

w/c 15th February 2021

Produced by Health Evidence Matters

Public Health England

PHE statement on Variant of Concern and new Variant Under Investigation

NERVTAG has named one additional SARS-CoV-2 Variant Under Investigation and one additional Variant of Concern, a coronavirus mutation first identified in Bristol.

[Details](#)

SARS-CoV-2 lateral flow antigen tests: evaluation of VOC1 (Kent, UK) and VOC2 (South Africa)

The lateral flow devices listed have detected the new variants that contain a limited number of amino acid changes from the original viral sequence in the target antigen. This does not affect their performance; further variant changes will be monitored as they arise.

[Details](#)

COVID-19 vaccination: easy-read resources

Easy-read guides providing information on coronavirus (COVID-19) and vaccination aimed primarily at those caring for people with learning difficulties

[Details](#)

Public Health Matters: Cardiovascular disease: building back better

This blog revisits the national CVD ambitions and sets out why, two years on from their publication, work across the health care and public health system which strives to achieve these goals remains vital.

[Details](#)

Public Health Matters: Counting deaths during the pandemic

Counting how many people have sadly died with COVID-19 is not straightforward. This blog looks at how the measure of excess deaths can provide arguably the most comprehensive overview of the impact of the pandemic.

[Details](#)

National flu and COVID-19 surveillance report: 11 February 2021 (week 6)

National influenza and COVID-19 report, monitoring COVID-19 activity, seasonal flu and other seasonal respiratory illnesses.

[Details](#)

Department of Health and Social Care

Blueprint launched for NHS and social care reform following pandemic

New proposals have been set out to build on the successful NHS response to the pandemic. The proposals will bring health and care services closer together to build back better by improving care and tackling health inequalities through measures to address obesity, oral health and patient choice. The measures set out, in a government white paper, will modernise the legal framework to make the

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health and care system fit for the future and put in place targeted improvements for the delivery of public health and social care. It will support local health and care systems to deliver higher-quality care to their communities, in a way that is less legally bureaucratic, more accountable and more joined up, by bringing together the NHS, local government and partners together to tackle the needs of their communities as a whole.

[Details](#)

NHS COVID-19 app alerts 1.7 million contacts to help prevent spread of COVID-19

Data show that over 1.7 million app users in England and Wales have been advised to isolate by the NHS COVID-19 app following a close contact with someone who goes on to test positive. Analysis suggests approximately 600,000 cases have been prevented by the app since September

[Details](#)

Public urged to consider work in adult social care

The public are being called upon to apply for short-term and long-term opportunities in the adult social care sector to support care home residents and those being cared for at home.

[Details](#)

9 in 10 local authorities in England now enrolled into community testing

Rapid, regular COVID-19 testing for people without symptoms is now being offered by more than 70% of local authorities in England, through targeted community programmes.

232 local authorities are now rolling out community testing, covering a population of around 42 million people and identifying thousands of positive COVID-19 cases in people not showing symptoms, who could be unknowingly spreading the virus. Local authorities are currently being encouraged to target testing at people who are unable to work from home during the national lockdown

[Details](#)

Nationwide drive to urge vaccine take-up in priority groups

Further push gets underway this weekend to encourage top 4 priority cohorts to get their jab.

[Details](#)

Green social prescribing: call for expressions of interest

Expressions of interest for a project which aims to improve people's mental health through green social prescribing.

[Details](#)

Surge testing to be deployed in areas within Middlesbrough, Walsall, and Hampshire in connection to new variant

Further targeted areas will have additional testing made available to help monitor and suppress the spread of a COVID-19 variant.

[Details](#)

Coronavirus cases by local authority: epidemiological data, 11 February 2021

Weekly watchlist giving epidemiological coronavirus (COVID-19) data for each lower-tier local authority (LTLA) in England.

[Details](#)

New vaccine uptake plan published

This plan sets out the government's approach to making sure everyone has the opportunity to get vaccinated, the information they need to make an informed decision, and that no one is left behind. The plan emphasises the importance of partnership working and national approaches to enable and support local experts and tackle the barriers that some communities face in taking up the offer of a vaccine.

[Details](#)

[Press release](#)

Government Office for Science

Latest R number and growth rate

Last updated on 12th February 2021.

