



A&E Attendances and Emergency Admissions

A&E Attendances and Emergency Admissions

February 2016 Monthly Report

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1 Background

The results of a recent review by Sir Bruce Keogh^{1, 2} concluded that arrangements for reporting performance were uncoordinated. Reporting was at different frequencies (weekly, monthly and quarterly) and on different days of the week. This made it difficult for people to have one transparent, coherent picture of performance at any one time. Starting in June 2015 therefore we standardised reporting arrangements so that performance statistics for A&E, Referral to Treatment (RTT), cancer, diagnostics, ambulances, NHS 111 and delayed transfers of care (DTOC) are all collected monthly and published on one day each month.

A&E waiting times form part of the NHS Constitution, which contains a list of expected rights and pledges for patients that NHS England take into account when assessing organisational delivery. The operational standard for A&E waiting times is that 95% of patients should be admitted, transferred or discharged within 4 hours of their arrival at an A&E department.

This A&E report presents a summary of English A&E attendances & emergency admissions statistics for February 2016 as well as an analysis of national trends.

Data on A&E attendances and emergency admissions were previously published weekly from November 2010 to June 2015. In order to provide meaningful comparisons to previous years, we have created an estimated monthly time series from the official weekly data. Figures prior to June 2015 should be regarded as estimates. This time series forms the basis of the analysis, and is also published on our web page.

Full tables for February 2016 and an England level time series can be found on the NHS England statistics website at the link below.

<http://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/ae-waiting-times-and-activity/>

Revised guidance for the A&E attendances and emergency admissions collection applied from December 2015 data onwards. The definition for delays for emergency admissions via A&E from decision to admit to admission was amended to include patients who are transferred to another provider (disposal code 7). This was to ensure that such patients are counted in the number of patients spending more than 4 or more than 12 hours from decision to admit to admission. This change did not affect the measures of A&E attendances, the numbers waiting four hours from arrival to discharge, transfer or admission, and total emergency admissions which still focus purely on attendances at the same healthcare provider (disposal code 1). For further information on this change see the data comparability section of the [annex](#) to this report.

1. <http://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/letter-waiting-time-standards-sbk.pdf>
2. <http://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/letter-ccgs-ss.pdf>

