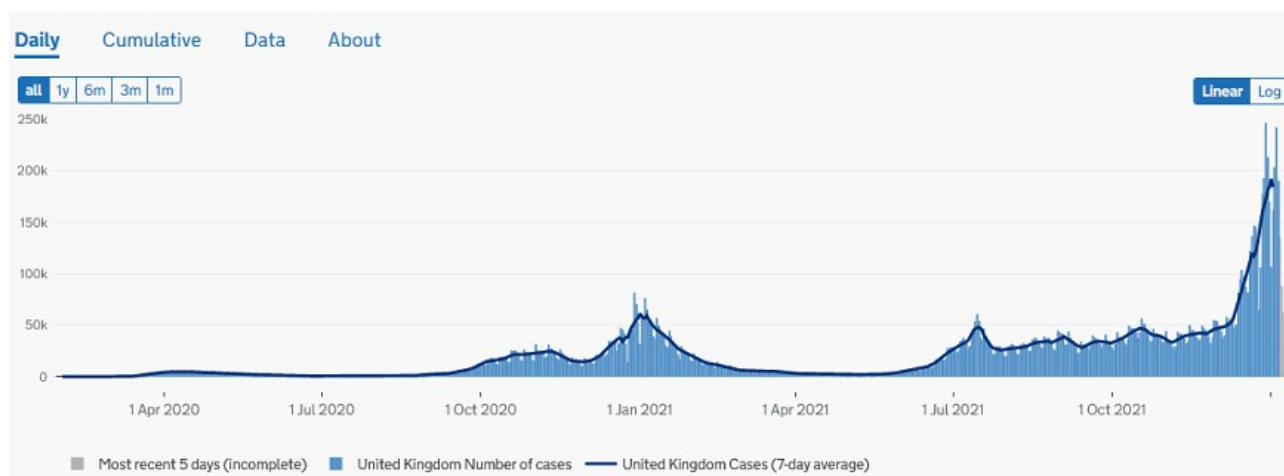


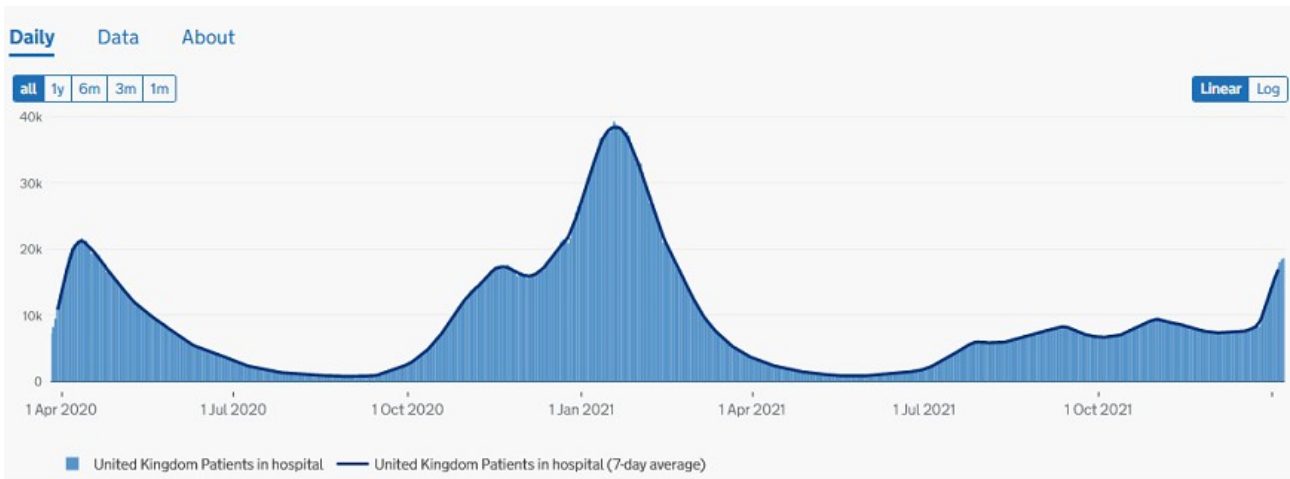
This composite summary covers most of October 2021, all of November & December and the first part of January 2022. Because I summarised events in 4-week 'blocks', the composite doesn't exactly correspond to monthly breaks.

