

# **COVID-19 in Herefordshire**

## **Weekly intelligence summary**

Public Health & Intelligence Unit

24<sup>th</sup> March 2021

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# Covid-19 in Herefordshire: key messages, 24 March

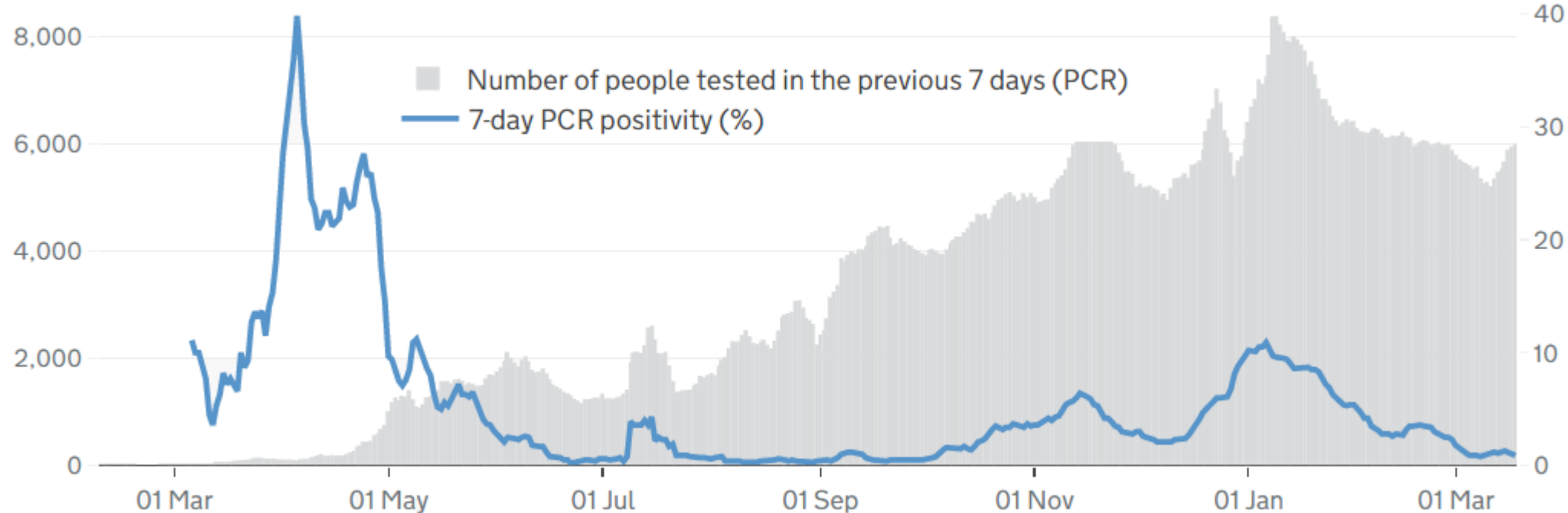
- There has been a slight increase in the number of new cases in Herefordshire this week, but numbers remain low (average of 8 per day). Some increases are to be expected as society reopens and more asymptomatic cases are identified through regular LFD testing. It's important to note that even in areas with higher rates due to outbreaks, numbers have been in the low tens and have been quickly brought under control.
- The average number of **asymptomatic (LFD) tests** remains around 4,000 a day. As well as the families of school-children, all businesses are now eligible for testing of staff. There are now 8 sites for community LFD testing across the county.
- COVID-19 **cases and in-patients** remain at their lowest levels since early October and **total deaths** are lower than average for the time of year. There have been just **three new outbreaks/situations** this week.
  - demand for **symptomatic (PCR) testing** is a quarter of what it was at the January peak, and the proportion testing positive (0.9%) is at its lowest since early October.
  - 57 new cases across the whole county in the week to 18 March: fewer than 3 new cases in half of all MSOAs, and no more than 10 in any. Slight increase in cases amongst school-age children, but no cases aged 80+ for the first time since September.
  - 1 death involving COVID-19 occurred in the week to 12 March (registered by 19 March) – the lowest since the end of November. After a sustained period of 'excess deaths' driven by COVID-19, total deaths during the last month have been lower than average for the time of year.
- Over half of all Herefordshire GP registered patients have received a first dose of **COVID-19 vaccine**. All those aged over 50 and those at higher risk (e.g. clinically, as carer, health/social care worker, care home resident) should now have been invited. This includes all those in the Phase 1 priority groups (i.e groups 1-9) identified by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.
- Next week sees the second stage in Step 1 of the UK Government's [roadmap out of lockdown](#): outdoor gatherings following the Rule of 6 or 2 households will be permitted and the 'stay at home' rule will end on 29 March. The recommendation to 'shield' for the 11,400 clinically extremely vulnerable people in Herefordshire will also end on 1 April.

# Symptomatic COVID-19 testing: PCR tests and positivity

- The graph gives a complete picture of local PCR testing for Herefordshire residents, regardless of where the test was carried out.
- The **number of tests** was higher this week (6,000) compared to last (5,200): although the level remains 25% lower than the January peak, reflecting lower numbers of symptomatic people currently requiring a test.
- The line shows that the **positivity rate** from PCR tests (i.e. the % of people whose test is positive). It is currently (18 March) 0.9% - a similar rate to this time last week and remaining at its lowest level since early October.
  - high positivity to May shows the impact of testing policy at that time, when only suspected cases amongst those most vulnerable to the disease were being tested. Availability of testing increased throughout the summer.
  - Since May, increases in positivity rate have matched the peaks in cases: generally around 1-2%, rising to 6% during November peak and 11% on 6 January

**! Need to know !**

- PCR data is for rolling 7 day periods, not daily / weekly counts
- Counts *individuals* tested in each 7-day period, not the number of *tests* carried out. A person is only counted once.
- Wholly residence based, whereas previous data included a mixture of Herefordshire residents & also people working in the county.



**Where can I find out more?** Local level testing data is now updated daily on the government's [Covid-19 dashboard](#). Details of the roll-out of lateral flow tests to local authorities was [published by the government](#) on 9 November, and a [guide for local delivery of community testing](#) was published on 11 January.

