



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Science Evidence Advice

Weekly Surveillance Report

12 November 2024



Science Evidence Advice (SEA)

gov.wales

Providing evidence and advice for Health and Social Services
Group on behalf of the Chief Scientific Advisor for Health

Science Evidence Advice: Weekly Surveillance Report

A. Top Line Summary

- Overall, COVID-19 confirmed case admissions to hospital **decreased** in the most recent week.
- COVID-19 cases who are inpatients have **decreased** in the most recent week.
- RSV activity in children under 5 years has **increased** in the most recent week.
- Influenza cases have **remained stable** and remain at low levels in the latest week.
- Whooping Cough notifications have **decreased** in the most recent week.
- Scarlet Fever notifications **decreased** in the most recent week.
- Norovirus confirmed cases have **decreased** in the most recent reporting week.

B. Acute Respiratory Infections Situation Update

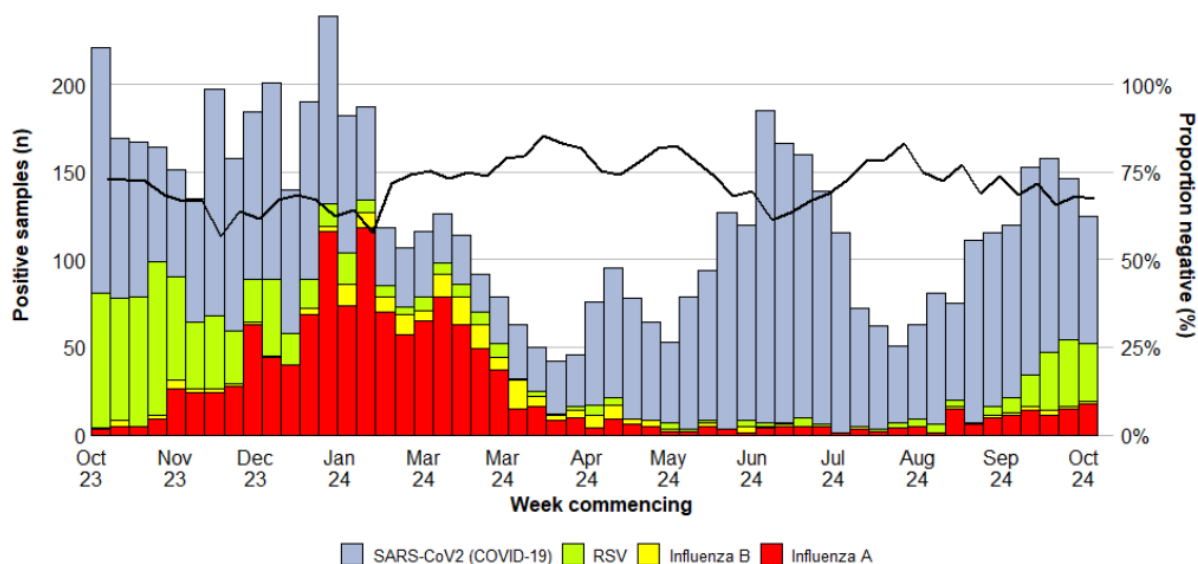
B.1 COVID-19 Situation Update

COVID-19 case numbers have decreased in recent weeks in the community but remain elevated in hospitals.

- At a national level, the weekly number of confirmed case admissions to hospital decreased but the number of cases who are inpatients remains high in week 44.
- As at 3 November 2024 the number of confirmed cases of community acquired COVID-19 admitted to hospital decreased to **61** but there were **392** in-patient cases of confirmed COVID-19, **8** of whom were in critical care compared to **436** and **3** in the previous week.
- The overall proportion of samples testing positive in hospitals and sentinel GP practices decreased to **8.2%** in the most recent week. Consultations with sentinel GPs for ARI decreased in the most recent week and confirmed cases of COVID-19 in sentinel GP patients decreased.
- During week 44, according to European Mortality Monitoring (EuroMoMo) methods, 'no excess deaths' were reported in the weekly number of deaths from all causes in Wales.
- Between weeks 39 and 44, KP.3* from the Pango lineage was the most dominant variant in Wales, accounting for **50.9%** of all sequenced cases. The emerging XEC variant accounted is second highest at **24.4%** of cases.
- The number of Ambulance calls recorded referring to syndromic indicators increased from **1,971** in the previous week to **2,050** in the latest reporting week.

- During week 43, 2024, **no** ARI outbreaks were reported to the Public Health Wales Health Protection Team.

Figure 1: Samples from hospital patients submitted for RSV, Influenza and SARS-CoV2 testing only, by week of sample collection, Week 44, 2023 to Week 44, 2024 (source: [PHW](#))

