

**Covid-19 related deaths in care homes, 2020/21**  
**Care homes for adults and older people in Scotland**

**A statistical bulletin**

Publication date: 26 May 2021

## Introduction

On the 16 March 2020, the Care Inspectorate received the first notification of a death related to Covid-19 from a care home. Since then, up to the end of March 2021, we have received 3,774 notifications of Covid-19 related deaths of residents of care homes.

The National Records of Scotland (NRS) already publishes official statistics about Covid-19 related deaths. Their statistics are the definitive record of deaths in Scotland, and our data, which is self-reported by individual care homes, cannot be of the same quality. Nevertheless, our data does present a unique picture of the impact Covid-19 has had on care homes, and especially care homes for older people.

In this bulletin we provide descriptive statistics charting Covid-19 deaths over time, geography, sector, size and quality of care home. We have also provided supplementary tables in a separate file, which includes data at care home and provider level.

## Summary of main points

### Background information

- At the 31 March 2021, there were 1,069 care homes in Scotland, 75% of which were for older people and 25% were for adults. These care homes provide over 40,600 places: 92% of which were in care homes for older people and the remaining 8% in care homes for adults.
- These care homes were provided by 483 different providers, of which the majority (72%) provided only one care home, 19% provided between two and five care homes, and the remaining 9% provided 6 or more, with 41 care homes registered under the largest provider.
- In Scotland, care homes are provided by the public sector, the private sector and the voluntary or not-for-profit sector.
  - In care homes for older people, the private sector provides 75% of care homes providing 81% of places.
  - The voluntary sector provides the majority of care homes for adults (63%) although they provide proportionately fewer places (49%) with the private sector providing a further 45% of places.

### Covid-19 related deaths in care homes

- Between 16 March 2020 and 31 March 2021 the Care Inspectorate received 3,774 notifications of deaths related to Covid-19 from care homes.
- Care homes for older people were most affected: 3,761 (99.7%) of these deaths occurred in care homes for older people, and 510 (59%) care homes for older people reported at least one Covid-19 related death.

- Putting the numbers of Covid-19 related deaths in the context of the size of the care home sector, overall there were 9.2 deaths per 100 registered places<sup>1</sup>.
- As the size of a care home increased, so too did the rate of Covid-19 related deaths per 100 places from 2.1 deaths per 100 places in care homes with up to 20 places, rising to 12.6 deaths per 100 places in care homes with more than 80 places.
- In care homes for adults there were 0.4 deaths per 100 places, with low rates across all sectors. In care homes for older people there were 10.1 deaths per 100 places, with rates slightly higher in the voluntary and private sectors (10.4 and 10.2 respectively) compared with the public sector (8.6).
- A comparison of quality of each care home prior to the pandemic with rates of Covid-19 related deaths showed no clear relationship, with similar rates of Covid-19 related deaths in the care homes previously rated very good or excellent, adequate or good and weak or unsatisfactory.
- Care homes located in the most populated areas had higher rates of Covid-19 related deaths than those in the most remote areas: 11.6 per 100 places in large urban areas compared with 3.7 per 100 places in remote small towns.
- These statistics are descriptive in nature and present the relationship between each individual factor (for example size or sector) and Covid-related deaths. However this bulletin does not address the underlying relationships between the different factors. Previous statistical analysis of a range of factors (including size and sector) associated with Covid-19 outbreaks in care homes found that size of a service was the key factor associated with outbreaks in care homes. We plan to undertake further work on a statistical model to better understand the complex relationships between, and importance of, these and other factors, and use this to inform our work including how we register care homes and target our scrutiny and improvement support work.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that rate per 100 places is not a percentage as care homes are not always fully occupied and the population of residents changes over time.