# COVID-19 testing: Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests

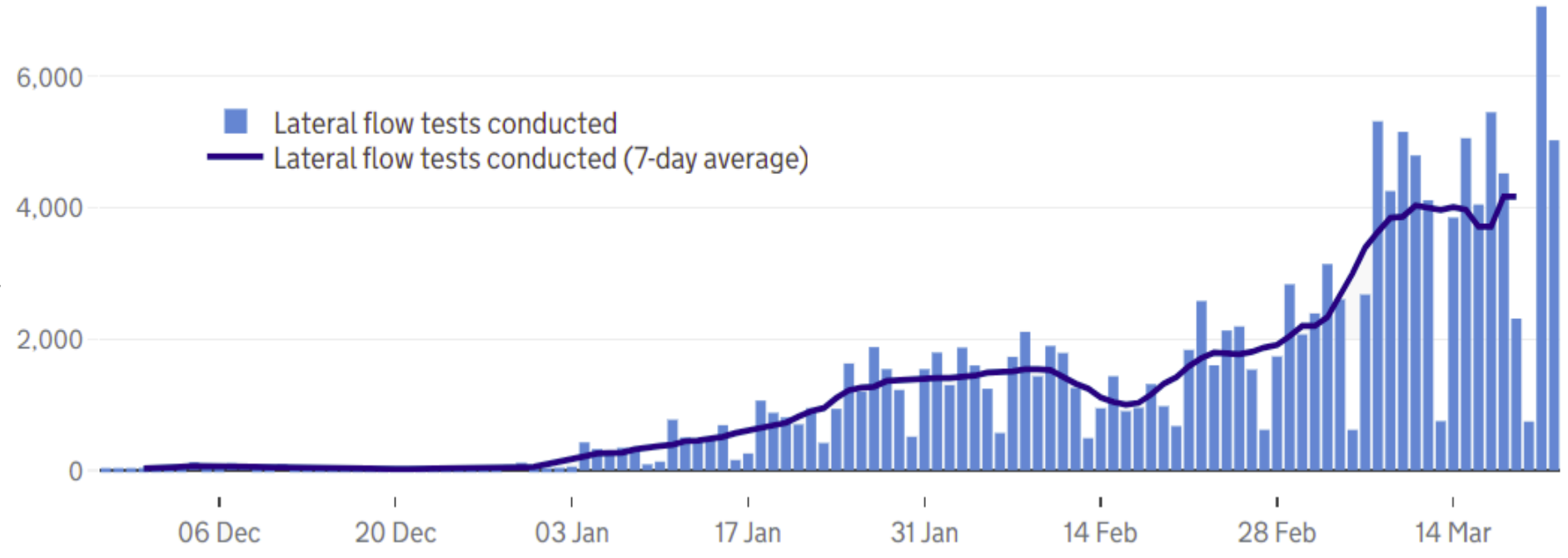
- Lateral flow device (LFD) tests are swab tests that give results in less than an hour, without needing to go to a lab. They are the national approach to rapid, frequent, community testing and eligibility continues to be widened.
- A total of 141,000 LFD tests had been recorded in Herefordshire by 22 March. The current average is 4,000 a day, which has been fairly consistent since 10 March.
  - The step change at the beginning of March reflects schools reopening to all pupils with twice-weekly testing of staff and secondary school pupils, and families of all school-age children also eligible.
  - Health and care home staff were the first to be regularly tested, and the initial offer of community LFD testing was to critical workers unable to work from home. All businesses are now able to apply for LFD testing for their staff.
  - Community LFD testing is now available at 8 sites across the county, including 4 pharmacies.

**! Be aware !**

- From 27 Jan the requirement for confirmatory PCR testing following a positive LFD result was removed for most LFD testing.
- This means that a positive LFD test is now considered a confirmed case and requires the person to self-isolate.
- Self-conducted tests will still require confirmation.
- Unlike the published PCR test data, LFD tests are counted by the number of tests which returned either a positive, negative or void result – which can mean that a person is counted more than once. Data is published as a daily count and 7-day average.

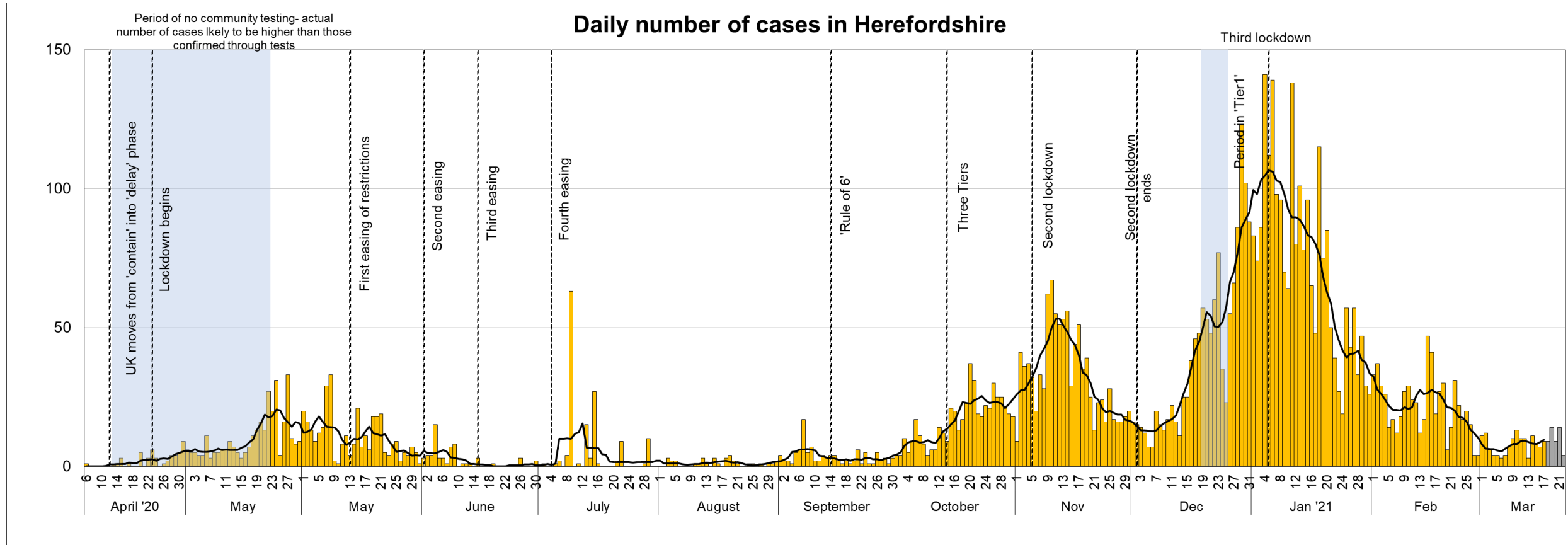
Notes

1. LFD tests for NHS staff using a self-reporting tool have been included from 17 December 2020. Some negative care home tests may not be included for the first 2 weeks of January
2. All LFD tests are counted under Pillar 2 (Gov't testing programme)



# Lab-confirmed COVID-19 cases in Herefordshire

- Lab-confirmed cases are the official count of people who live in Herefordshire and have tested positive for COVID-19. In the first few months of the pandemic, numbers of confirmed cases were dependent on testing policy so are not comparable with later waves.
- The total lab-confirmed cases over the course of the epidemic is now 6,784 (18 March). This week's increase of 57 cases is similar to the week before (note that reporting lags mean daily numbers can change, and the grey bars for the last 5 days will increase).
- The line on the chart shows the average daily number of new cases: currently 8.1 (8 Mar) - similar to levels seen in early October.