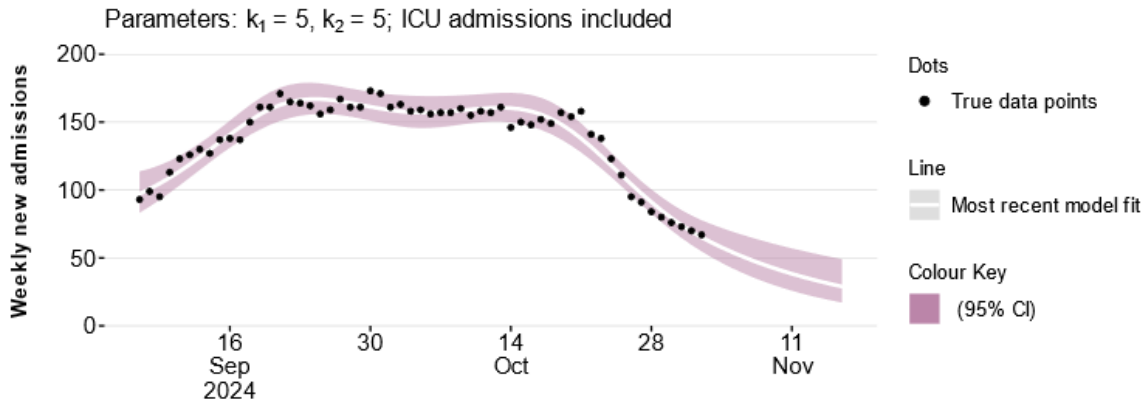


COVID-19 Short Term Projections

The Science Evidence Advice team at Welsh Government have produced short term projections (STPs) for COVID-19 which can be produced nationally and at the Local Health Board unit. STPs project 2 weeks forward from 8 weeks of current data, and do not explicitly factor in properties of the infectious disease, policy changes, changes in testing, changes in behaviour, emergence of new variants or rapid changes in vaccinations.

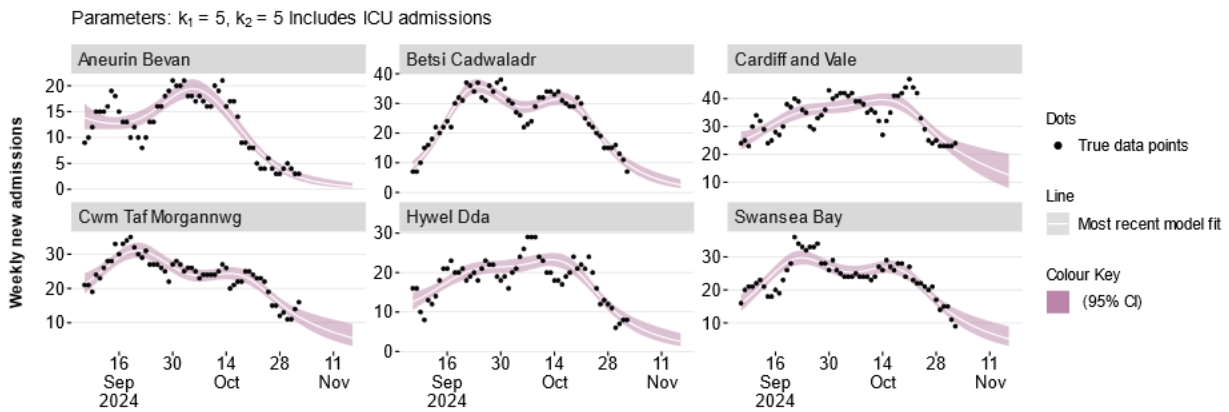
The COVID-19 STPs uses admissions data from PHW until 2 November 2024 to make short term projections for COVID-19 weeks forward (16 November 2024). The black dots show the actual data points while the white line is the best fit from the most recent projection. The colour shadings represent the 95% confidence interval of the projections with light purple showing the most recent projection and the dark purple showing the oldest. The STPs for Wales show that COVID-19 admissions are projected to decrease over the next two week period (Figure 2). Figure 3 shows that COVID-19 admissions are projected to decrease across all health boards over the next two weeks.

Figure 2: Short Term Projections for COVID-19 hospital admissions in Wales (data until 2 November 2024)



Source: Public Health Wales

Figure 3: Short Term Projections for COVID-19 hospital admissions in Wales Health Boards (data until 2 November 2024)