General comment: at the end of the last composite summary (end September 2021), it seemed that perhaps there was some hope for optimism as regards the future with a 'disconnect' between case numbers, deaths and hospitalisations. That seems to have been maintained for much of this composite period, but, what we didn't know then was that in November, an entirely new strain of the Coronavirus ('Omicron') would take over, rapidly, from the 'Delta' main strain that we had been living with since this time last year and would flood the country as never seen before. By early December, governments around the world were having to react to this emergent strain – here in the UK, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (as well as adjacent sovereign nations) introduced much stricter rules, similar to those in place in late winter 2020/21, but the UK government, whose remit for this was only for England, decided on a 'light touch' with the reintroduction of masks in shops/retail and also tightening up on rules in schools. They did, as other jurisdictions, go 'hell for leather' on the booster/third dose programme. See the summary notes below for more on this. All in all, as I write this (10th January, 2022), we await to see which, if any, strategy was/is correct. The graphs appended give a useful overview again of the progress of the virus. There is also a lot of 'political' noise now ... a large section of the Conservative (government party) back-bench community want light-touch, or no, restrictions.

[**Cases** ... remember that testing can be quite erratic and the early part of the pandemic was grossly under-tested: this graph ends January 10th, 2022]

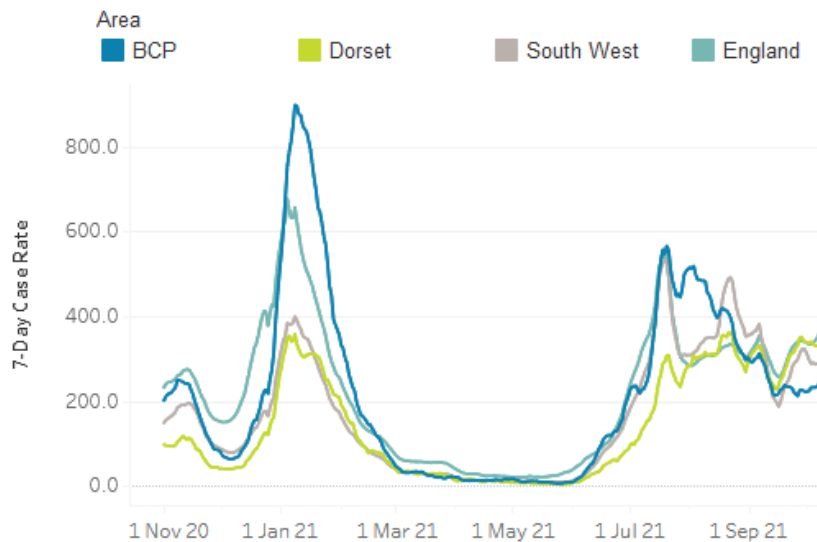


[**Hospital occupancy** ... covering almost the same period as above (ending 6th January), and you can see that although we are below the winter 20/21 peak, the profile is somewhat similar to that at the beginning of the pandemic. Remains to be seen whether this is an ill omen!



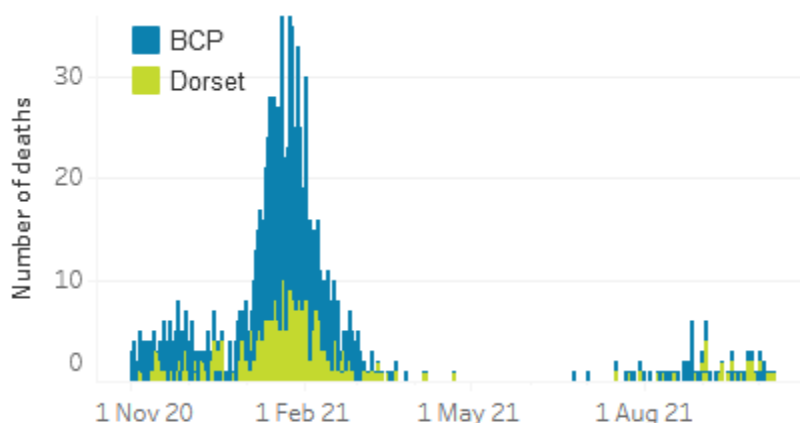
Summary of newsy items from past 4 weeks (to Sunday 17th October 2021: next issue in **four** weeks time – to Sunday 14th November.)