## Background

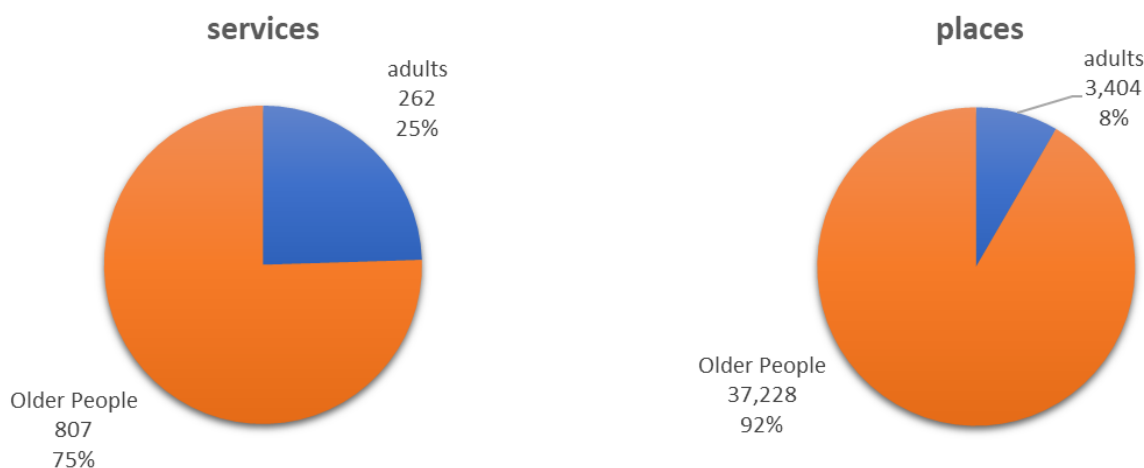
All care homes operating in Scotland must register with the Care Inspectorate. At 31 March 2021, there were 1,069 registered care homes providing over 40,600 places across Scotland.

The register of care homes is dynamic, with care homes registering and cancelling over time<sup>2</sup>. In total there were 1,136 care homes operating at some point during 2020/21. Over the year to 31 March 2021, 67 care homes cancelled their registrations and 53 care homes registered, giving a net reduction of 14 care homes and 383 places. Note that these registrations and cancellations include 48 care homes that cancelled and re-registered over this period. The dynamic nature of the register presents some challenges in presenting and interpreting the data about deaths in care homes. While we have provided detailed supplementary tables at care home and provider level, and detailed notes on what has been included in each table, we advise caution when using this data for this reason.

At 31 March 2021, most care homes in Scotland were care homes for older people (75%), with the remaining 25% meeting a range of needs of younger adults including people with learning disabilities, mental health, alcohol and drug misuse, and physical and sensory impairment (figure 1).

An even higher proportion of available care home places in Scotland are in care homes for older people, which make up 92% of all places registered. This reflects that care homes for older people tend to be larger facilities than those for younger adults.

Figure 1: Care homes and places at 31 March 2021



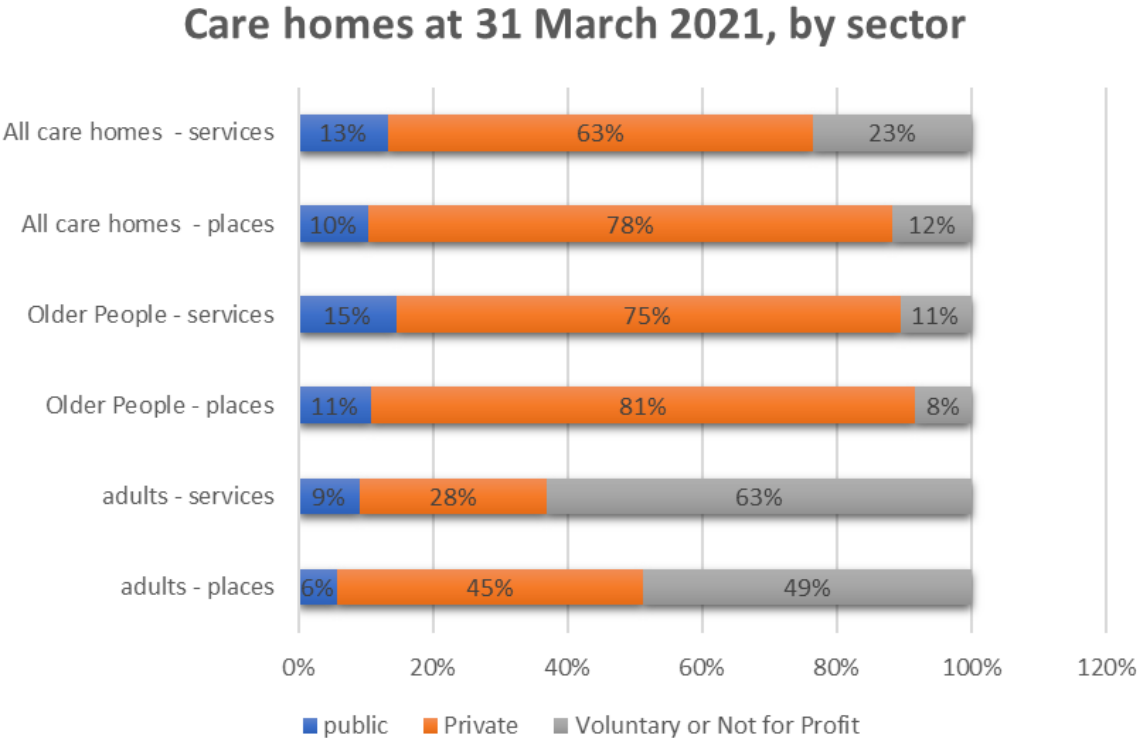
Each care home is registered under a provider, and each provider can register multiple care homes. At 31 March 2021 the 1,069 care homes were provided by 483 different providers. Of these, the majority (72%) provided only one care home, 19% provided between two and five care homes, and the remaining 9% provided 6 or more, with 41 care homes registered under the largest provider. Further data at provider level is included in the supplementary tables.