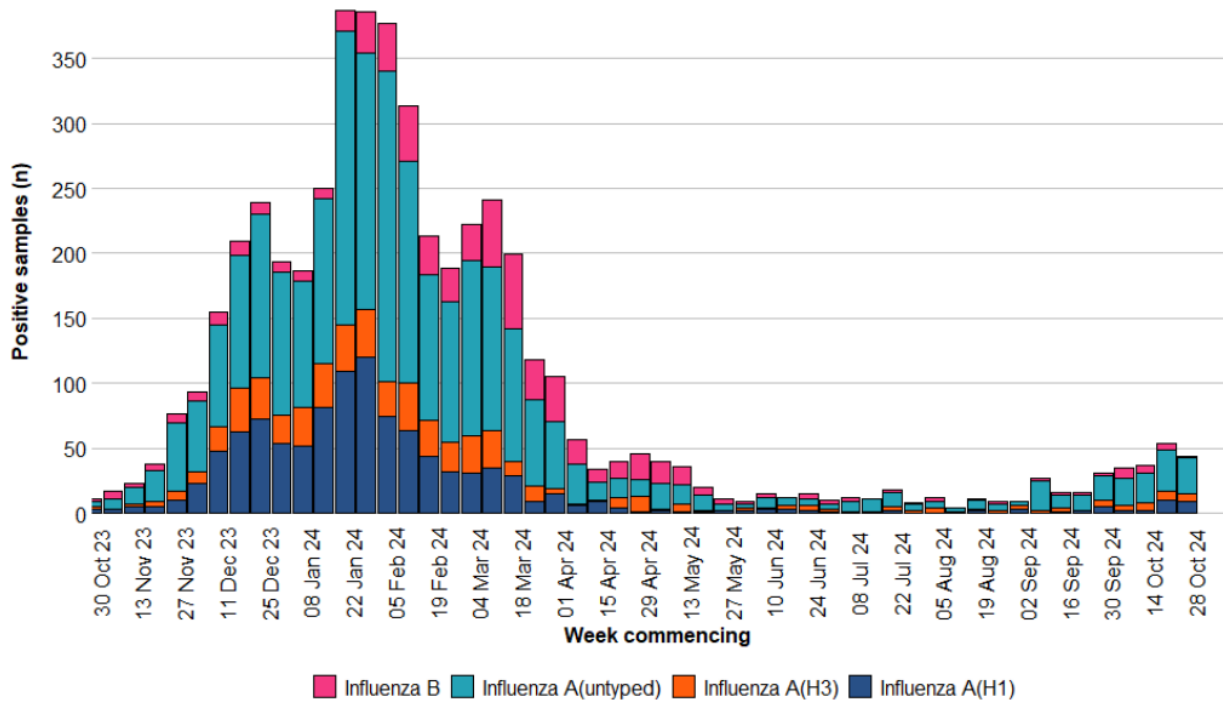


Source: Public Health Wales

B.2 Influenza Situation Update

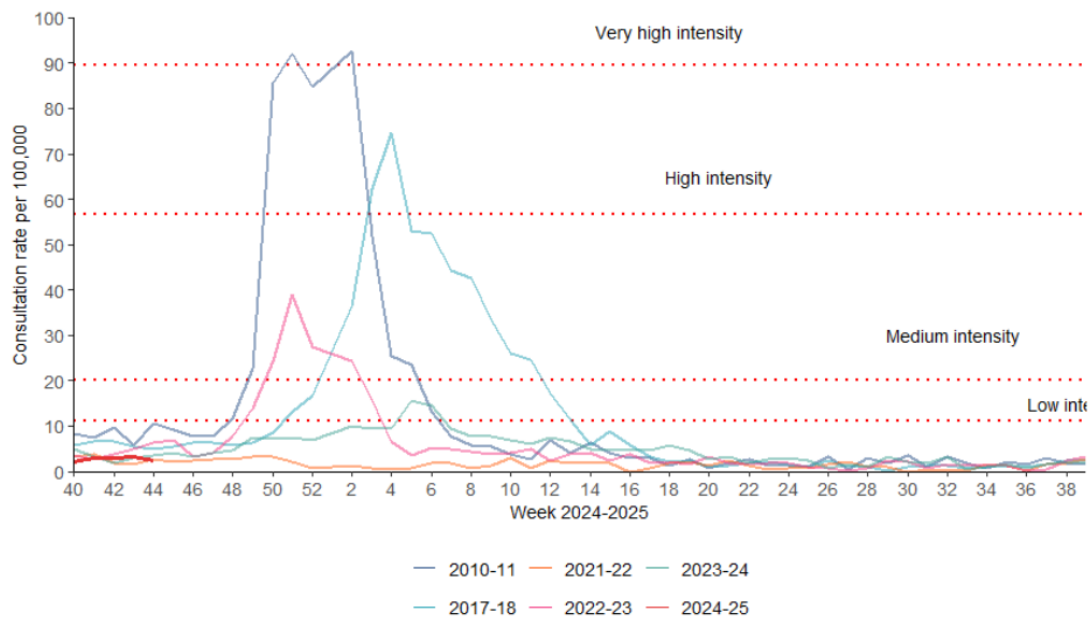
Influenza case numbers remained low and stable in week 44. The number of confirmed cases of community acquired influenza admitted to hospital increased to **17** in the most recent week. In the most recent week, there were **25** hospital in-patient cases of confirmed influenza, **2** of whom was in critical care. In the most recent week there were 6 confirmed cases of influenza A(H3N2), 9 cases of influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, 28 influenza A untyped and 1 influenza B (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Influenza subtypes based on samples submitted for virological testing by Sentinel GPs and community pharmacies, hospital patients, and non-Sentinel GPs, by week of sample collection, Week 44, 2023 to Week 44, 2024 (source: PHW)



There were 2.4 Influenza Like Illness consultations per 100,000 practice population in the most recent week, a decrease compared to the previous week (3.3 consultations per 100,000).

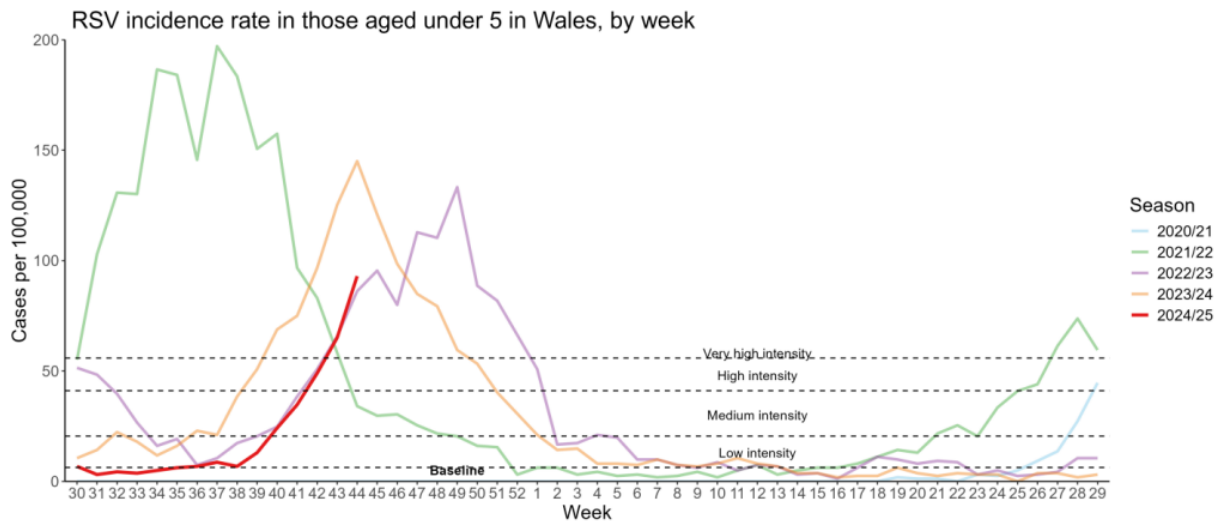
Figure 5: Clinical consultation rate for ILI per 100,000 practice population in Welsh sentinel practices (source: PHW)



B.3. Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) update

RSV is circulating, with activity at very high intensity levels in children aged up to 5 years old. Incidence per 100,000 population in children aged up to 5y increased to **93** in the most recent week. The number of confirmed cases of community acquired RSV admitted to hospital increased to **71** in the most recent week.

