 23.4 per 100,000 population (a decrease from 30.1 the previous week) and those aged 85 years and over at 55.4 per 100,000 population, a decline from 63.9 the previous week. Hospital admission rates for COVID-19 were highest in the South East, with a rate of 6.8 per 100,000 population – 4th May 2023

- The Secretary of State has issued a notice to GPs and NHS England that they should share information to support efforts against COVID-19

The offer of a first and second dose of COVID-19 vaccine will end on 30 June 2023. Appointments can be booked online, by calling 119 or by visiting one of the walk-in vaccination sites across the country

Following a committee meeting report highlighting the decreasing number of COVID-19 deaths and hospitalisations, and the high levels of population immunity, The World Health Organization's Director General has made a statement that COVID-19 is now an established and ongoing health issue which no longer constitutes a public health emergency of international concern – 5th May 2023

- COVID-19 surveillance indicators show hospital admission rates remained stable in week 18 of 2023. The highest admission rate is for those 85 years and over at 53.69 per 100,000 population, a decline from 55.4 the previous week. The rate of those aged 75 to 84 years has also declined to 22.49 per 100,000 population (a decrease from 24.1 the previous week). The overall hospital admission rate for COVID-19 in week 18 was 4.42 per 100,000 population, a decrease from 4.63 per 100,000 the previous week – 11th May 2023

- COVID-19 surveillance indicators in week 19 shows the hospital admission rate was highest for those 85 years and over but continued to decline in numbers to 46.37 per 100,000 population. Rates of those aged 75 to 84 years have declined to 20.51 per 100,000 population (a decrease from 22.49 the previous week). The overall hospital admission rate for COVID-19 in week 19 was 3.86 per 100,000 population, also a decrease from the previous week – 18th May 2023

- COVID-19 surveillance indicators in week 20 show hospital admission rates were highest for those 85 years and over but continued to decline to 36.30 per 100,000 from the previous week. Rates of those aged 75 to 84 years have declined to 15.96 per 100,000 population (a decrease from 20.51 the previous week). The overall hospital admission rate for COVID-19 in week 19 was 3.25 per 100,000 population, another decrease from the previous week – 25th May 2023
- To support the government's COVID-19 Response: Living with COVID-19 strategy, to protect frontline staff, the elderly and the vulnerable and reduce pressure on the NHS, the continued provision of free PPE for COVID-19 has been extended until 31 March 2024 (or until stocks are depleted, whichever is sooner) – 30th May 2023

[This summary presently covers the period to the end of May 2023 but will be updated as necessary in the future]

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