<sup>2</sup> Further information about registering and cancelling a care service is on the Care Inspectorate website: [www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/register-a-care-service](http://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/register-a-care-service)

Care homes are provided by public bodies, by the private sector and by the voluntary or not for profit sector. Care homes for older people are predominantly provided by the private sector which runs 75% of care homes and 81% of places. The public sector provides 15% of these care homes and the voluntary sector the remaining 11% (figure 2).

In contrast care homes for adults are predominantly provided by voluntary sector organisations – 63% of care homes, compared with 28% provided by the private sector and the remaining 9% by the public sector. Again, care homes provided by the private sector tend to be larger, with this sector providing 45% of all places although only providing 28% of care homes (figure 2).

Figure 2



**Covid-19 related deaths**

**Source and quality of Care Inspectorate data**

Prior to the pandemic, care homes have always been required to notify the Care Inspectorate of deaths of any residents, irrespective of place of death. At the onset of the pandemic, from 16 March 2021, we asked care homes to tell us whether these deaths were related to a confirmed or suspected case of Covid-19. These notifications of deaths, and information about Covid-19 contained within them, are as reported by each care home. Although Care Inspectorate inspectors take action in response to notifications of deaths and may discuss anomalies with care home staff, the raw data in the notification itself remains as submitted. Some quality assurance of the data was undertaken in preparation for this publication, and this is described in Appendix A.

Further detail on other sources of statistics about Covid-19 related deaths in care homes, including official statistics released by National Records of Scotland (NRS), other published data from the Care Inspectorate and data released by the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, is in Appendix A.

**Comparison with official statistics published by NRS**

In particular we have compared our data with the data published by NRS, the national source of official statistics on deaths in Scotland. We found it matched the overall trends and scale of the statistics held by NRS, although a key difference is that Care Inspectorate statistics on Covid-19 related deaths show a higher number than NRS. This is because the Care Inspectorate data includes all deaths of care home residents, including those who have died in hospital and those who have been resident even for a short period of time. NRS statistics are based on the place of death and exclude residents who may have died in hospital or had been resident for a short period of time. See Appendix A for further details and comparisons.

**Overview of Covid-19-related deaths in care homes between 16 March 2020 to 31 March 2021**

From the onset of recording (16 March 2020) up to the end of the financial year (31 March 2021) the Care Inspectorate received 3,774 notifications of deaths of care home residents that were related to Covid-19. All but 13 of these were in care homes for older people.

Of the 1,136 care homes in operation at some point during this period, 45.6% (518) reported at least one Covid-19 related death (figure 3). Again the majority were care homes for older people: 59.0% (510 homes) of all care homes for older people reported at least one Covid-19 related death compared with 2.9% (8 homes) of care homes for adults.

Of those care homes for older people provided by the private sector, 60.8% reported at least one such death, compared with 57.1% of care homes provided by the voluntary sector and 50.8% by the public sector.

Figure 3  
**All care homes in operation at any point between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021**

Number and % of care homes with at least one death related to Covid-19

	all care homes operating during 20/21 (1)	reporting at least 1 Covid-19 related death	
		number	%
Adults	272	8	2.9%
Older People	864	510	59.0%
<b>All care homes</b>	<b>1136</b>	<b>518</b>	<b>45.6%</b>

(1) Although Covid-19 related notifications were submitted prior to 31 March 2020, all of the care homes that did this were still registered on 31 March 2020.