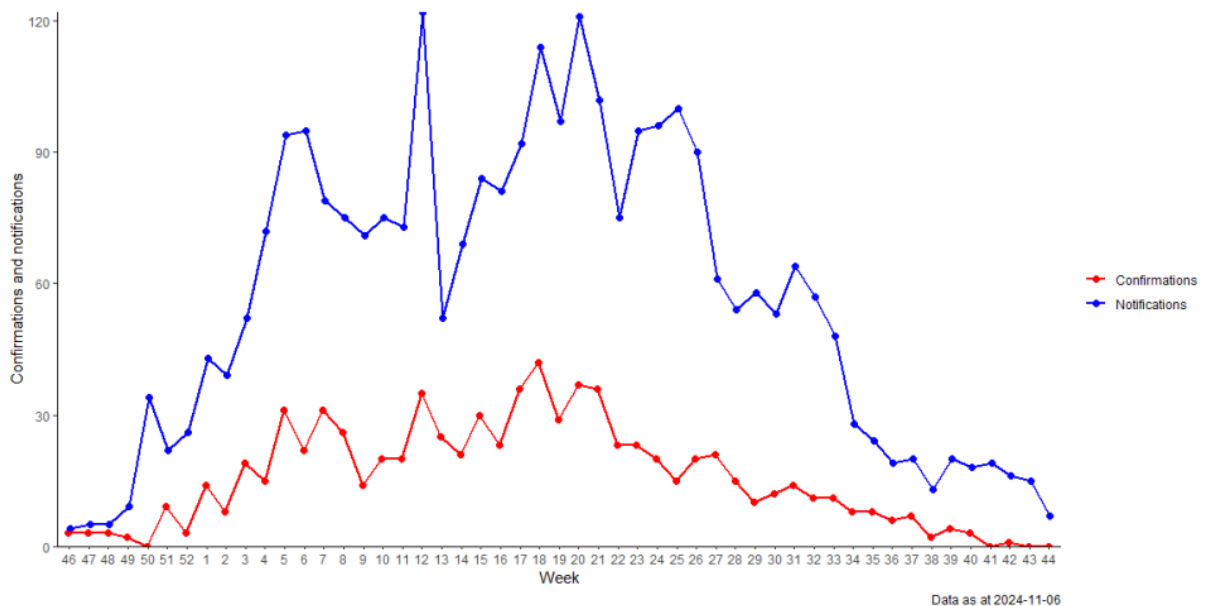
Figure 6: RSV Incidence Rate per 100,000 population under 5 years, weeks 30 2020 to week 44 2024 (source: PHW)



B.4 Whooping Cough (Pertussis)

Figure 7 below shows that whooping cough notifications up to the end of week 44 remained stable at low levels. Both notifications and lab confirmations continue to be at very low levels and have decreased in the latest week.

Figure 7: Weekly notifications and confirmations of Pertussis/Whooping Cough in Wales. (Source: PHW)



B.5 iGAS and Scarlet Fever

The number of iGAS notifications are currently low, remaining at seasonally expected levels. Scarlet Fever notifications have decreased in the most recent week (week 44) as shown in the figures below (up to 3 November 2024) with Figure 9 showing a stable picture overall for the current season (the bright red line on the chart). These notifications are now well below 100 a week compared to the peak of over 800 notifications in winter 2022-23.

Figure 8: Rolling 3 Week Average Scarlet Fever Notifications, 2014-2024, Wales (source: [PHW](#))