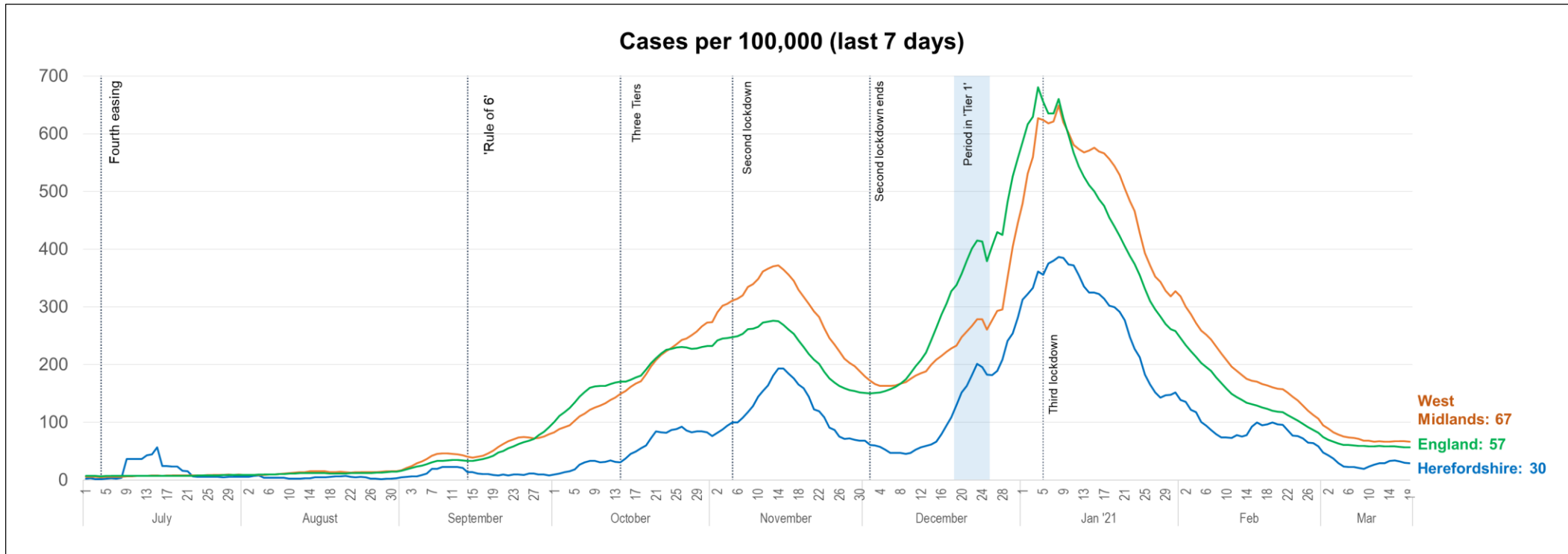


# Lab-confirmed cases: comparisons

- The chart shows the recent trend in cases per 100,000 resident population for 7-day periods (the latest one ending 5 days ago to allow for lags in the results of tests). This rate is commonly quoted in national reporting.
- The latest rate of 30 per 100,000 is slightly higher than this time last week but remains less than a tenth of the peak seen in January.
- Following a plateau in mid-February when the gap narrowed, the Herefordshire rate is close to half of the national rate and less than half the regional figure.

## **! Be aware !**

- Rates per 100,000 resident population give a fairer comparison of the number of cases in each area but they do not take account of the different rates of testing or differences in the age and sex of the local populations.
- With one of the smallest 'upper tier' local authority populations (193,200), Herefordshire's rate can be dramatically affected by relatively small changes in numbers of cases. An average of 28 cases a day in a week would result in a rate of 100 per 100,000.
- These are not rates of infection amongst the population: they can only reflect those who have been tested, so numbers are highly dependent on the availability of tests.



## Where can I find out more?

The graph is based on daily updated [PHE data on lab-confirmed cases](#). Further comparisons are included in the [LG Inform](#) dashboard. You can also view the local 7-day case rates and numbers on the [Herefordshire Council website](#).

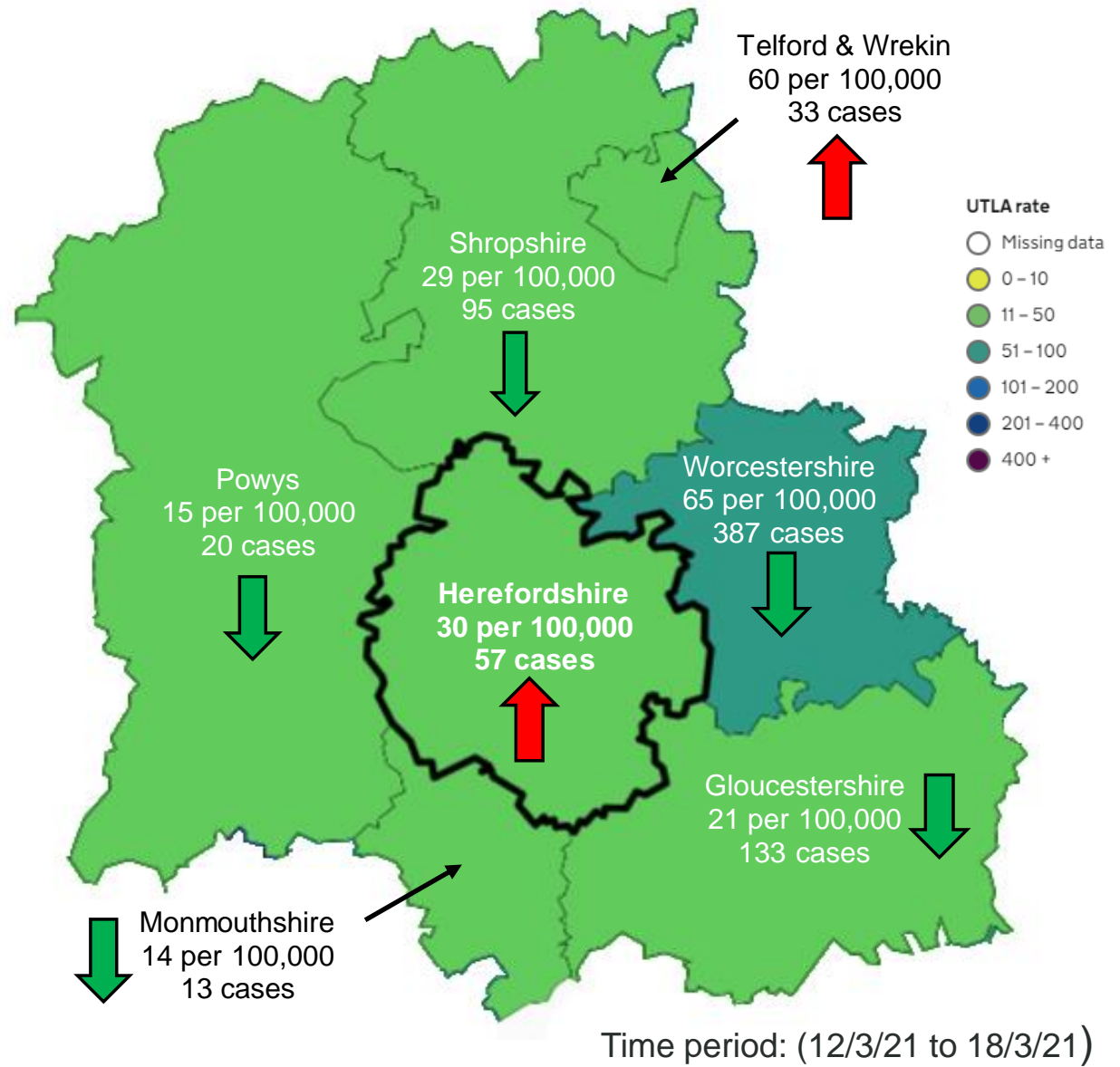



# Lab-confirmed cases: comparison with neighbouring authorities

Latest published comparisons, for the week ending 18 March\*, show:

- Herefordshire's rate increased by 11% over the seven days to 18 March, but note that because numbers are so low, this only represents six more cases than the previous week.
- With the exception of Telford and Wrekin 7-day case rates fell in other bordering authorities (as indicated by the arrows).
- The rate in Herefordshire is broadly similar to elsewhere, with the exception of Worcestershire where the rate is almost twice as high.

\* Note that the slight lag in this data reflects the latest date for which complete data is available from test results

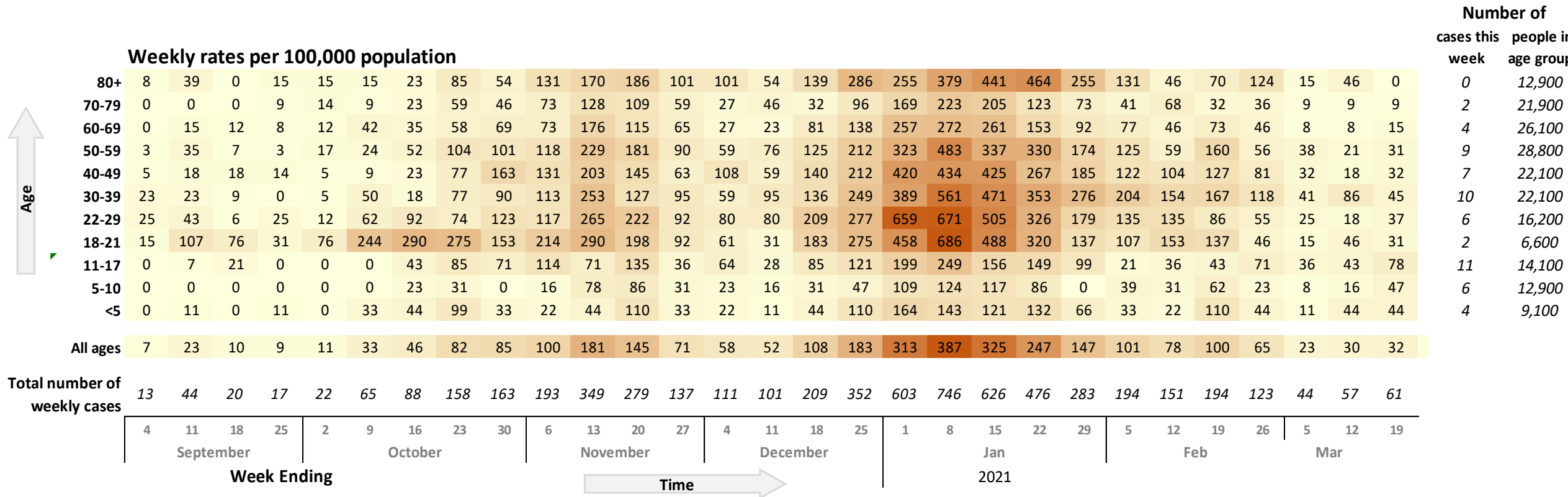


 Where can I find out more? Maps comparing 7 day numbers of cases and rates per 100,000 people are updated daily by PHE at <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>.



# Demographics of COVID-19: rates per 100,000 by age over time

- This “heat map” shows how the 7-day rates per 100,000 for specific age groups have changed each week from September. Each row represents an age group. As rates increase, the chart colours become darker.
- It is important to note that rates per 100,000 can be significantly affected by relatively small numbers of cases in a population as small as Herefordshire, even more so when broken down into age-groups. The absolute number of cases are shown as context. This is especially true in the current situation of single-figure case numbers in some groups.
- Overall rates remain at levels last seen in early October.
- In the last week there were no new cases in those aged 80+ (the first time since mid-September), while new cases amongst 30-39 year-olds halved. Case rates amongst school-age children rose, but are still very low numbers.



# Lab-confirmed cases around the county: this week

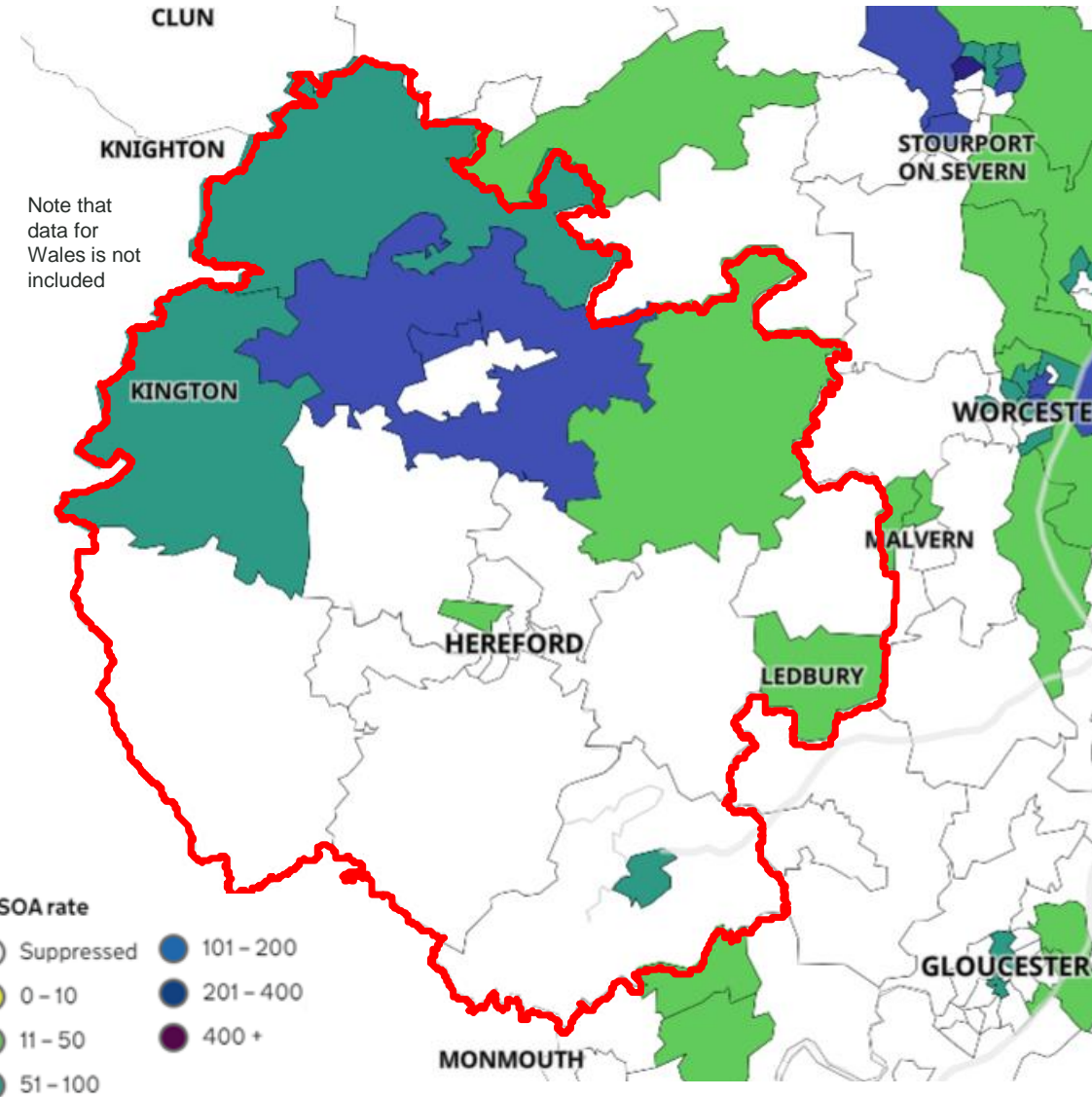
- The map shows the latest 7-day rates of new cases per 100,000 population, as published by Public Health England: the darker the shading, the higher the rate (unshaded areas have had fewer than 3 cases in the last 7 days).
- As for the last two weeks, 15 of Herefordshire's 23 MSOAs<sup>^</sup> had fewer than three cases in the week to 18 March\*
- Four areas had higher rates than England overall (57 per 100,000), but the absolute number of cases is low. These MSOAs include the school communities of Shobdon and Luston, which were closed last week due to a number of cases.
  - 'Leominster North' (115 per 100,000): 7 cases
  - 'Shobdon, Luston and Bodenham' (112 per 100,000): 10 cases
  - 'Wigmore, Orleton and Brimfield' (93 per 100,000): 6 cases
  - 'Kington, Eardisley and Shobdon' (73 per 100,000): 6 cases