### Covid-19 deaths by size of care home

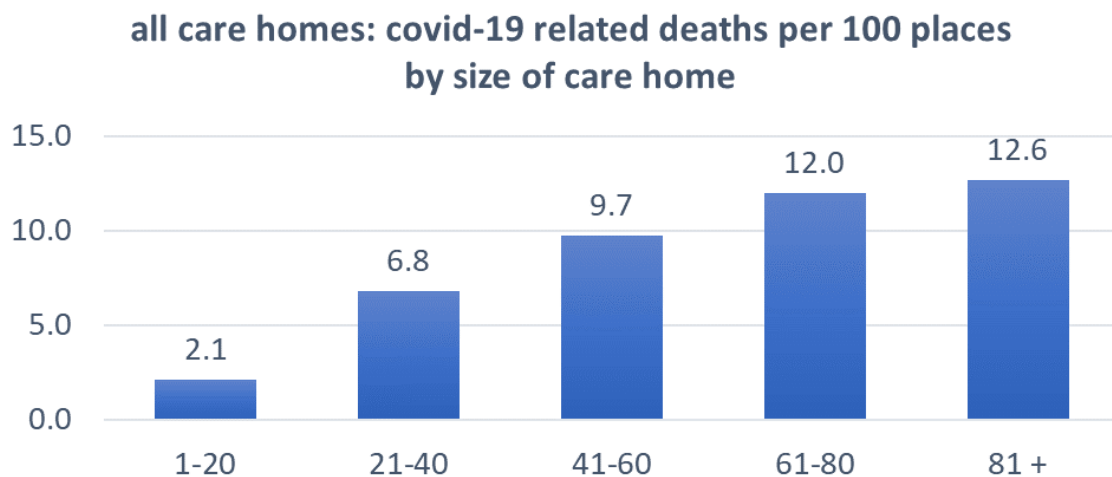
It is also important to put these figures in the context of the number of people who live in care homes for older people. To do this we have used the number of registered places as a proxy for number of residents, taking an average of places over the year (at 31 March 2020 and 31 March 2021). We have used this, along with the total number of Covid-19 related deaths between 16 March 2020 and 31 March 2021, to calculate rates per 100 places.

When interpreting the rates per 100 places presented, please note that:

- the number of places is not the same as number of residents in care homes over the period presented. Depending on factors such as occupancy levels over time, the total number of people who have lived in a care home over a year could be more than or less than the number of places it is registered to provide.
- Rates per 100 places are not, and should not be interpreted as, percentages.

Figure 4 shows the rate of Covid-19 related deaths per 100 places increases as the size of the care home increases, from 2.1 per 100 places in care homes with up to 20 places, to 12.6 per 100 places in care homes with over 80 places.

Figure 4



Across all care homes for adults there were 9.2 Covid-19 related deaths per 100 places reported up to 31 March 2021 (figure 5 and 6). In care homes for older people there were 10.1 deaths per 100 places, with the voluntary sector (10.4) and private sector (10.2), having higher rates than public sector care homes (8.6). In care homes for adults, the private sector had the highest rate (0.7) followed by the voluntary sector (0.1) and no deaths were reported by care homes provided by the public sector.

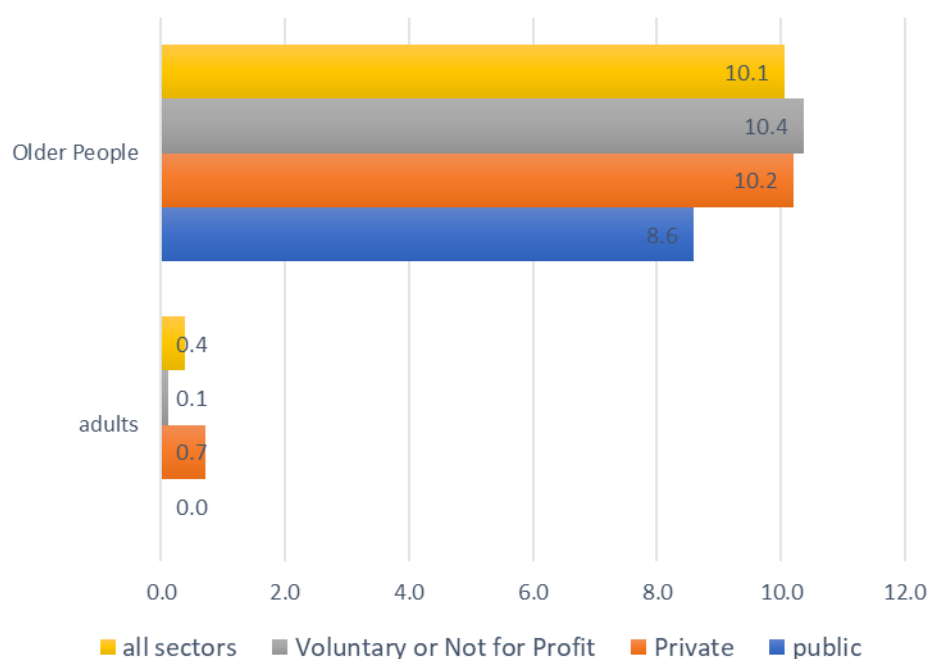
Figure 5

**Covid-19 related deaths per 100 places, by sector  
(average of places at 31 March 20 and 31 March 21)**

	public	Private	Voluntary or Not for Profit	all sectors
Adults	0.0	0.7	0.1	0.4
Older People	8.6	10.2	10.4	10.1
<b>All care homes</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>9.2</b>