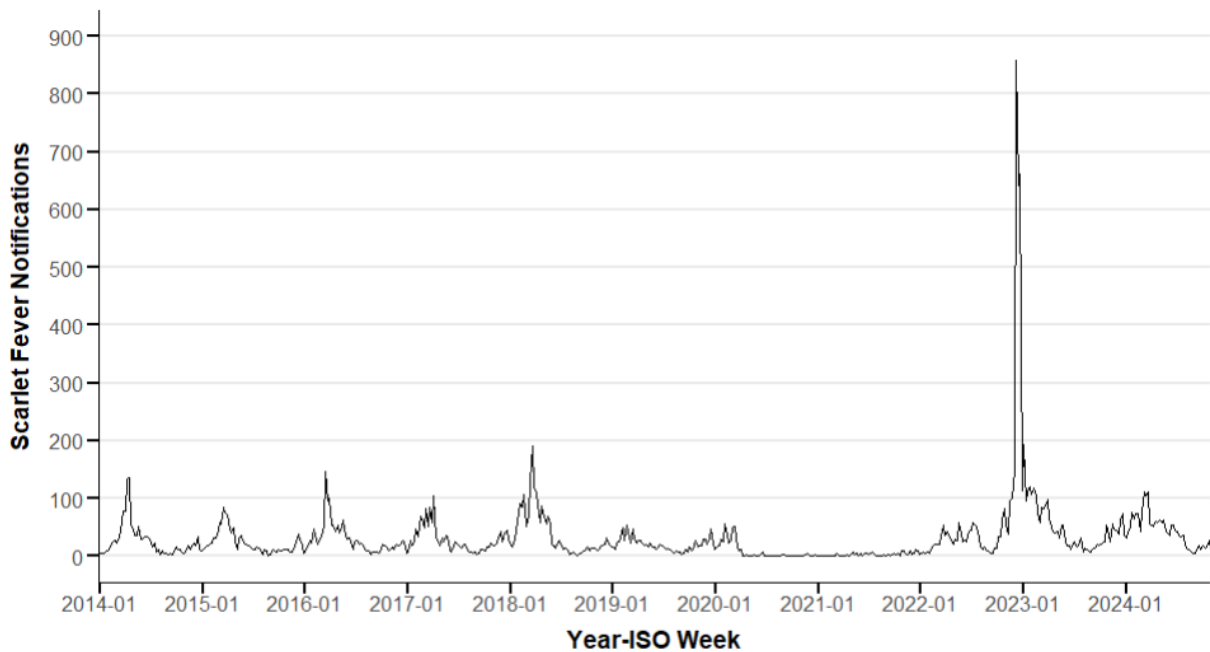
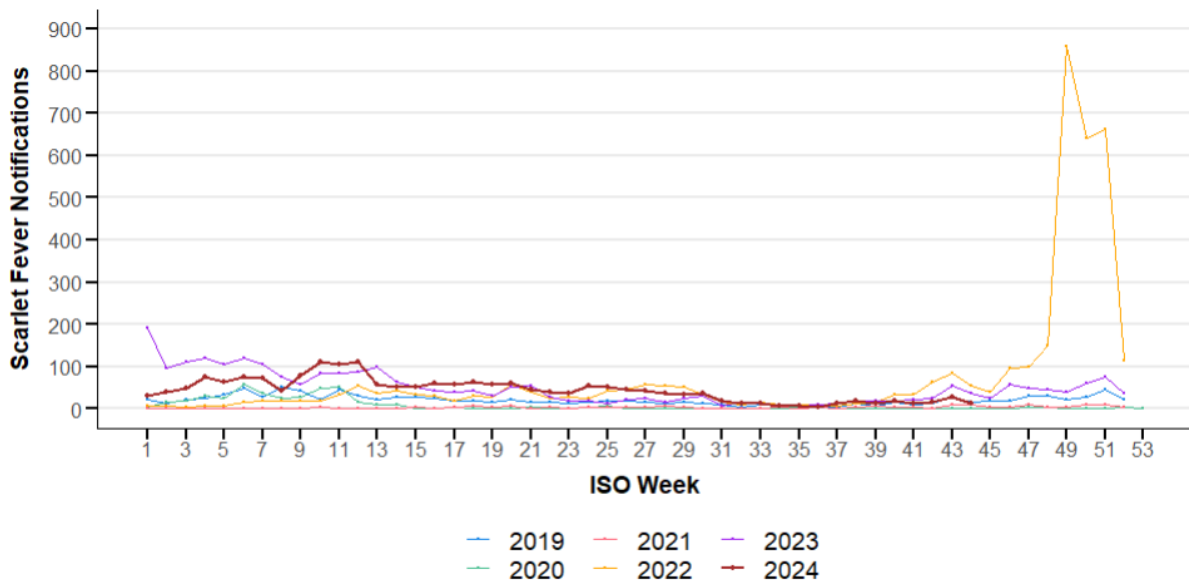


Figure 9: Rolling 3 Week Average Scarlet Fever Notifications, 2019-2024, Wales (Source: [PHW](#))



C. Science Evidence Advice Winter Modelling

The Science Evidence Advice (SEA) team in Welsh Government have published modelled scenarios for COVID-19, RSV and Influenza for [Winter 2024-25](#). This uses analysis of historical data used to project forward to estimate what we may see in winter 2024/25, contributing to winter planning for NHS Wales. The aim is to estimate the pressures that could be seen by an increase in respiratory viruses and other factors which are typically more prevalent in the winter months than other times of the year. The charts that follow show the scenarios for each disease and plot these against actual data to reveal how well the scenarios are capturing the current pressures on the health system in Wales.

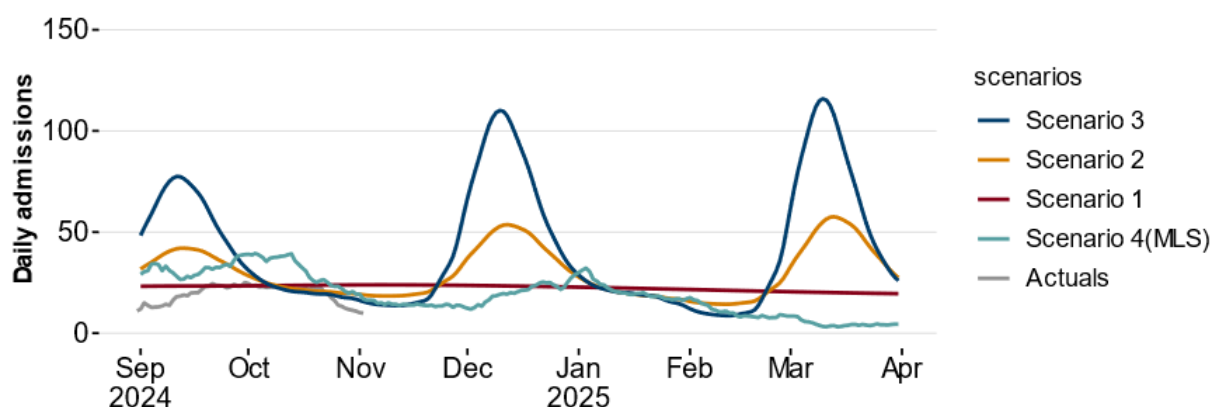
Note that, the modelling is an estimate of what may happen, not a prediction of what will happen.