- Furlough programme ceased end of September ... Shielding (which had been paused) ceased completely. Little if any material change ‘on the ground’ despite increase in cases (but see below re: schools). Mask wearing stabilised. Much planning for Christmas (and similar) events – must be some doubts given the case numbers shown in the graphs ... but if the hospital admission data remain low then we’ll probably get away with it!
- Case number over past 4 weeks have been rising: as of Friday 15th October, the graphs here show the situation well:



The case numbers for Dorset are within a whisker of the highest during the winter 2020/21 peak. This is obviously worrying, but the

COVID-19 Deaths in Dorset and BCP Council Areas
Deaths that occurred within 28 days of a positive test



15/10/2021 07:51:42 graph for hospitalisations tell a different story ...

The main problem currently is that it is young people (roughly under 25, and many below age 16) who are picking up and spreading infections ... and yet they are either unwilling or

unable to be vaccinated. Local schools are re-introducing restrictions such as ‘bubbles’ and mask-wearing etc.

Visit: westmoors-tc.gov.uk/ and select “Covid-19”

Summary of newsy items from past 4 weeks (to Sunday 14th November 2021: next issue in **four** weeks time – to Sunday 12th December.)

- Very little ‘on the ground’ to report: case numbers rose sharply earlier in this period, but are now, very slowly, beginning to decline, though still above the national average. Deaths/hospitalisations remain stubbornly high – the deaths are causing concern.
- Most clubs and activities seem to be back up and running.
- The churches are planning a full schedule of special services, concerts and other activities for Christmas.
- The Annual Service of Remembrance was held on Sunday 14th November in much the usual format that it was before the pandemic struck. There were exhortations to use caution about mixing, wear masks etc., but all seems to have passed off well.
- Case numbers/deaths etc., all worryingly high but we seem to be coping. The rest of Europe is, apparently, doing poorer than us.
- Booster shots are rolling out, but in a rather disorganised way.

Summary of newsy items from past 4 weeks (to Sunday 12th December 2021: next issue in **four** weeks time – to Sunday 9th January 2022.)

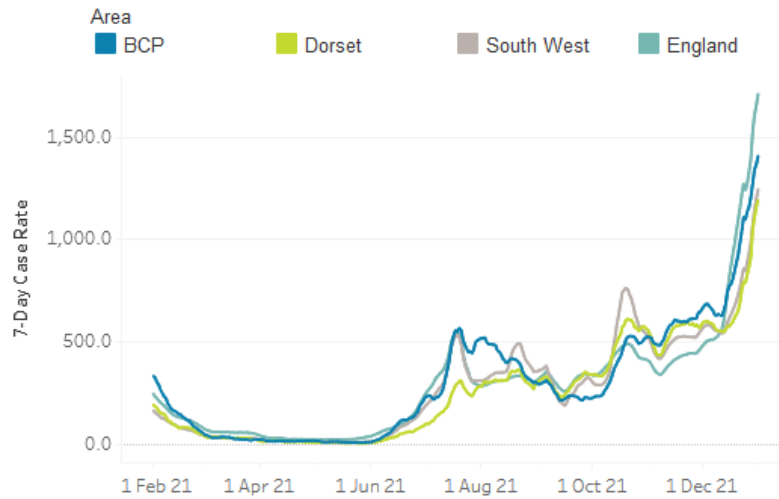
- Due to the arrival of the ‘Omicron’ variant of the Coronavirus infection early in this summary period (first detected in South Africa, but probably more widespread than that statement implies), the government indicated, via a prime-ministerial statement on Saturday 27th November that from Tuesday 30th face masks will be required in retail premises and on public transport (rather than on a voluntary basis) & school-children Year 7 and upwards will also be required to wear face-covering within communal areas.
- Further changes to regulations/guidance following rapid rise in Omicron/Coronavirus wave: From Friday 10th December, 2021, face coverings will be mandatory for most indoor public venues including places of worship, theatres and cinemas, as well as the already promulgated requirement in shops/retail outlets and on public transport. Masks are NOT needed in hospitality settings.
From Monday 13th December, people should work from home "if they can".
From Wednesday 15th, people will need an NHS Covid Pass, or a negative lateral flow test - to gain entry to a range of venues, including nightclubs and other entertainment venues.
The 'booster' (or third dose) vaccination programme is to be expanded and accelerated.
- Despite all the gathering gloom, the usual Christmas events locally have gone ahead ... Carols on the Petwyn, Christmas Tree Festival and of course shopping!
- The cases generally have been rising to an alarming level: the highest level since January. However, hospitalisations are roughly a fifth of those at the same time: a difficult conundrum for the authorities to plan for ... how many restrictions do you put in place?