Figure 6

**Covid-19 related deaths per 100 places, by sector**



The above data includes all care homes that were in operation at any point between 31 March 2020 and 31 March 2021. A full list of care homes that reported a death to the Care Inspectorate between 16 March 2020 (when we received the first Covid-related death notification) and 31 March 2021 is included in the supplementary tables.

**Covid-19 related deaths by quality of care**

The Care Inspectorate routinely evaluates care homes and grades different aspects of quality on a six-point scale from unsatisfactory (1) to excellent (6).

Figure 7 shows the rate of Covid-19 related deaths per 100 places for care homes with a minimum grade of:

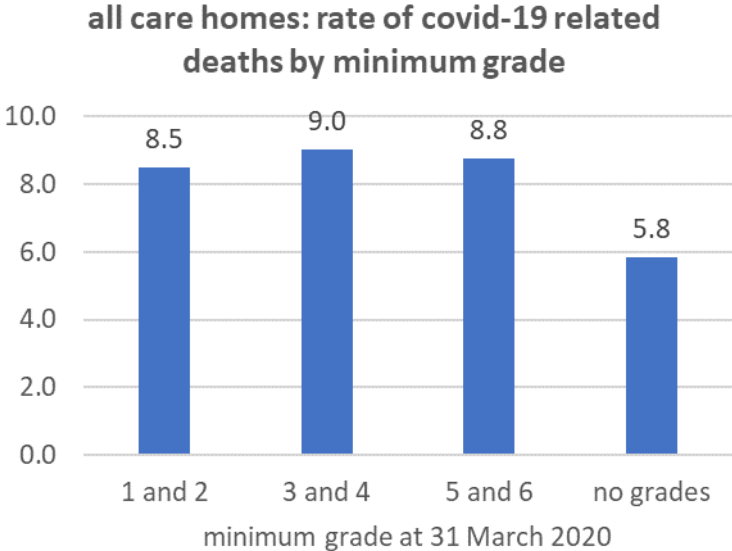
- Unsatisfactory or weak (1 and 2)
- Adequate or good (3 and 4)
- Very good or excellent (5 and 6).

It shows no clear relationship between the previous quality of the care home and Covid-19 related deaths per 100 places, with similar rates across the three groups of services with grades.



For completeness, figure 7 also shows the rate of Covid-19 related deaths for the 84 care homes that had not been evaluated and given grades by 31 March 2020. This mainly includes care homes that registered during 2020 or 2021.