Our winter modelling uses hospital admissions data from the Patient Episode Data for Wales (PEDW) dataset provided by Digital Health and Care Wales (DHCW). However, due to a lag in clinical coding and receiving PEDW data from DHCW, we use INCET admissions data provided by Public Health Wales (PHW) for our actuals. The data sources differ for a few reasons: the flu and RSV data from PHW includes lab-confirmed results only and includes inpatients only. The PEDW data from DHCW is based on [International Classification of Diseases vers. 10](#) (ICD-10) codes and the definitions may go wider than those used by PHW (e.g. our flu modelling using DHCW's data includes codes for both flu and pneumonia). Therefore, we account for these differences by multiplying the PHW data by the average of the differences in daily sums between the two data sources (3.92 for flu, 4.09 for RSV) last year for hospital admissions.

COVID-19

COVID-19 actuals are currently tracking below scenario 4 which is the Most Likely Scenario (MLS)

Figure 10 Daily COVID-19 Winter 2024-5 admissions scenarios, data until 2 November 2024



Source: Swansea University modelling (Scenarios 1, 2 3), actuals underlying the MLS to 31 March 2024 provided by DHCW, projected MLS scenarios from 1 September 2024 to 31 March 2025 from SEA.

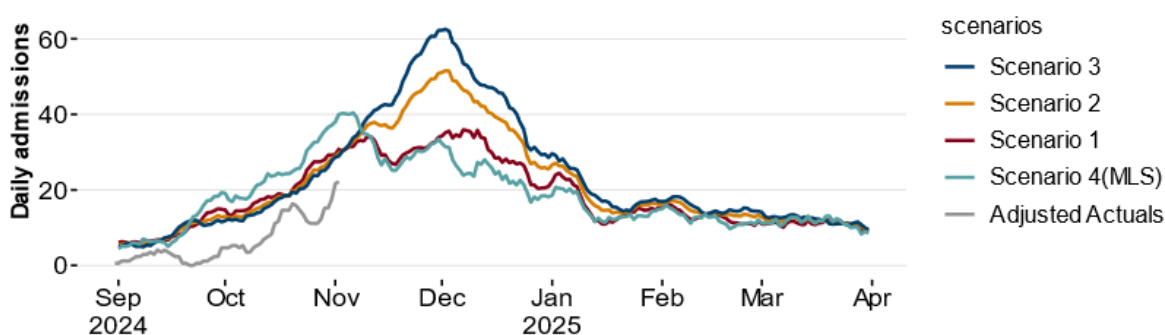
Notes

COVID-19 admissions and occupancy scenarios were created by Swansea University where a new variant emerges gradually every 3 months. The degrees of immune evasion from the variant is given by the scalar value 1, 1.25 and 1.5 and represented as scenarios 1-3. Scenario 4 is the repeat of last year’s data from Digital Health and Care Wales. Includes ICD-10 codes U071, U072, U099, U109.

RSV

RSV is currently tracking below the MLS and is closer to scenario 1 and scenario 2.

Figure 11: Daily RSV Winter 2024-5 admissions scenarios, data until 2 November 2024



Source: Raw data to 31 March 2024 provided by DHCW, projected scenarios from 1 September 2024 to 31 March 2025 from SEA

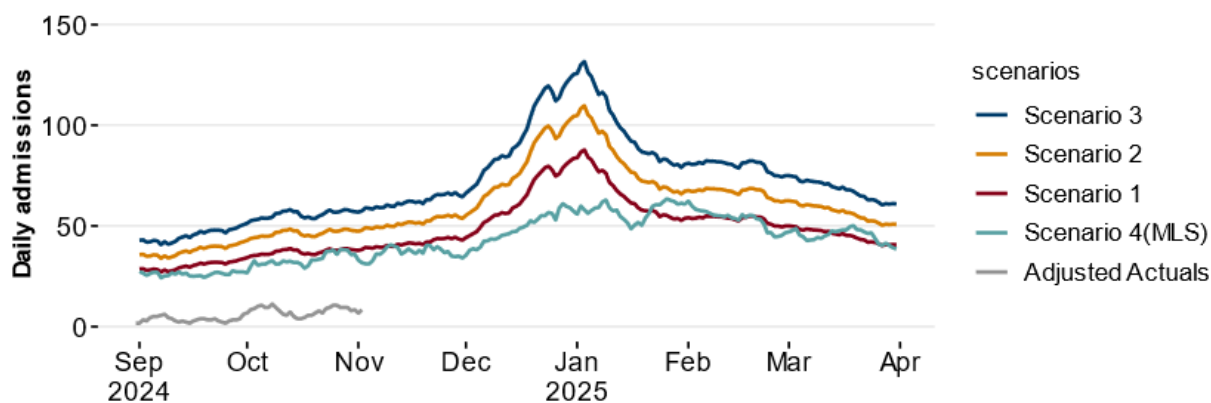
Notes

Scenario 1 reflects trends in the last two years. Scenario 3 assumes pre-pandemic patterns (from 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20). Scenario 2 combines elements from both Scenario 1 and 3 (2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20, 2022/23 and 2023/24). Scenario 4 is a repeat of last year’s data (2023/24). Data includes diagnosis codes J21 to J22 from the ICD-10.