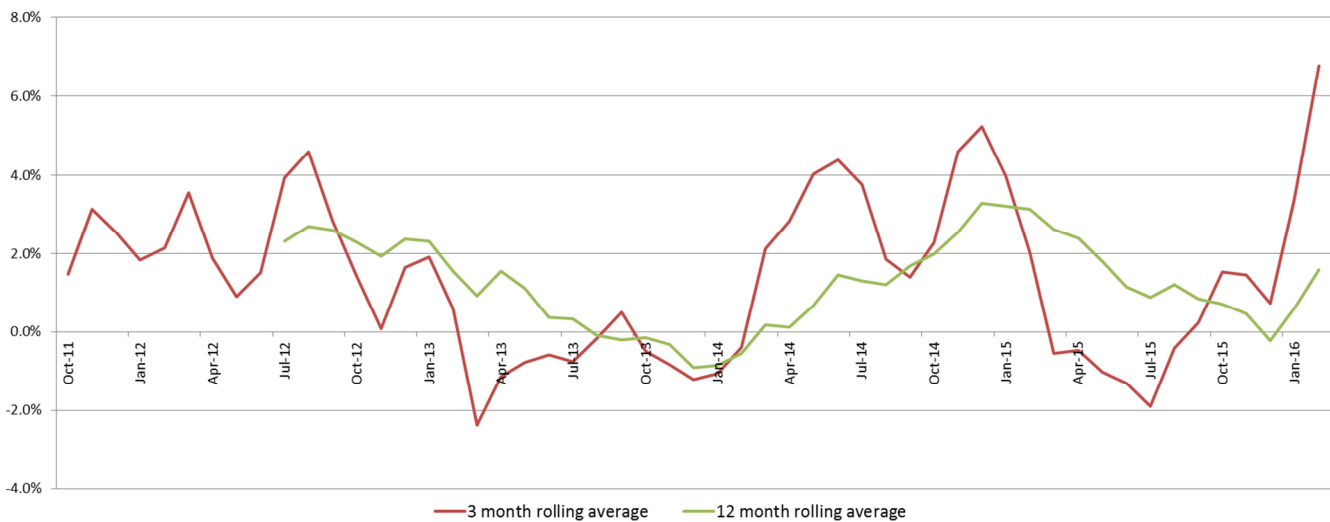
2 Key Findings

- The total number of attendances in February 2016 was 1,872,000, an increase of 13.1% on the same month last year. Of these, attendances at type 1 A&E departments were 13.7% higher. Attendances over the latest twelve months are higher than levels in the preceding twelve month period (an increase of 1.6%)
- There were 463,000 emergency admissions in the month, 9.0% higher than the same month last year. Emergency admissions via type 1 A&E departments increased by 8.8% over the same period. Emergency admissions over the last twelve months are up 2.6% on the preceding twelve month period
- It should be noted that this February contained an extra day due to the leap year giving it a total of five Mondays. This will explain some of the rise in attendances and admissions compared to February last year
- 27.4% of patients that attended a type 1 major A&E department required admission to hospital, which compares to 28.6% for the same month last year
- 87.8% of patients were seen within 4 hours in all A&E departments this month. This is the lowest performance since monthly data became available in August 2010. This is below the 95% standard and lower than 92.0% for the same month last year
- From April 2015 to February 2016, 92.4% of patients were seen within 4 hours in all A&E departments. This compares to 93.7% from April 2014 to February 2015
- 81.6% of patients were seen within 4 hours in type 1 A&E departments, compared to 87.8% for the same month last year
- There were 50,100 four-hour delays from decision to admit to admission this month, which compares to 33,100 in the same month last year
- Of these, 190 were delayed over twelve hours (from decision to admit to admission), compared to 184 in the same month last year
- 5 out of 138 reporting trusts with type 1 departments achieved the 95% standard on all types during the month
- Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Clevedon Hospital did not submit data this month due to IT difficulties

3 A&E attendances

- 3.1. The total number of attendances in February 2016 was 1,872,000 which is 13.1% higher than 1,655,000 in the same month last year. Of these, attendances at type 1 A&E departments increased by 13.7% from 1,072,000 to 1,219,000. It should be noted that this February contained an extra day due to the leap year giving it a total of five Mondays, which explains some of the rise in attendances.
- 3.2. Looking at the pattern over slightly longer time periods, attendances in the last 3 months showed a 6.8% increase when compared to the same 3 months last year and activity in the last 12 months increased by 1.6%. Chart 1 shows the growth in attendances averaged over 3 and 12 month periods, compared to the same time period in the previous year. Although the 12 month growth remains relatively low at 1.6%, the growth seen in each of the last two months has been above 10%

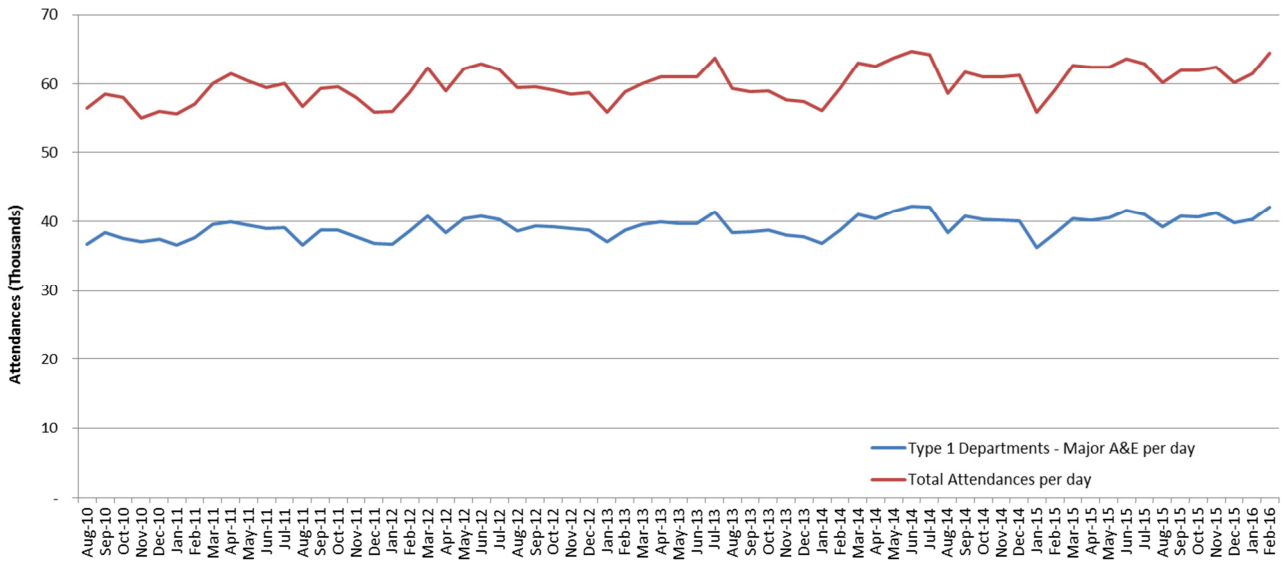
Chart 1: Total A&E Attendances % growth on previous year