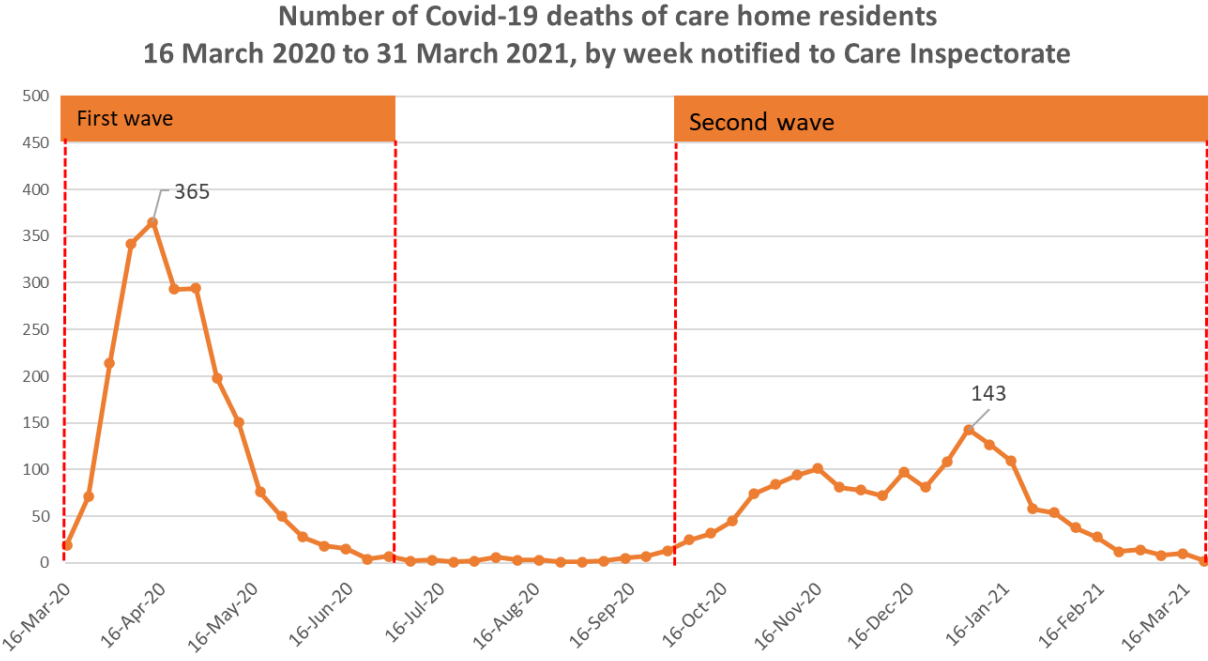
Figure 7



**Covid-19 deaths over time and by geographical location**

Figure 8 shows the distribution of deaths notified to the Care Inspectorate over time. This distribution closely matches the weekly deaths in care homes reported by NRS (see Appendix A for comparison). It shows an initial wave beginning in mid-March 2020, with deaths falling to very low levels by the end of June. In total, 2,140 Covid-19 related deaths were reported to the Care Inspectorate by the 30<sup>th</sup> of June. The second wave was underway by the start of October 2020, with a lower peak than the first wave but persisting for a prolonged period up to late March 2021. Over this six-month period (1 October to 31 March) 1,592 deaths were reported, 26% fewer than reported in the first wave.

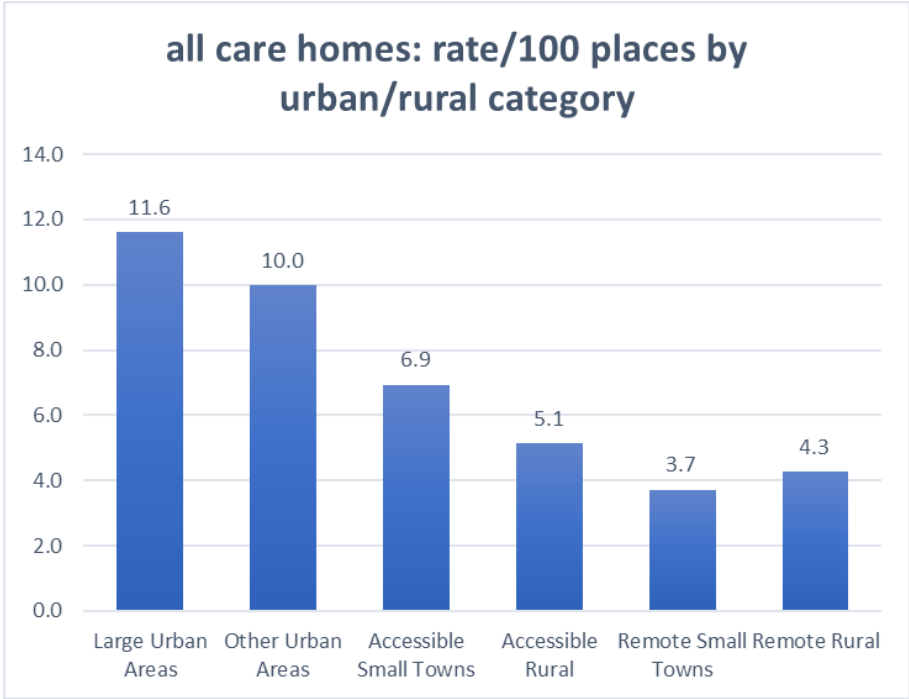
Figure 8



Care homes in different parts of the country had different experiences over time. Further information on deaths reported by local authority is available in the supplementary tables. In just over half of local authority areas (18 out of 32), care homes experienced the majority of deaths in care homes during the first wave. Of the remainder, eight were spread more evenly across the two waves and five had the majority of cases reported in the second wave. We received no notifications of Covid-related deaths from care homes in Orkney.

Figure 9 presents rates per 100 places by urban rural category and shows that care homes based in the most populated urban areas had the highest rates and that rates fell as areas became more remote and rural.

**Figure 9**



**Conclusion and next steps**

The impact of Covid-19 on care homes, and care homes for older people in particular, is set out in this bulletin. We have presented descriptive statistics on size, sector, geographical location, urban rural category and quality of care.