Latest R number range for the UK

0.7 to 0.9

Latest growth rate range for the UK

-5% to -2% per day

[Details](#)

Independent SAGE

How to achieve global vaccine rollout

Recommendations:

- Create a UK Global Pandemic Strategy Board to advise on long term response, consistency and fairness in border controls, and suppression of community transmission
- Ensure UK funding to diagnostics, vaccine and drug development is linked to a tangible commitment for equitable global distribution.
- Reinstate the UK commitment of 0.7% GDP funding for international aid, to support this initiative
- The G20 leaders should meet urgently to agree a global strategy and finance for equitable vaccine and drug supplies.

[Details](#)

NHS England

Managing a healthy weight in adult secure services – practice guidance

This practice guidance provides guidance to support all stakeholders to ensure that issues related to managing a healthy weight in adult secure services are addressed effectively with positive outcomes for all those involved.

[Details](#)

Hospitals admit one third of COVID patients in a single month

Hospital admissions data show 101,956 patients with Covid-19 were treated in hospital in January 2021, compared to 242,307 treated last year. NHS leaders are urging the public to remain vigilant and follow the official advice on slowing the spread of the virus.

[Details](#)

Legislating for Integrated Care Systems: five recommendations to Government and Parliament

This document makes five specific recommendations to Government on the question of how to legislate to place Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) on a statutory footing, having gathered the views of the NHS, local government and wider stakeholders.

These recommendations seek to build on the successful integration, collaboration and partnership efforts of ICSs to date.

[Details](#)

Research and analysis from academic journals – non-coronavirus-related

The Lancet Planetary Health: The public health implications of the Paris Agreement: a modelling study

Modelling study suggests millions of lives could be saved annually by 2040 through cleaner air, healthier diets and more physical activity if we adopted more ambitious climate policies.

[Full text](#)

The Lancet Public Health: Risk factors for suicide in prisons: a systematic review and meta-analysis

Several modifiable risk factors, such as psychiatric diagnosis, suicidal ideation during the current period in prison, and single-cell occupancy, are associated with suicide among people in prison.

[Full text](#)

The Lancet Infectious Diseases: Prevention of influenza during mismatched seasons in older adults with an MF59-adjuvanted quadrivalent influenza vaccine: a randomised, controlled, multicentre, phase 3 efficacy study

RCT (n=6,761) found an overall vaccine efficacy for an adjuvanted quadrivalent influenza vaccine of 19.8% against all influenza, in terms of RT-PCR-confirmed influenza cases, owing to a significant degree of isolates (mainly H3N2) mismatched to the vaccine. The efficacy was 49.9% in antigenically matched strains as measured by influenza-like illness

[Abstract](#)

JECH: Mental distress among young people in inner cities: the Resilience, Ethnicity and AdolesCent Mental Health (REACH) study

Adolescent mental health problems and self-harm are common in inner city London. Gender differences in mental health problems may emerge during early adolescence.

[Full text](#)

Heart: Vaping and cardiac disease

There are no long-term outcome studies on the cardiovascular risk of vaping electronic cigarettes. This review summarises evidence in humans that supports the notion that while electronic cigarettes may be less harmful than traditional cigarettes, they are not harmless.

[Abstract](#)

Research and analysis from academic journals and preprints – coronavirus-related

medRxiv (preprint): Trends, regional variation, and clinical characteristics of COVID-19 vaccine recipients: a retrospective cohort study in 23.4 million patients using OpenSAFELY

Ethnic minorities, people living in areas of high deprivation, and those with severe mental health illness or learning disabilities seem to be less likely to have been vaccinated.