- 3.3. Chart 2 shows the volume of attendances per day in each month to remove fluctuations caused by the length of each month. This shows that attendances are typically higher in the summer months, particularly between May and July, and are lowest in winter, notably in January. Attendances peaked in July 2014, and attendances last summer were down on those levels. This winter has not followed the usual pattern; attendances were high in both January and February. Weekly figures published by Public Health England¹ show that the peaks in incidence of flu and hospitalisation rates for flu have both been later than usual this year. This could explain some of the recent rise in attendances and admissions.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/weekly-national-flu-reports>

Chart 2: Total A&E attendances and Type 1 attendances per day



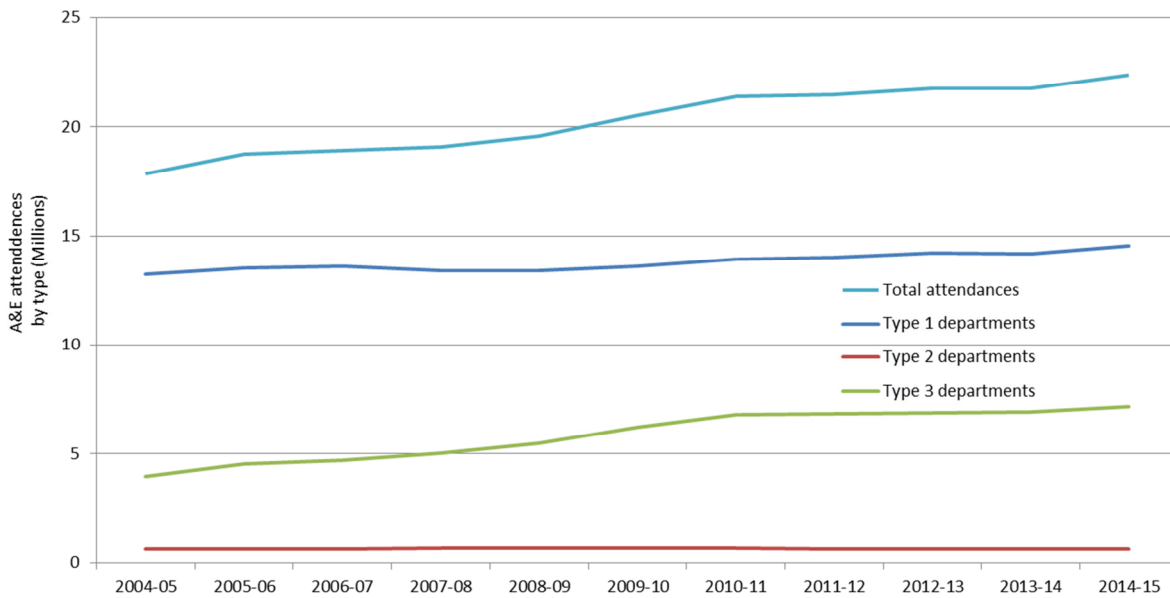
3.4 A longer term trend using historical quarterly data shows that total annual attendances have increased by around 4.5 million (25%) between 2004/05 and 2014/15 (Table 1 and Chart 2). Type 1 attendances have increased by around 1.3 million (10%) over the same period.

