

Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Situation Update for the
Health and Wellbeing Board

14th March 2023

**Barking &
Dagenham**

one borough; one community; no one left behind

Key updates

Coronavirus remains a serious health risk, particularly to vulnerable populations. Coronavirus, in combination with other resurgent respiratory illnesses such as Influenza, continues to apply pressure to health services in the borough. Residents and visitors to the borough should stay cautious to help protect themselves and others.

- The all-age case rate in Barking and Dagenham remains low, but is rising at the end of the week to 15th February. From the 8th February to 15th February, the boroughs all-age case rate rose from 20.6 cases per 100k residents to 28.0 cases, which was below the London average of 29.1 cases. At the end of the week to 15th February, 15 London boroughs had a lower case rate than Barking and Dagenham, up from 7 in the previous week. It should be noted that these low all-age case rates are being observed in an environment of low pillar 1 and 2 testing levels, particularly among younger age groups.
- From the 8th February to 15th February, Barking and Dagenham's 60+ case rate nearly doubled, from 35.7 cases per 100k residents to 71.3 cases. The borough maintained its 60+ rag rating at green. 20 London boroughs have a lower 60+ case rate than Barking and Dagenham, up from 5 in the previous week. Over the same period, the London 60+ case rate rose for the fourth consecutive week, from 55.3 cases per 100k residents to 68.5 cases, a 23.9% increase.
- The 7 day average rate per 100k residents who took a PCR test rose from 14.2 tests in the week to 8th February to 18.1 tests in the week to 15th February. Over the same time period, the percentage of test taking residents receiving a positive result fell from 9.9% to 9.5%.
- Despite low case rates being observed in Barking and Dagenham, the number of COVID-19 positive patients in a BHRUT G&A hospital bed is now rising. From the 8th February to 19th February, the number rose from 26 to 40. This is the fourth consecutive weekly increase, despite falling case rates over some of those weeks. Winter pressures caused in part by the increased prevalence of COVID-19 and Influenza continue to strain health care services in the borough. The number of patients in BHRUT critical care hospital beds fell from 2 on 9th February to 1 on 19th February. This number may continue to rise as the effects of higher G&A bed occupancy filter through to critical care services.
- One possible explanation for increased hospital bed occupancy is the increasing prevalence of the XBB.1.5 and CH.1.1 variants of COVID-19. The XBB.1.5 variant was first identified in a Barking and Dagenham resident on 11th January 2023. Six samples from Barking and Dagenham residents have tested positive for this new variant in total, but there are likely many more cases present in the borough. Currently, the BQ.1 strain remains dominant in Barking and Dagenham, but this is expected to change to the XBB.1.5 variant based on mutations that give the latter a growth advantage, potentially making it more contagious.
- The Autumn booster coverage percentage for all borough residents aged 50 and over was unchanged over the week to 15th February at 55.9%. This is the second week that has not seen a weekly increase in coverage since the campaigns inception. The 90+ year old group remained the group with the highest Autumn booster coverage at 61.5%.
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- In the week to 10th February, no death certificates issued in the borough mentioned COVID-19. The total number of deaths in the borough that week was 6.6 deaths below the 2015-19 average for the same week. Following a downward adjustment to the total number of deaths that occurred in the week to 3rd February, excess mortality is yet to be recorded in Barking and Dagenham in 2023. There have been 693 COVID-19 related deaths in the borough since the start of the pandemic.