[Full text](#)

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medRxiv (preprint): Aerosol emission from the respiratory tract: an analysis of relative risks from oxygen delivery systems

for after the results of Study suggests that NHS staff working outside of intensive care may be at greater risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection through aerosol transmission than previously thought. The study found that the risk of SARSCoV-2 aerosolisation was likely to be high in departments where patients with covid-19 are coughing, such as emergency departments and general wards. These are places where staff generally wear face masks only and pressure is mounting on the government and NHS trusts to adopt a more precautionary approach to personal protective equipment (PPE)

[Full text](#)

CDC MMWR (preprint): Maximizing Fit for Cloth and Medical Procedure Masks to Improve Performance and Reduce SARS-CoV-2 Transmission and Exposure, 2021

CDC is urging either double-masking or use surgical mask with tight fit to better protect against threat of new and more contagious variants of the coronavirus. This study suggests two methods substantially boost fit and protection

[Full text](#)

JAMA: Effectiveness of Mask Wearing to Control Community Spread of SARS-CoV-2

This review summarises accumulating evidence that mask wearing reduces spread of SARS-CoV-2 infection and that universal mandatory mask wearing policies reduce infections and deaths, and emphasizes face masks are just one component of pandemic control measures.

[Full text](#)

Imperial College preprint: Symptom reporting in over 1 million people: community detection of covid-19

The latest findings from the ongoing React-1 study found that symptoms varied with age. Children aged five to 17 were more likely to suffer from headaches, while muscle aches and appetite loss were most common in people aged 18-54. Chills were linked with testing positive across all ages. The study also found that around 60% of infected people did not report any symptoms in the week leading up to their positive test.

[Full text](#)

Thorax: Current smoking and COVID-19 risk: results from a population symptom app in over 2.4 million people

In this study of 2.4m users entering data into the Zoe COVID-19 app, current smokers were more likely to report symptoms suggesting diagnosis of COVID-19; classic symptoms adjusted OR (95% CI) 1.14 (1.10 to 1.18); >5 symptoms 1.29 (1.26 to 1.31); >10 symptoms 1.50 (1.42 to 1.58)

[Full text](#)

The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health: Effect of the new SARS-CoV-2 variant B.1.1.7 on children and young people

Early second wave descriptive data from one centre show that many children and young people have been admitted to hospital.

[Full text](#)

JAMA: Reports of Anaphylaxis After Receipt of mRNA COVID-19 Vaccines in the US—December 14, 2020-January 18, 2021

Update of anaphylaxis from mRNA vaccines: 66 cases out of ~18 million vaccinations (=0.00000003%). All but 1 within 11 minutes. No deaths.

[Full text](#)

JECH: Is area deprivation associated with greater impacts of COVID-19 in care homes across England? A preliminary analysis of COVID-19 outbreaks and deaths

COVID-19 outbreaks in care homes did not vary by area deprivation. However, COVID-19-related deaths were more common in the most deprived quartiles of IDAOPI (incidence rate ratio (IRR): 1.23, 95% CI 1.04 to 1.47) and IMD extent (IRR: 1.16, 95% CI 1.00 to 1.34), compared with the least deprived quartiles.

[Full text](#)

The Lancet Public Health: COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in a representative working-age population in France: a survey experiment based on vaccine characteristics

Survey (n=1942) found 28.8% opted for outright vaccine refusal. Factors associated with this and vaccine hesitancy were female gender, age (inverted U-shaped relationship), lower educational level, poor compliance with past vaccinations, and no underlying chronic diseases.

[Full text](#)

BMJ Open: Use of routine death and illness surveillance data to provide insight for UK pandemic planning: lessons from COVID-19

Early contextualisation of public health data is critical to recognising who gets sick, when and why. Understanding at-risk groups facilitates a targeted response considering indirect consequences of society's reaction to a pandemic alongside disease-related impacts. COVID-19-related deaths mainly mirror historical patterns, and excess non-COVID-19-related deaths partly reflect reduced access to and uptake of healthcare during lockdown.

[Full text](#)

BMJ Feature: Jeremy Hunt: I was too slow to boost the NHS workforce—the government must, and can, act now

In this interview, former health secretary Jeremy Hunt tells of his regrets from his time in charge, how they made the pandemic worse, and why this has fuelled him to be so outspoken since

[Full text](#)

BMJ Feature: Covid-19: Why test and trace will fail without support for self-isolation

The spread of SARS-CoV-2 will only slow if people who test positive for the virus self-isolate. But expecting them to do so is a bigger ask than governments seem to realise.