Although we have presented each of these factors separately, they are, in reality, interrelated. Previous detailed analysis of Covid-19 outbreaks in care homes undertaken both by Public Health Scotland<sup>3</sup> and by the Scottish Government<sup>4</sup> found that, of several factors included in their analyses, size of a care home (measured by number of registered places) had the strongest association with outbreaks. Given that there is also a relationship between size of care home and, for example, sector or urban/rural categories, then it may be that size is also the underlying factor behind the relationships we have presented.

We plan to undertake further work on a statistical model to better understand the complex relationships between, and importance of, these and other factors, and use this to inform our work including how we register care homes and target our scrutiny and improvement support work.

<sup>3</sup> Public Health Scotland (April 2021), Discharges from NHS Hospitals to care homes: <https://beta.isdscotland.org/find-publications-and-data/population-health/covid-19/discharges-from-nhsscotland-hospitals-to-care-homes/>

<sup>4</sup> Scottish Government (2020), Adult Social Care Winter Preparedness Plan 2020-21: Evidence Paper: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2020/11/adult-social-care-winter-preparedness-plan-2020-21/documents/evidence-paper/evidence-paper/govscot%3Adocument/evidence-paper.pdf>

## Further information

### Other sources of statistics on Covid-19 related deaths – Appendix A

### Notes on quality of Care Inspectorate data – Appendix A

#### Supplementary tables

A separate excel file has been prepared to accompany this bulletin.

It includes:

- Table 1 Covid-19 related deaths by LA and over time
- Table 2 Covid-19 related deaths by provider
- Table 3 Covid-19 related deaths by care home - totals up to 31 March 2021
- Table 4 Covid-19 related deaths by care home - deaths from all causes by month notified
- Table 5 Covid-19 related deaths by care home - Covid-19 related deaths by month notified

## Appendix A

### Other sources of statistics on Covid-19 related deaths in care homes

National Records of Scotland have routinely published data about deaths in care homes on a weekly basis throughout the pandemic<sup>5</sup>. NRS data are regarded as the definitive source of statistics about deaths in Scotland, and are of the highest quality available.

The Scottish Government publishes a range of data about Covid-19. This includes weekly figures of deaths in care homes supplied by The Care Inspectorate<sup>6</sup>.

The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), as part of its investigation into deaths in care homes, has also collected data on Covid-19 related deaths in Scotland from a variety of sources. The COPFS released this under The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act (FOISA) at care home level in April 2021<sup>7</sup>.

### Comparison of Care Inspectorate with NRS statistics

To provide some assurance of the quality of our data, we have compared the number of notifications we received from care homes with the data published by National Records of Scotland on a weekly basis. Figure A shows how the Care Inspectorate data compares with the NRS data on a weekly basis. While the two sources of data follow the same overall trends, there are some important differences:

- Care Inspectorate data includes deaths of all residents, irrespective of place of death, while NRS data includes only those residents who died in the care home. In addition, Care Inspectorate data will include those who have been resident for any length of time while NRS figures may exclude shorter term residents. Therefore the Care Inspectorate trend generally sits slightly above the NRS trend.
- The Care Inspectorate data includes all care homes on its register at any point from 16 March 20 to 31 March 2021, while NRS uses a list maintained by Public Health Scotland to identify care home locations. This list includes locations that may not be care homes, for example it includes some hospices and private hospitals. NRS offer further details of the codes they use in their publications.
- The data published by NRS is the definitive source of official statistics about deaths in Scotland and is subject to robust quality assurance processes backed up by legislation to ensure all deaths are registered within strict time limits.
- The Care Inspectorate data is based on data reported directly by care home staff, and is not subject to further quality assurance. The attribution of death to Covid-19 is based on the knowledge and information available to the person completing the notification. Although the majority are notified to us within three

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<sup>5</sup> NRS: Deaths Involving Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Scotland <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/covid19stats>