## **! Need to know !**

- It's important to note that these rates are very sensitive to small changes for small areas like MSOAs. For instance, an increase of 1 case from 9 to 10 cases in an area of 10,000 people (about the size of Ledbury), would increase the rate from 90 to 100 per 100,000.
- Note that the slight time-lag in this data reflects that test results are incomplete for the most recent few days

<sup>^</sup> Middle super output areas: geographies designed by the Office for National Statistics in 2004 to have broadly similar population sizes – which means that they tend to be geographically bigger in rural Herefordshire.

Positive cases from samples taken in the 7 day period ending 18/3/21\*



Data suppressed where numbers are low to avoid possible identification of individuals



**Where can I find out more?** This map of weekly confirmed cases by middle super output area (MSOA) in England are included in the [PHE dashboard](#), which is updated daily.

# Lab-confirmed cases around the county: trends in rates over time

- Whilst the previous slide shows cases in the last 7 days, this “heat map” shows how the 7-day rates per 100,000 have changed in each area of Herefordshire from September. The areas (MSOAs\*) are ranked by the rate in the last week.
  - It’s important to note that rates per 100,000 can be significantly affected by relatively small numbers of cases in areas as small as MSOAs, especially in the current situation of single-figure case numbers. The absolute number of cases are shown as context.
- Rates in most areas remain at the relatively low levels similar to those last seen in early October, and half of MSOAs had fewer than 3 new cases last week.
- At these relatively low levels, the heat map illustrates geographical hot spots with clusters of new cases linked to settings where there is mixing of households and support bubbles. Note that in recent weeks even these hot spots have far fewer cases than were seen in all areas during the widespread community transmission of the winter.

\* Middle super output areas: geographies designed by the Office for National Statistics in 2004 to have broadly similar population sizes

MSOA	Weekly rates per 100,000 population																												Number of cases this week	MSOA Population	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27			28
North Leominster	0	49	16	16	33	16	0	16	33	66	98	82	98	66	33	98	147	393	295	278	164	147	16	66	33	66	33	49	131	8	6,100
Shobdon, Luston & Bodenham	0	11	0	0	11	22	11	78	45	157	67	123	45	34	34	45	190	179	414	336	56	112	56	90	34	11	0	112	112	10	8,900
Kington Eardisley & Staunton	0	36	12	12	0	24	12	61	49	243	146	194	49	49	97	122	134	49	109	207	109	85	146	109	12	122	0	0	73	6	8,200
South Leominster	16	95	16	0	16	16	64	79	0	64	159	111	254	270	32	32	111	461	540	413	238	95	32	64	79	64	16	64	64	4	6,300
Kingstone & Kingsthorpe	9	9	0	0	18	9	80	62	98	53	169	177	35	44	62	106	177	195	275	231	133	80	44	71	80	27	18	0	44	5	11,300
Hereford West	0	0	0	0	0	28	42	42	84	84	237	98	56	84	14	153	153	390	432	613	209	223	125	153	167	0	0	14	42	3	7,200
Bromyard & Bishop's Frome	28	37	19	9	9	0	65	84	93	56	93	65	28	28	56	56	279	316	557	297	158	121	111	65	102	46	37	0	37	4	10,800
Hereford North West	0	22	32	0	32	22	32	32	151	118	237	151	118	75	54	86	344	280	527	387	344	323	129	151	118	65	11	22	32	3	9,300
Wigmore, Orleton and Brimfield	0	0	0	0	31	93	0	15	93	139	108	31	15	46	62	93	62	248	278	248	155	31	77	15	31	31	0	93	31	2	6,500
Ledbury	0	20	0	10	30	10	50	80	90	80	50	30	10	10	30	119	70	229	169	259	229	109	70	80	139	139	10	90	30	3	10,100
Hereford Central	0	20	0	20	10	70	50	89	99	89	288	169	40	79	109	139	228	556	606	526	487	338	169	40	50	0	30	0	30	3	10,100
Lugwardine, Withington and Moreton on Lugg	0	39	13	26	13	39	13	91	91	78	156	104	117	78	65	65	143	248	456	326	339	130	52	65	104	65	13	13	26	2	7,700
Hereford North East	13	77	13	0	0	39	65	168	129	116	129	129	65	77	52	206	606	723	490	477	555	181	181	116	103	77	13	39	26	2	7,800
Ross-on-Wye	0	0	9	0	18	71	62	141	71	44	53	62	62	27	62	115	124	301	256	212	318	186	88	53	44	27	35	71	18	2	11,300
Hereford East	0	17	0	17	0	33	100	100	50	134	351	184	67	83	67	100	184	551	534	568	534	317	50	184	401	217	17	0	17	1	6,000
Credenhill, Weobley & Wellington	31	31	10	0	10	42	21	31	52	42	177	229	83	21	10	135	114	239	479	385	208	125	156	73	104	52	21	0	10	1	9,600
Hereford South	0	10	10	10	0	31	31	72	133	194	542	399	164	82	102	133	164	470	522	481	368	174	123	61	225	123	61	20	10	1	9,800
Penyard, Llangarron & Goodrich	17	0	17	0	0	41	108	124	83	83	133	91	83	66	17	166	216	257	299	166	216	58	66	66	83	58	41	8	8	1	12,100
Colwall, Cradley & Wellington Heath	0	0	0	51	17	34	69	103	120	17	172	69	17	34	0	0	34	69	292	86	137	86	154	34	154	51	17	17	0	0	5,800
Belmont, Madley & Clehonger	15	30	0	0	0	15	44	89	118	118	236	162	118	0	30	133	207	339	443	207	177	103	74	74	192	103	15	0	0	0	6,800
Hereford South West	0	12	24	12	0	0	0	73	97	242	399	435	85	48	60	85	157	314	423	411	278	145	169	48	36	48	36	48	0	0	8,300
Fownhope, Tarrington & Marcle	15	44	44	0	15	58	58	102	58	29	117	117	58	87	87	73	102	335	306	219	131	73	87	29	58	160	73	0	0	0	6,900
Golden Valley	0	0	0	48	0	64	32	128	64	64	64	48	0	0	48	176	160	112	176	192	96	112	112	112	32	0	16	32	0	0	6,200
<b>Herefordshire</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32</b>		
<b>Total weekly cases</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>746</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>477</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>61</b>		
	4	11	18	25	2	9	16	23	30	7	14	21	28	4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26	5	12	19		
	<b>September</b>				<b>October</b>				<b>November</b>				<b>December</b>				<b>Jan</b>			<b>Feb</b>			<b>Mar</b>								
	<b>Time</b> →																														
	2021																														