[Full text](#)

The Lancet: Challenges in ensuring global access to COVID-19 vaccines: production, affordability, allocation, and deployment

Having licensed vaccines is not enough to achieve global control of COVID-19: they also need to be produced at scale, priced affordably, allocated globally so that they are available where needed, and widely deployed in local communities. This Health Policy paper discusses the development and

production, affordability, allocation, and deployment of COVID-19 vaccines, as well as the interactions between these dimensions of the global vaccination challenge.

[Full text](#)

BMJ Feature: Covid-19: How to vaccinate the world

Richer countries have secured stocks of vaccine first. With the headache of distribution on top of procurement, how will the world reach the herd immunity levels needed to defeat the virus?

[Full text](#)

The Lancet Editorial: Improving prisoner health for stronger public health

Editorial discusses the range of COVID-19 vaccine policies for prisoners across the USA and the UK, noting that prisons are dangerous hotspots for acquiring SARS-CoV-2, and individuals who return to the community could unwittingly transmit the virus. Prison health systems remain a weak link in public health preparedness, racial and social justice, and human rights.

[Full text](#)

BMJ Analysis: Covid-19: The E484K mutation and the risks it poses

The mutation E484K has now been identified in the UK fast-spreading variant, prompting fears the virus is evolving further and could become resistant to vaccines.

[Full text](#)

The Lancet: SARS-CoV-2 variants and ending the COVID-19 pandemic

Analysis of the factors influencing a path to the end of the pandemic

[Full text](#)

BMJ news: Covid-19: More young children are being infected in Israel and Italy, emerging data suggest

Experts have warned that schools must be reopened with caution, amid emerging evidence from Israel and Italy that more young children are being infected with new variants of covid-19.

Paediatricians in Israel reported a sharp rise in covid-19 infections among young people, with more than 50 000 children and teens testing positive in January. Similar warnings are emerging from Italy after a spike in case in the village of Corzano. On 3 February 10% of its total population of 1400 (140) were reported to have tested positive for the virus, 60% of whom were children of primary or infant school age.

[Full text](#)

BMJ news: Covid-19: WHO says laboratory escape theory is “extremely unlikely” after mission to China

A team of scientists sent to Wuhan, China, by the World Health Organization to investigate the origins of the covid-19 pandemic has effectively ruled out the hypothesis of a viral escape from the nearby Wuhan Institute of Virology.

[Full text](#)

BMJ news: Government to reverse Lansley reforms in major NHS shake up

BMJ looks at the proposals for NHS reform announced by DHSC

[Full text](#)

Office for National Statistics

Percentage of deaths involving COVID-19 is the highest of the pandemic

9 February 2021

There were 8,433 deaths involving the coronavirus (COVID-19) in England and Wales in the week ending 29 January 2021 – the second highest weekly figure of the pandemic (behind the week ending 17-04-20). While the number of COVID-19 deaths increased slightly from the previous week, deaths from all causes (18,448) declined marginally. As a result, the percentage of deaths that involved COVID-19 rose further to a record 45.7% in the week ending 29 January.

COVID-19 mortality increased in six out of nine English regions. In areas where deaths decreased from the previous week (the North East, London and the South East), the numbers remained high in the context of the pandemic. Wales reported a drop in COVID-19 deaths for the second week running.

[Details](#)

Cough, fatigue and headache the most common symptoms in people testing positive

9 February 2021

The most commonly reported symptoms from people who tested positive for the coronavirus (COVID-19) between 1 October 2020 and 30 January 2021 were a cough, fatigue and headache.

Less commonly reported symptoms in those who tested positive included abdominal pain, diarrhoea and nausea.

In England, 47% of people who tested positive for COVID-19 reported having any symptoms. This compares with 55% in Wales, 38% in Northern Ireland and 47% in Scotland.

[Details](#)

Disabled people generally at greater risk of death involving COVID-19 than non-disabled people, even after taking personal and household factors into account

11 February 2021

Disabled people have a higher rate of death involving coronavirus (COVID-19) than non-disabled people. Between 24 January and 20 November 2020 in England, the risk of death involving COVID-19 was 3.1 times greater for more-disabled men and 1.9 times greater for less-disabled men, compared to non-disabled men. Among women, the risk of death was 3.5 times greater for more-disabled women and 2.0 times greater for less-disabled women, compared to non-disabled women.