Table 1: Total A&E attendances and type 1 attendances by year

| Year | Type 1 Departments - Major A&E | Total attendances | Annual increase in total attendances |
|---------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 2004-05 | 13,265,820 | 17,837,180 | - |
| 2005-06 | 13,553,686 | 18,759,164 | 5.2% |
| 2006-07 | 13,602,589 | 18,922,275 | 0.9% |
| 2007-08 | 13,395,275 | 19,076,831 | 0.8% |
| 2008-09 | 13,426,136 | 19,588,344 | 2.7% |
| 2009-10 | 13,618,300 | 20,511,908 | 4.7% |
| 2010-11 | 13,931,715 | 21,380,985 | 4.2% |
| 2011-12 | 14,013,922 | 21,481,402 | 0.5% |
| 2012-13 | 14,252,068 | 21,738,637 | 1.2% |
| 2013-14 | 14,213,148 | 21,778,657 | 0.2% |
| 2014-15 | 14,584,736 | 22,354,781 | 2.6% |
| 2015-16 (YTD) | 13,619,225 | 20,843,512 | 1.8%* |

*Compared to the same period last year

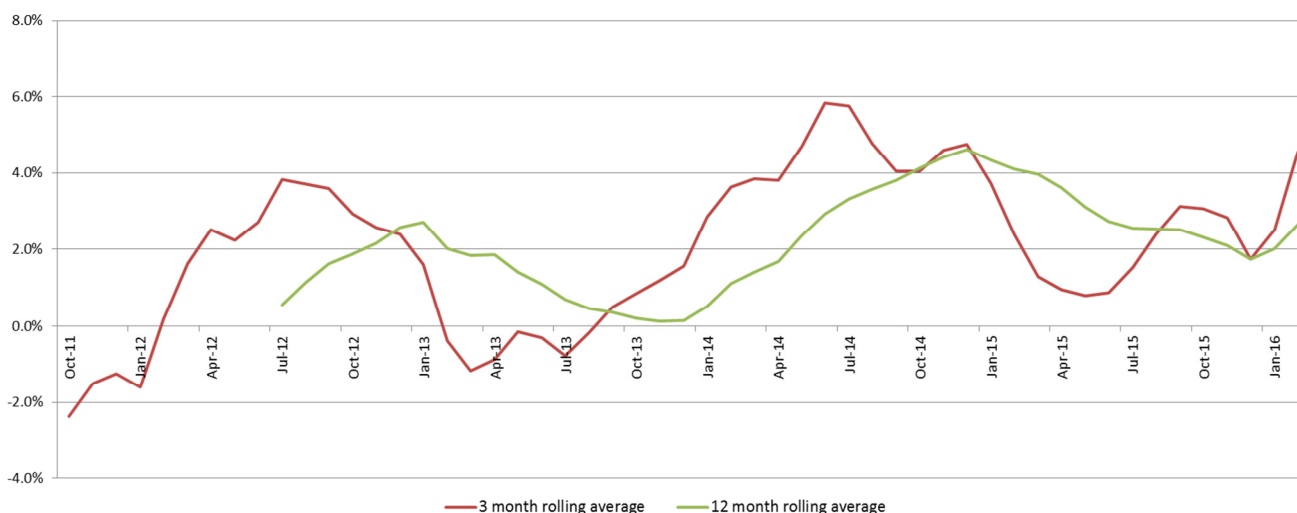
Chart 3: Total A&E attendances by year



4 Emergency admissions

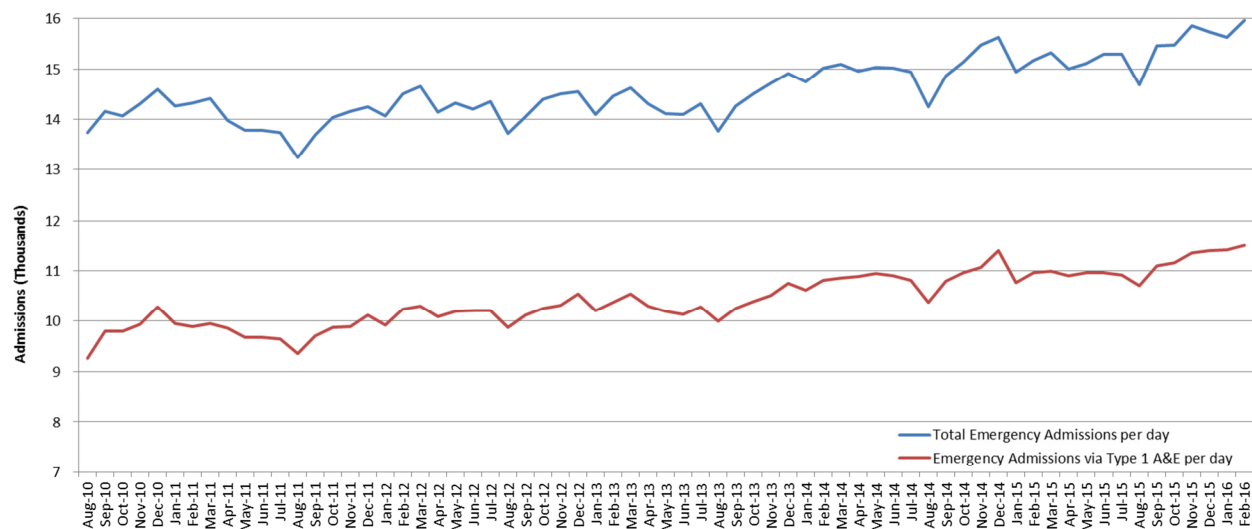
- 4.1. There were 463,000 emergency admissions in the month, which is 9.0% higher than 425,000 in the same month last year. Emergency admissions via type 1 A&E departments increased by 8.8% compared to the same month last year. It should be noted that this February contained an extra day due to the leap year giving it a total of five Mondays. This explains some of the rise in admissions.
- 4.2. Looking at the pattern over slightly longer time periods, emergency admissions in the last 3 months rose by 4.6% over the same 3 months last year and by 2.6% over the last 12 months. Chart 1 shows the % growth in admissions averaged over 3 and 12 month periods compared to the same time period in the previous year. As with attendances, but to a lesser extent, the last two months have shown large growths on the previous year.