Summary of newsy items from past 4 weeks (to Sunday 9th January 2022: next issue in **four** weeks time – to Sunday 7th February 2022.)

- Following the Prime Minister’s address to the nation in early December announcing the ‘ramping up’ of the Covid ‘booster’ (or third) vaccination campaign, there has been a mad

scramble to get these: unfortunately, no-one seems to have told the NHS! West Moors Village Surgery put out an urgent message saying don't call us, we'll call you as the receptionists etc., have been overwhelmed with queries!

- However, the roll-out of the 'third/booster' vaccination has been a great success in Dorset. As of 9th January, whilst the UK-wide figure was 62% of all adults eligible, for Dorset, the figure was 71% and for West Moors, 78%!
- In WM, at the beginning of this period, Covid-19 case numbers were well below the national average (and falling over 7 days), with deaths across Dorset (already a low number) falling too. However, that wasn't to last! By the end of this report period, case numbers had risen alarmingly, especially following the Christmas/New Year holiday – with an estimated 1 in 38 having the virus in one form or other by early January. Much speculation about further restrictions, but the government (for England only) have decided to 'ride out the wave'! Time will tell if this is the right approach ... the NHS is under severe strain – but deaths and 'severe' respiratory consequences are fairly stable.
- Following the 'work from home if you can' advice from this week, the road traffic has eased. During the week ending Saturday 18th December, a lot of 'strong hints' that people should avoid parties, meeting up in groups etc., though no official guidance to that effect. The medical people though would like a stronger message to be issued.
- Notable drop in people about – with anecdotal information that parents are taking their children out of school early to avoid catching the CV19/Omicron variant and 'spoiling Christmas'.
- Just before Christmas, there was much speculation that the government would enact more stringent restrictions, both for Christmas itself and afterwards ... as Christmas Eve approached, no such announcement was forthcoming. It will be interesting to see what happens after Boxing Day! And in fact, there were NO new restrictions announced for the last week of the old year (hence no additional threats to New Year's Eve), but it all depends upon the data as regards early January. However, England is now significantly out of step with Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (and many European nations) in having only 'light-touch' restrictions in place.
- Schools started back 'as normal' on the 4th January (or soon after), but with additional testing and other restrictions, such as mask wearing for all secondary school attendees in class (as well as in communal areas). Although no figures have been released local schools have been affected to a greater extent than in previous 'waves'.
- Regulations to change wef 11th January regarding testing: from that date, the emphasis will be on the Lateral Flow Tests (LFT) rather than automatically needing the PCR version (which is slower but more thorough). Mind you, a lot of local chemists have had problems getting hold of the LFTs!
- And finally ... as a certain ITN newscaster would say ... this end-of-the-week summary for Friday 7th January perhaps sums up the significant problems we're living through:
- " Case rates have continued to rise quickly over the past week across Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, and remain higher than at any other point during the pandemic. Infection rates are very high across the country. In Dorset we have started to see hospitalisations related to COVID-19 rise, up to 74 from 55 in a week. Our hospitals and other critical services are also under increasing pressure due to staff absences related to COVID-19. The number of deaths related to COVID-19 has remained relatively stable and continue to be much lower than during previous waves of the pandemic."
- See the graphs below ... alarming curves:



Let's hope the

government have the strategy right.

- The only specific local impact of the high cases appears to be that the 'reawakened' Dementia Action Group, due to restart in January, has gone back to sleep! I suppose this is precautionary only. I suspect they'll pop up fairly soon. No other club/organisation that I'm aware of has cancelled or otherwise changed their actions.