[Details](#)

Almost 8 in 10 people aged over 70 years say they have had a vaccine dose

12 February 2021

Around 1 in 5 (22%) of adults reported they had received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine in this week's Opinion and Lifestyle survey.

Among those aged 70 years and older, that figure was almost 8 in 10 (78%).

Over 9 in 10 (92%) adults reported they had now either received the vaccine or would be likely (very or fairly likely) to have the vaccine if offered. Of adults aged 70 years and above, 99% reported this.

[Details](#)

The percentage of people testing positive in the UK has decreased

12 February 2021

An estimated 1 in 80 people tested positive for the coronavirus (COVID-19) within the community population in England during the week ending 6 February 2021, equating to 695,400 people, or 1.28% of the population.

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This is lower than the week ending 30 January 2021, when 846,900 people (1.55%) were estimated to have COVID-19 in England.

The percentage of people testing positive in Wales also decreased. An estimated 35,300 people, around 1 in 85 or 1.16% of the population, had the virus during the week ending 6 February, down from 42,700 in the week ending 30 January 2021.

In Northern Ireland, the percentage of people testing positive decreased. An estimated 24,400 people had COVID-19 in the week ending 6 February 2021, equating to 1 in 75 people or 1.33% of the population, down from 28,700 in the week ending 30 January 2021.

In Scotland, we estimate that 35,400 people had COVID-19 in the week ending 6 February 2021, which is around 1 in 150 people or 0.67% of the population and is down from 46,100 people in the previous week.

[Details](#)

Adults aged 35 to 49 most likely to test positive for COVID-19

12 February 2021

The proportion of people testing positive for COVID-19 was highest among adults aged between 35 and 49 years in the week to 6 February 2021.

COVID-19 cases fell in every age group, with 1.24% of people aged 35 to 49 years testing positive. The lowest positivity rate was recorded among those aged 70 years and over, at 0.74%.

[Details](#)

World Health Organization

Global covid-19 clinical platform case report form (CRF) for post covid condition

WHO has urged countries to prioritise rehabilitation for the medium and long term consequences of covid-19 and to gather information on “long covid” more systematically.

WHO has produced a standardised form to report clinical data from individual patients after hospital discharge or after their acute illness to examine the medium and long term consequences of covid-19.1 It has also set up technical working groups to build a consensus on the clinical description of what WHO now calls “the post-covid-19 condition” and to define research priorities.

[Details](#)

Interim recommendations for use of the AZD1222 (ChAdOx1-S (recombinant)) vaccine against COVID-19 developed by Oxford University and AstraZeneca

Interim recommendations from the WHO’s SAGE panel recommend the vaccine can be widely used, including in people aged over 65, and should be given in a two-dose regimen, with each dose given with an interval of around eight to 12 weeks.

[Details](#)

Children’s Commissioner

Still not safe: the public health response to youth violence

This report assesses how effectively existing infrastructure within local authorities is being used to deliver a public health approach to preventing gang involvement and youth violence. The Children’s Commissioner concludes that two years on from her last report into this issue and a year after the Prime Minister promised to ‘cut the head off the snake’ of county lines, thousands of children are still not being kept safe.

[Details](#)

House of Commons Public Accounts Committee

COVID-19: Government procurement and supply of personal protective equipment—42nd report of session 2019-21

The parliamentary public spending watchdog has concluded that the UK government wasted hundreds of millions of pounds of taxpayers' money on poor quality and unusable personal protective equipment (PPE) while leaving frontline workers insufficiently protected from covid-19. The committee heard "compelling evidence from organisations representing frontline workers that stocks ran perilously low, single use items were reused, some was not fit for purpose—including reports of expired, substandard, deficient or even insect-infected supplies"

[Details](#)

Royal Society for Public Health

RSPH calls for public health to be central in health and social care reforms

RSPH has responded to the Department of Health and Social Care's legislative proposals for a Health and Care Bill Integration and Innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all.

[Details](#)

University of Nottingham and Aardman launch campaign to tackle the mental health crisis

Professor of Health Humanities from the School of Health Sciences at the University of Nottingham and RSPH Fellow, Paul Crawford, outlines the campaign he has led, 'What's Up With Everyone?', to support young people's mental health and wellbeing.