# Vaccinations in Herefordshire

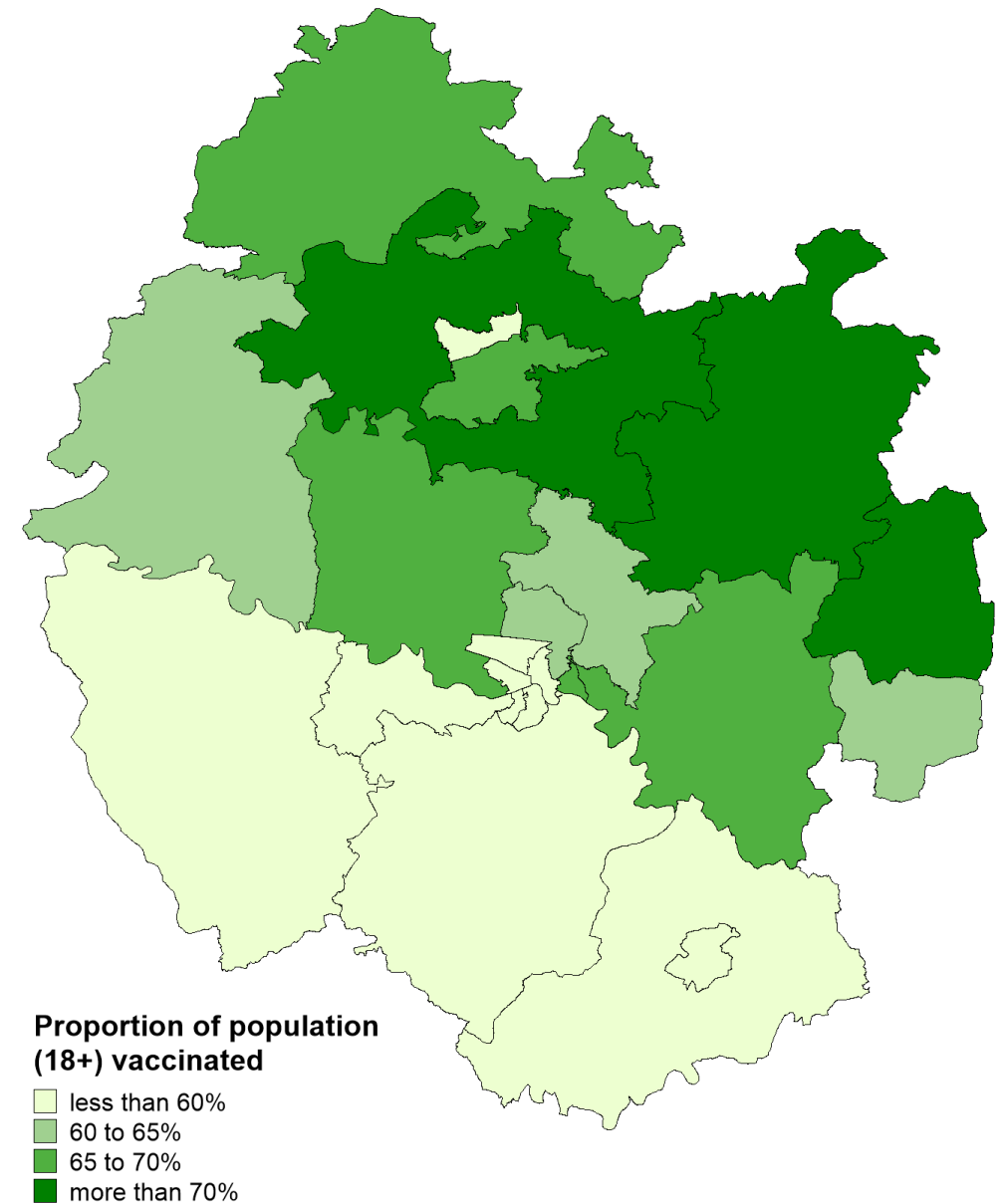
- NHS data indicates that as of 21 March **96,700** Herefordshire residents had received their first dose: **62%** of eligible residents (aged 18+).
- The proportion of the community dwelling population\* vaccinated by MSOA ranges from 51% (Hereford South West) to 73% (Colwall, Cradley & Wellington).
- The proportions vaccinated are currently lower in Hereford city, Ross and the rest of south Herefordshire than the rest of the county.

**Note:** Differences in the proportion of the population vaccinated by MSOA will, in part, reflect the differing age profiles between areas because of the way the vaccine programme has been prioritised. The complexities of the data mean that it currently isn't possible to account for this in reporting.