Influenza and Pneumonia

Adjusted Influenza and pneumonia actuals are currently tracking well below the MLS.

Figure 12: Daily flu and pneumonia Winter 2024-5 admissions scenarios, data until 2 November 2024



Source: Raw data to 31 March 2024 provided by DHCW, projected scenarios from 1 September 2024 to 31 March 2025 from SEA

Notes: Based on the previous seven years of historical data,¹ the following scenarios were created for flu admissions and occupancy: Scenario 1 represents the average of non-pandemic years (2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20, 2022/23 and 2023/24). Scenarios 2 and 3 are obtained by multiplying Scenario 1 by scalars 1.25 and 1.5. Finally, scenario 4, which repeats last year's admissions, is considered the most likely scenario (MLS). Data includes diagnosis codes J09 to J18 (flu and pneumonia) from ICD-10. The adjusted actuals for flu admissions are currently tracking below the most likely scenario.

D. Communicable Disease Situation Update (non-respiratory)

D.1 Norovirus

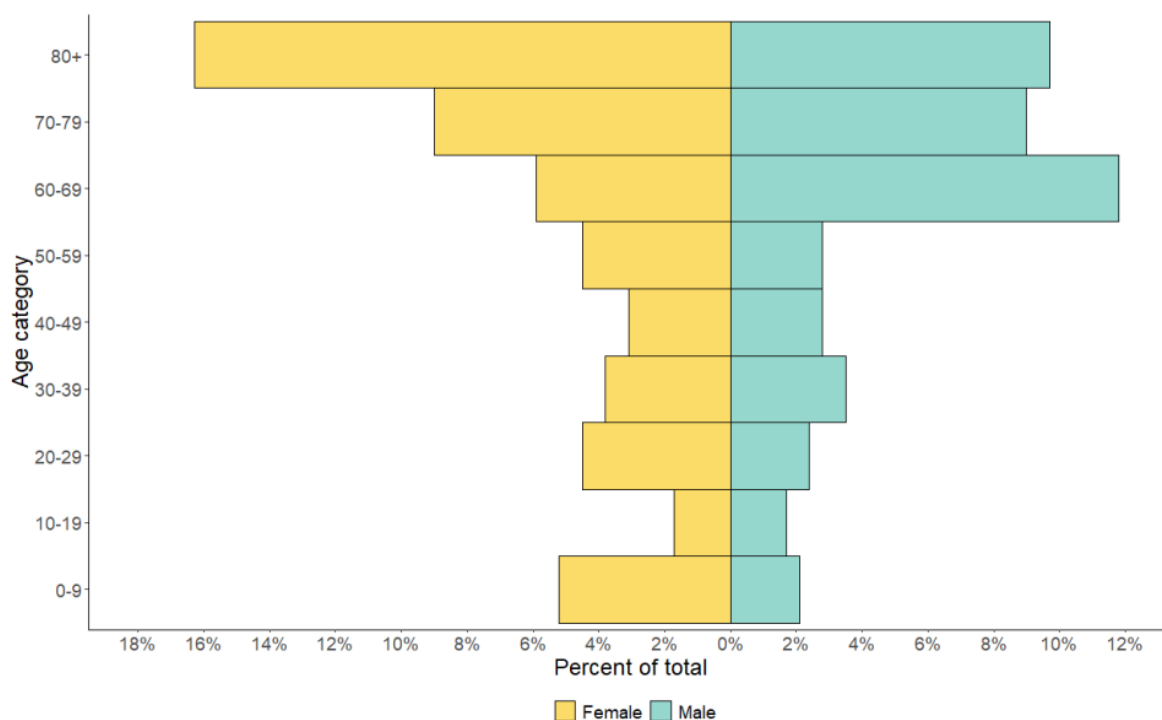
In the current reporting week (week 44 2024), a total of **21** Norovirus confirmed cases were reported in Welsh residents. This is a decrease (-36.4%) in reported cases compared to the previous reporting week (week 43 2024), where **33** Norovirus confirmed cases were reported.

In the last 12 week period (12/08/2024 to 03/11/2024) a total of **290** Norovirus confirmed cases were reported in Welsh residents. This is an increase (70.6%) in reported cases compared to the same 12 week period in the previous year (12/08/2023 to 03/11/2023) where **170** Norovirus confirmed cases were reported

In the last 12 weeks (12/08/2024 to 03/11/2024) **156** (53.8%) confirmed Norovirus cases were female and **132** (45.5%) confirmed cases were male. The age groups with the most cases were the 80+ (76 cases) and 70-79 (52 cases) age groups.

¹ Admissions during the pandemic years were not included in the scenarios due to very low numbers.

Figure 13: Age and sex distribution of confirmed Norovirus cases in the last 12 weeks (12/08/2024 to 03/11/2024)



Notes: This data from PHW only includes locally-confirmed PCR positive cases of Norovirus in Wales within the 12 week period up until the end of the current reporting week, week 43 2024 (12/08/2024 to 03/11/2024). Under-ascertainment is a recognised challenge in norovirus surveillance with sampling, testing and reporting known to vary by health board. In addition, only a small proportion of community cases are confirmed microbiologically.

E. International Surveillance Update

E.1 Mpox Clade 1 ([UKHSA Update](#))

30 October: The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has detected a single confirmed human case of Clade Ib mpox. The risk to the UK population remains low.

This is the first detection of this Clade of mpox in the UK. It is different from mpox Clade II that has been circulating at low levels in the UK since 2022, primarily among gay, bisexual and other men-who-have-sex-with-men (GBMSM).