[Details](#)

Local Government Association

LGA responds to white paper plans to radically reform the NHS

Council leaders have warned that local government needs to be an equal partner in the design of any national oversight of social care as the Government sets out its white paper plans to overhaul the NHS.

[Details](#)

LGA: Councils playing leading local role in vaccine rollout success

"The vaccine roll-out has been a huge success so far and councils are playing a key role in coordinating the rollout on the ground, with their unrivalled knowledge and connections with their communities helping to get the word out about the vaccine, using trusted local leaders to answer residents' questions and dispel any myths".

[Details and links to case studies](#)

COVID-19 public opinion research - BritainThinks

To help councils with their thinking and to shape a narrative that will resonate locally, we commissioned BritainThinks to research how the pandemic has changed public opinion and behaviour, and what matters most for them.

[Details](#)

The Climate Coalition

This report comes with a health warning

This report finds that the health of more than 12 million people is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as heatwaves and floods. It studies the benefits of a net zero economy and active travel on health and the role of the NHS and health professionals in reaching this target.

[Details](#)

National Audit Office

Protecting and supporting the clinically extremely vulnerable during lockdown

Report looks at how effectively government identified and met the needs of clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) people. It found there was impressive initial support offered to many people, but it took time for people to be identified as CEV, and therefore access formal support.

[Details](#)

The King's Fund

Understanding factors that enabled digital service change in general practice during the Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic prompted rapid uptake of existing digital technologies to deliver patient care differently in general practice. This report looks at how services changed and the digital tools and services that were used to facilitate that change. It looks particularly at the wider factors that enabled change and what might need to be done to sustain these changes after the response to the pandemic.

[Details](#)

Social care leadership: stories from the frontline

Adult social care is the often forgotten and invisible part of the welfare state. For the past decade the sector has been under acute financial pressure and this issue has only been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. So, what is the state of social care leadership? We interviewed a range of people – from service users to directors of adult social care services – to understand where the leadership in social care lies, how effective it is, and what could be done to improve it.

[Details](#)

Stories from social care leadership: Progress amid pestilence and penury

This report contains interviews from across the social care sector to explore where leadership lies and what might be done to improve it.

[Details](#)

King's Fund response to the government's Integration and Innovation White Paper

'There is much to welcome in the ambition of the White Paper, but the history of the NHS is littered with reform plans that overestimated benefits and underestimated disruption. These latest proposals add up to a major reform package and come at a time when the NHS, local authorities and charities are still battling Covid-19.'

[Details](#)

NHS Confederation Mental Health Network

Working together to improve patient care: how PCNs are working in partnership to support people's mental health

Mental health disorders are one of the common causes of morbidity in England and primary care plays a key role in supporting patients' mental health and wellbeing, so it has become a priority for many primary care networks (PCNs). This briefing provides examples of three models of partnership working that are currently under way in primary care to support mental health at place level.

[Details](#)

University of Bristol

We can't prevent childhood obesity by education alone: lessons from the evidence base

This briefing examines randomised control trials across a range of countries and settings. It analyses the focus of the trials through a wider determinants of health lens, and compares the focus of interventions against previously mapped causes of obesity – which show that approximately 60 per cent of the causes come from living and working conditions, such as housing or transport, or wider conditions, such as income equality or land use.

[Details](#)

House of Commons Library

Support for domestic abuse victims: housing, health, education, social services and social security

This briefing outlines support for victims of domestic violence and abuse. It considers social services, housing, social security benefits, health services and preventive actions in education settings.

[Details](#)

Institute for Economic Affairs

Viral myths: why we risk learning the wrong lessons from the pandemic

Right wing think tank IEA argues that there is no obvious measure of 'Covid performance' that would allow us to rank countries by how well they dealt with the pandemic. This paper claims that the best performers didn't do well because they have low public spending levels but because they have open economies, or that they did well because they have non-NHS-type health care systems. It puts forward the argument that an effective pandemic response is compatible with a variety of public spending levels, a variety of trade regimes, and a variety of health care systems.

This is the report which led to the "NHS is nothing special" headlines.

[Details](#)