## **! Be aware !**

\* *i.e. excluding residents of care homes as these would skew the distribution*

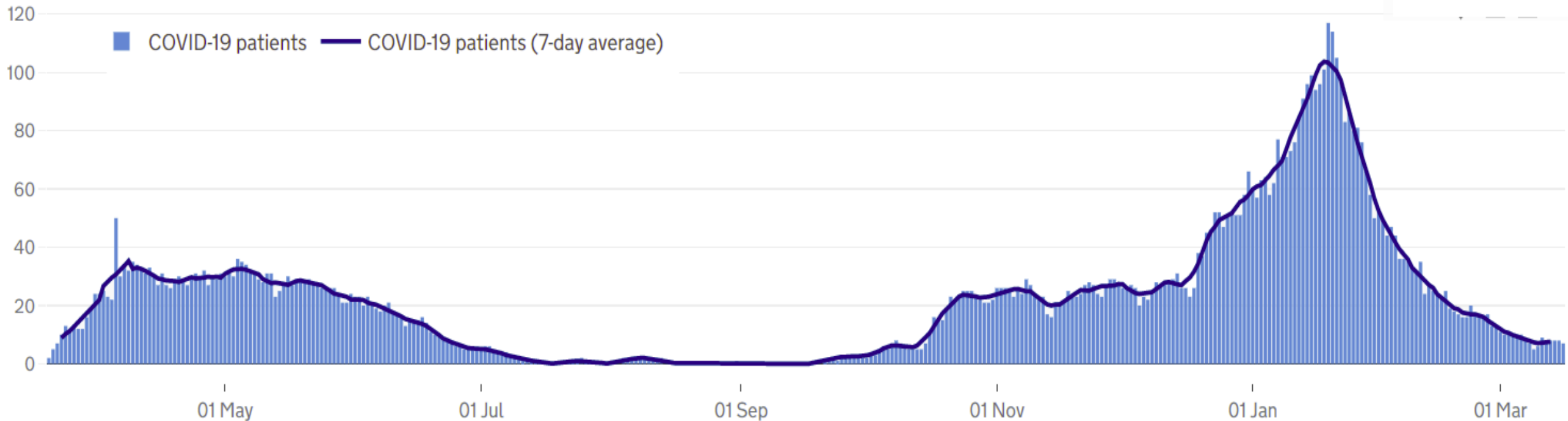
- *Some readers may have access to other sources of data on vaccinations. Numbers and percentages may vary due to:*
  - *Date: the published NHS data lags behind unpublished data intended for other intelligence purposes*
  - *Population base: the figure here is the percentage of the **resident** population, whilst others will be a proportion of those **registered** with a GP*
  - *Age/eligibility group: reporting groups can change*



**Where can I find out more?** The numbers of COVID-19 vaccinations are published weekly (Thursdays) by the NHS: [www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-vaccinations/](https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-vaccinations/)

# Patients with Covid-19 in Herefordshire hospitals

- Published data shows that by 13 March there were 8 COVID-19 patients in Wye Valley Trust hospitals compared to the peak of 117 seen on 19 January. The 7-day average (7.6) is now lower than at any point since mid October.
- Over the course of the pandemic a total of 742 patients have been admitted, almost a third of whom were admitted during January. In the first two weeks of March, 7 patients were admitted.

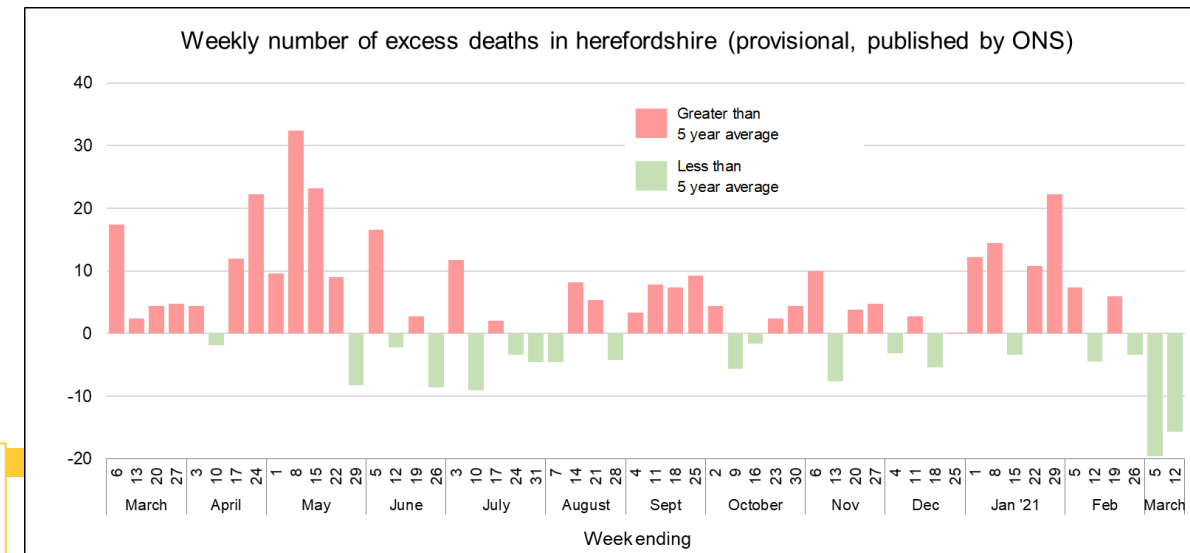
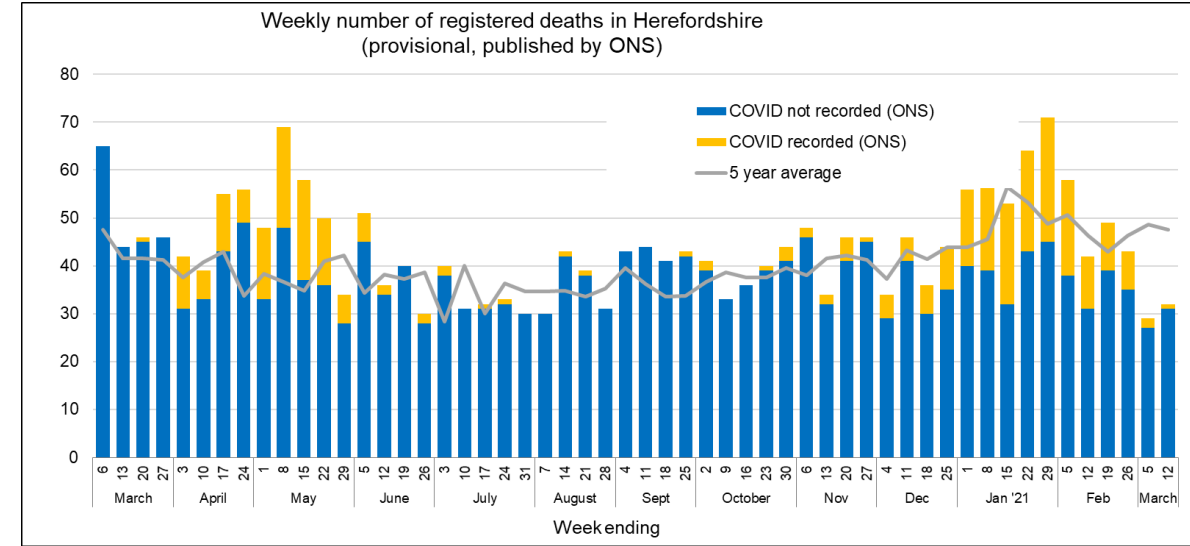



**Where can I find out more?** The numbers of COVID-19 patients in hospital by acute trust are updated daily by PHE at <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>, with an 11 day lag.