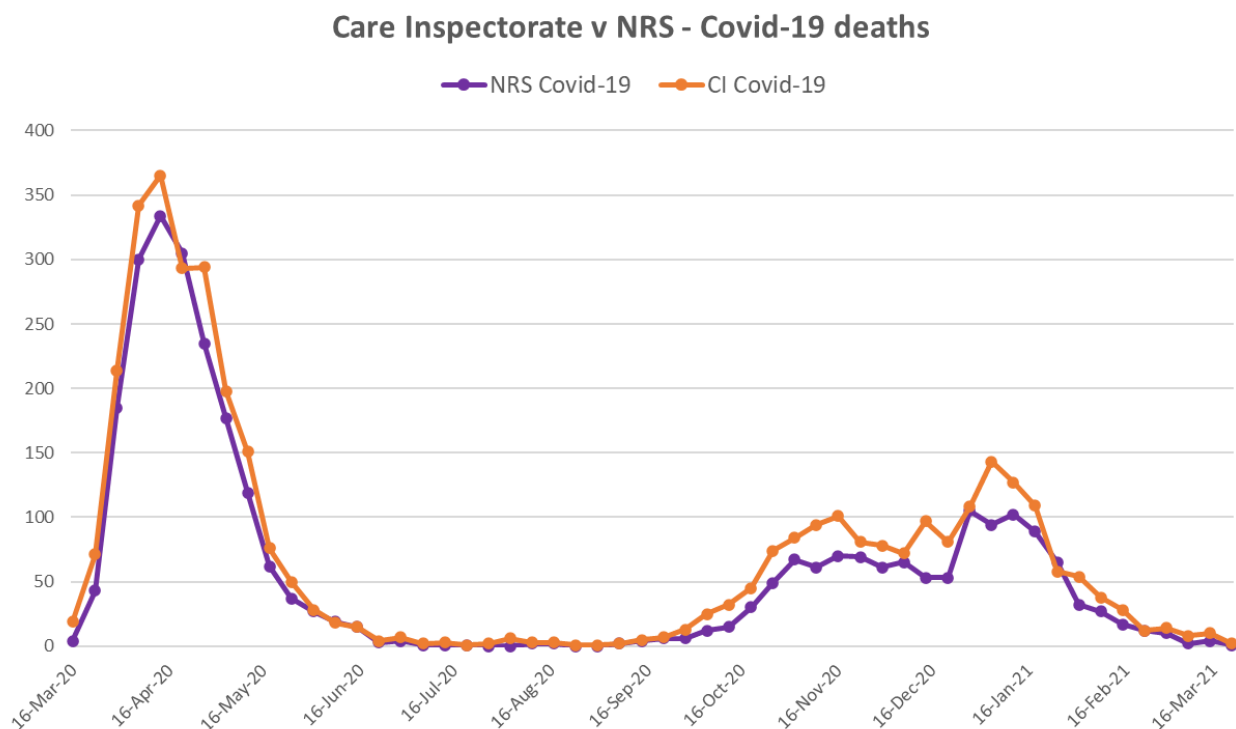
<sup>6</sup> Scottish Government: Coronavirus (Covid-19): deaths reported to the Care Inspectorate <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-additional-data-about-adult-care-homes-in-scotland/>

<sup>7</sup> The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service: <https://www.copfs.gov.uk/freedom-of-information/published-information/responses-we-have-made-to-foi-requests/foi-register-of-responses>

days, this can be variable, with some deaths reported some time after the date of death.

Although the quality of the data held by the Care Inspectorate cannot be of the standard of that held by NRS, the trend and scale is comparable and not contradictory to the NRS data.

Figure A



### Data sources and background notes on data

- Main data sources are:
  - Care Inspectorate: Extract of notifications of deaths, 15 May 2021
  - Care Inspectorate: Service list at 31 March 2021
  - Care Inspectorate: Service list at 31 March 2020
- Data is based on the date a notification was made to the Care Inspectorate. All notifications made between 16 March 2020 and 31 March 2021 are included.
- Data on deaths includes care homes for adults and care homes for older people which have submitted at least one death notification over this period.
- All data on deaths is as submitted by the service with the exceptions outlined in the data quality notes below.
- Care homes can cater for a range of needs and have been categorised into either "older people" or "adults" based on the majority in order to avoid double counting.
- The register of services is a dynamic list, with registrations cancelled and new registrations added over time.

- Unless otherwise stated, the data presented includes all care homes active at any point between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021. Registration status given is as at 31 March 2021 unless otherwise noted.
- A care home registration may be cancelled and a new service registered for several reasons, for example being taken over by new owners. Such services will each appear as separate care services in the supplementary tables at care home and provider levels.

**Notes on data quality and quality assurance undertaken during the preparation of this report**

- From 16 March 2020 services were asked to indicate if the death was related to Covid-19, and if so, whether that had been confirmed by testing. The selection made has been accepted without further checking.
- Any notifications which were submitted, but then noted to be an error, have been removed from the data.
- Notifications of deaths of residents that were erroneously recorded using the notification for death of a service provider, have been identified and included.

## Headquarters

Care Inspectorate  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

web: [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com)

email: [enquiries@careinspectorate.com](mailto:enquiries@careinspectorate.com)

telephone: 0345 600 9527



@careinspect

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