

Contact Tracing Service

COVID-19 Outbreak/Cluster summary



Issued 6 January 2022

Cluster and outbreak identification and follow up is an important part of the COVID-19 Test, Trace and Protect Strategy¹ in Northern Ireland. This report contains the number of outbreaks and clusters by setting since the start of the Contact Tracing Service and over a four week period. **It is important to note that whilst the risk of COVID-19 transmission within households is known to be high, outbreaks and clusters related to households are not reported here.**

Probable Outbreaks by Setting

During the 4 week period, 29th November 2021 – 26th December 2021, there were 78 outbreaks identified (58 open, 20 closed).

Setting	Total	Open	Closed
Workplace	35	24	11
Retail	9	7	2
Health & Social Care Setting	2	2	0
Funeral / Wakes	1	1	0
Fast Food Outlet / Takeaway	0	0	0
Cinema / Theatre / Entertainment Venue	8	8	0
Restaurant / Cafe	3	2	1
Sporting Event	4	4	0
Social Setting	1	1	0
Pharmacy	0	0	0
Place of Worship	2	0	2
Wedding	4	2	2
Personal Services	3	2	1
Bar	4	4	0
Hotel	0	0	0
Gym	0	0	0
Transport	2	1	1
Total	78	58	20

¹ Department of Health. Covid-19 Test, Trace and Protect Strategy. Belfast: May 2020.
<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/Test-Trace-Protect-Support-Strategy.pdf>

Clusters by Setting

During the 4 week period, 29th November 2021 – 26th December 2021, there were 479 clusters identified (273 open, 206 closed).

Setting	Total	Open	Closed
Workplace	208	114	94
Retail	96	52	44
Health & Social Care Setting	10	6	4
Funeral / Wakes	1	1	0
Fast Food Outlet / Takeaway	4	4	0
Cinema / Theatre / Entertainment Venue	48	29	19
Restaurant / Cafe	16	8	8
Sporting Event	9	7	2
Social Setting	10	6	4
Pharmacy	5	4	1
Place of Worship	2	1	1
Wedding	0	0	0
Personal Services	3	0	3
Bar	32	23	9
Hotel	20	10	10
Gym	1	0	1
Transport	14	8	6
Total	479	273	206

Notes

- Data are based on information reported to the Contact Tracing Service (CTS) and the PHA Health Protection Service. These data are provisional and based on live operational systems. Data will be subject to review and update and may differ from subsequent figures.
- 4 weekly data covers a 4 week period from 29th November – 26th December. Any open or closed clusters/outbreaks during this period were included. Clusters and outbreaks are reported separately
- Data for education settings (e.g. schools and universities) are not included as it is maintained by the education cell (<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/coronavirus-bulletin>)
- Data for Nursing Homes, Residential Homes and HSC institutions are not included as this is maintained by the PHA health protection service (<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/coronavirus-bulletin>). Health & Social Care settings reported relate to GP practices and independent and voluntary sector providers.
- PHA moved to a new reporting mechanism WC 12 July 2021 and comparison with previous reports should be considered within this context.
- Due to the recent large increase in the number of positive COVID-19 cases associated with the Omicron variant and the pressures placed on the CT service, cases associated with higher risk settings (e.g. Health and Social Care, food processing/packaging) and clusters and outbreaks with higher numbers have been prioritised. Therefore the number of clusters with smaller numbers of associated cases is likely to be an underestimate.

Definitions

- A cluster is defined as two or more test-confirmed cases of COVID-19 among individuals associated with a specific non-residential setting with illness onset dates within a 14-day period (in the absence of detailed information about the type of contact between the cases). A cluster may be closed if there are no new test-confirmed cases with illness onset dates in the last 14 days.
- An outbreak is defined as two or more test-confirmed cases of COVID-19 among individuals associated with a specific non-residential setting with illness onset dates within 14 days and either:
 - identified direct exposure between at least 2 of the test-confirmed cases in that setting (for example under one metre face to face, or spending more than 15 minutes within 2 metres) during the infectious period of one of the cases

OR

- when there is no sustained local community transmission - absence of an alternative source of infection outside the setting for the initially identified cases.

An outbreak may be closed if there are no new test-confirmed cases with illness onset dates in the last 28 days.

Ref: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-epidemiological-definitions-of-outbreaks-and-clusters/covid-19-epidemiological-definitions-of-outbreaks-and-clusters-in-particular-settings>