UKHSA, the NHS and partner organisations have well tested capabilities to detect, contain and treat novel infectious diseases, and while this is the first confirmed case of mpox Clade Ib in the UK, there has been extensive planning underway to ensure healthcare professionals are equipped and prepared to respond to any confirmed cases.

The case was detected in London and the individual has been transferred to the Royal Free Hospital High Consequence Infectious Diseases unit. They had recently travelled to countries in Africa that are seeing community cases of Clade Ib mpox. The UKHSA and NHS will not be disclosing any further details about the individual.

Close contacts of the case are being followed up by UKHSA and partner organisations. Any contacts will be offered testing and vaccination as needed and advised on any necessary further care if they have symptoms or test positive.

UKHSA is working closely with the NHS and academic partners to determine the characteristics of the pathogen and further assess the risk to human health. While the existing evidence suggests mpox Clade Ib causes more severe disease than Clade II, we will continue to monitor and learn more about the severity, transmission and control measures. We will initially manage Clade Ib as a high consequence infectious disease (HCID) whilst we are learning more about the virus.

November 5: Two cases of Clade Ib mpox have been detected in household contacts of the first case, the UK Health Security Agency (UKSHA) can confirm. This brings the total number of confirmed cases to 3.

The 2 patients are currently under specialist care at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust in London. The risk to the UK population remains low.

There has been extensive planning underway to ensure healthcare professionals are equipped and prepared to respond to any further confirmed cases.

Professor Susan Hopkins, Chief Medical Adviser at UKHSA, said:

Mpox is very infectious in households with close contact and so it is not unexpected to see further cases within the same household.

The overall risk to the UK population remains low. We are working with partners to make sure all contacts of the cases are identified and contacted to reduce the risk of further spread.

Contacts of all 3 cases are being followed up by UKHSA and partner organisations. All contacts will be offered testing and vaccination as needed and advised on any necessary further care if they have symptoms or test positive.

November 6: One further case of Clade Ib mpox has been detected in a household contact of the first case, the UK Health Security Agency (UKSHA) can confirm.

This brings the total number of confirmed cases to 4, all of which belong to the same household. The patient is currently under specialist care at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust in London. The risk to the UK population remains low. The patient has been isolating since identified as a contact of the first case and no additional contact tracing is required.

E.2 Communicable Disease Centre (CDC) USA – Avian Flu [update](#)

4 November, 2024: Since April 2024, CDC, working with state public health departments, has confirmed H5 bird flu infections in 44 people in the United States. Nineteen of these cases were associated with exposure to H5N1 bird flu-infected poultry and 24 were associated with exposure to sick or infected dairy cows. The source of the exposure in one case, which was reported by Missouri on September 6, could not be determined. Serological testing of the contacts of the Missouri case have been reported, and that investigation has concluded.

The 44 cases include 20 cases in dairy farm workers in California, three of which were confirmed by CDC last week and three on Monday, November 4; nine cases in poultry farm workers in Washington state, three of which were confirmed by CDC last week; and one case associated with the Washington poultry outbreak that was confirmed by CDC last week and is pending jurisdiction assignment. Not included in that count are four probable cases -- one in a California dairy farm worker and three in Washington state poultry farm workers. While these probable cases were negative on confirmatory testing at CDC, all four met the [Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists \(CSTE\) probable case definition](#) and have been reported by the states.

Cases in California and Washington have occurred in workers on affected farms. All available data so far suggest sporadic instances of animal-to-human spread. The farm workers in California and Washington state all described mild symptoms, many with eye redness or discharge (conjunctivitis). Some workers who tested positive in Washington reported some mild upper respiratory symptoms. None of the workers were hospitalized. Updated case counts, including by state and source of exposure, are reflected in a [table](#) on CDC's website. To date, person-to-person spread of H5 bird flu has not been identified in the United States. CDC believes the immediate risk to the general public from H5 bird flu remains low, but people with exposure to infected animals are at higher risk of infection.

E.4 [Marburg Virus Disease \(MVD\) Rwanda](#)

No new cases of Marburg virus disease have been reported in Rwanda since 30 October 2024 and as of 7 November 2024. The last two cases were reported on 26 October and on 30 October 2024. Both cases were known contacts of confirmed cases. An additional 1 000 doses of the investigational Marburg virus vaccine were dispatched to Rwanda by the Sabin Vaccine Institute (Sabin Vaccine Institute Press Release, 31 October 2024). Epidemiological investigation of the patients is ongoing and a preprint including the results of the genomic analysis of Marburg virus from the cases was published on 5 November. The analysis concluded that the outbreak lineage is most closely related to a sequence sampled in Kampala, Uganda in September 2014 from a healthcare worker. The results support the theory of a single zoonotic event followed by human-to-human transmission among the cases reported during the first two weeks.

Caves where fruit bats can be found have been mapped and investigations of the fruit bats in the area where the index case was exposed (mining site) are conducted, according to the interview of the Minister of Health of Rwanda to the New England Journal of Medicine (published on 6 November). Overall, 66 MVD cases have been reported since the start of the outbreak. Among these, 49 have recovered and 15 have passed away. Over 1 000 contacts have been listed and followed up during the investigation.

ECDC Assessment

The impact of an MVD case for an EU/EEA citizen in Rwanda is assessed as low. Although MVD is a potentially life-threatening disease, at the population level case numbers are low and in the context of this outbreak adequate supportive care is available locally. Therefore, the overall risk for EU/EEA citizens visiting or living in Rwanda is estimated as low.