# Profile of deaths: published data

- One **death related to Covid-19** was reported in this week's published ONS data (occurring by 12 Mar and registered by 19 Mar) – this takes the official total amongst Herefordshire residents to 329 throughout the whole pandemic.
- Almost one third (105) of deaths occurred in January.
  - Following a sustained period of 'excess deaths' linked to Covid-19 during January and February, overall numbers of deaths have been below average levels for the time of year in four of the last five weeks.
  - As in May, one in every three deaths in January were related to Covid-19, although fewer of them were 'excess deaths' compared to May.
  - There have been 206 'excess deaths' in Herefordshire since the beginning of March 2020.
- There are signs that the latest wave of Covid-related deaths has peaked with only three Covid-19 related deaths so far recorded in March.
- Deaths in Herefordshire remain lower than nationally: the crude death rate is currently 171 per 100,000 compared to the England figure of 228.
- Public Health England also publish numbers of people who have **died within 28 days** of a first positive test:
  - 280 in total (registered by 24 March), a figure lower than that published by ONS as the latter does not require a positive test for COVID-19 to be mentioned on a death certificate.



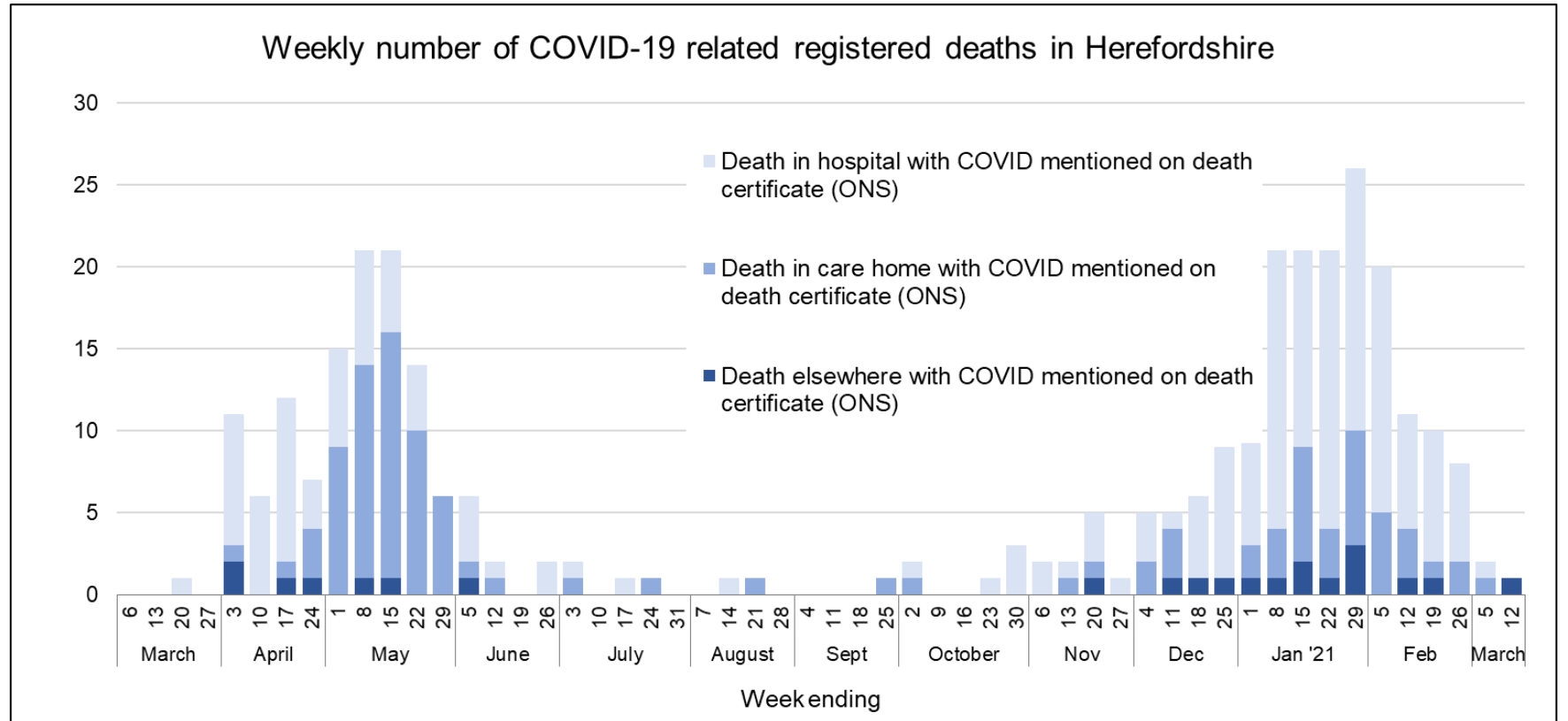
 **Where can I find out more?** ONS publish [provisional data on weekly numbers of registered deaths](#) by usual residence for local authorities every Tuesday, with an 11 day lag. Deaths recorded as COVID-19 by ONS include deaths where possible or confirmed COVID-19 is mentioned as any cause of death. They are therefore higher than the [PHE figures](#), which only include those who have died following a positive test.



# Deaths associated with Covid-19: location

- During the first wave in April around two thirds of deaths were in hospital and a quarter in care homes, whereas in May the proportions were reversed. Since mid December hospital deaths have again dominated with almost three quarters (117) occurring in this setting while one fifth (33) have been in care homes.
- Over the course of the pandemic 106 Covid-related deaths have occurred in care homes, 200 in hospital (some of whom will have been care home residents), 18 at home and 4 in a hospice.

- The highest numbers of deaths in small areas are linked to deaths of care home residents, mainly during April and May. Otherwise, there has been no geographic pattern of COVID-related deaths in Herefordshire.



**Where can I find out more?** ONS publish [provisional data on weekly numbers of registered deaths](#) by usual residence for local authorities every Tuesday, with an 11 day lag. Deaths recorded as COVID-19 include deaths where possible or confirmed COVID-19 is mentioned as any cause of death. Their [interactive map](#) is updated less regularly, and currently includes deaths occurring up to the end of December.

# Other resources

- Wider vulnerabilities

- The draft *2020 Director of Public Health report: Impacts of COVID-19* is available on the [Council's website](#) (final version due for publication mid-April)
- A monthly bulletin of the economic impacts of coronavirus is published on the [Understanding Herefordshire website](#)

- New research and open access analytical tools are continually emerging. As well as the sources linked to throughout these slides, you may be interested in:

- [The Office for National Statistics' daily coronavirus roundup](#): the latest research into the effects on the economy and society
- [The Health Foundation - COVID-19 policy tracker](#): an interactive timeline of key events and government policy announcements related to coronavirus
- An [LG Inform dashboard](#) tailored to Herefordshire & Worcestershire, showing daily updates in cases and comparisons with other areas.
- A [Herefordshire Council dashboard](#) provides up to date information on cases in the county and provides links to other useful information.
- A [summary of Google mobility data](#) for Herefordshire provided by Data Orchard shows average visits to different categories of places over the pandemic.