Chart 4: Total Emergency admissions % growth on previous year



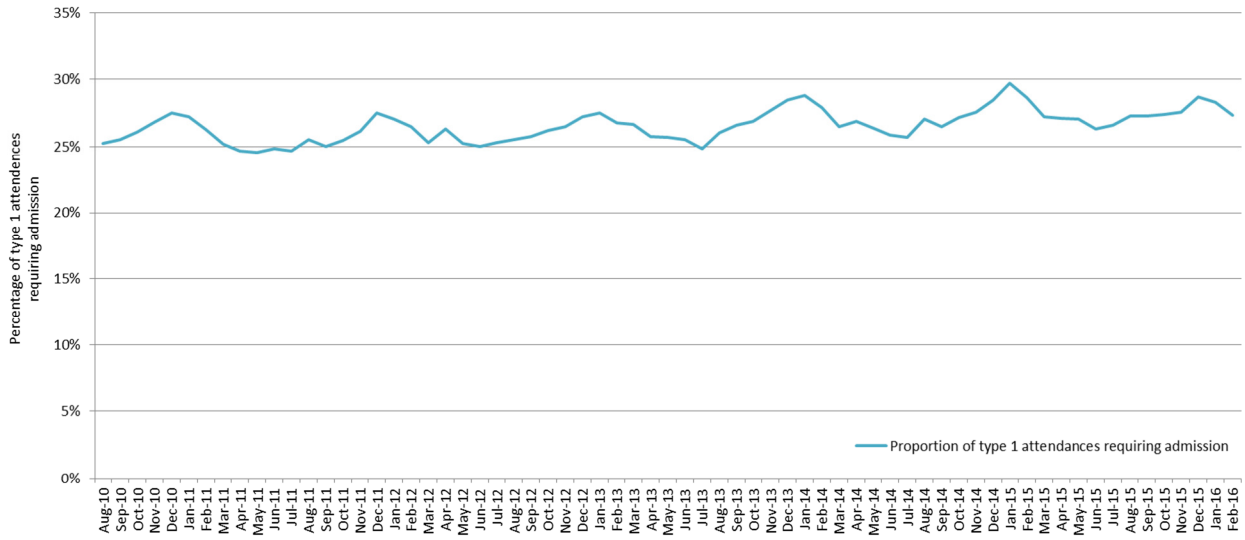
4.3. Chart 3 shows the volume of emergency admissions per day in each month to remove fluctuations caused by the length of each month. As opposed to A&E attendances, which show peaks in the summer months, emergency admissions peak in winter.

Chart 5: Number of emergency admissions per day



4.4. The proportion of type 1 attendances requiring admission gives an indication of the clinical complexity of patients attending A&E and shows a seasonal pattern with a higher proportion observed in winter months, especially January. In February 2016, 27.4% of type 1 attendances required admission compared to 28.6% in February 2015 (chart 4). The peak in this measure over the last five years was in January 2015 at 29.7%. The fall in this proportion reflects the higher number of attendances experienced this month.

Chart 6: Percentage of type 1 attendances that required admission by month



5 Performance

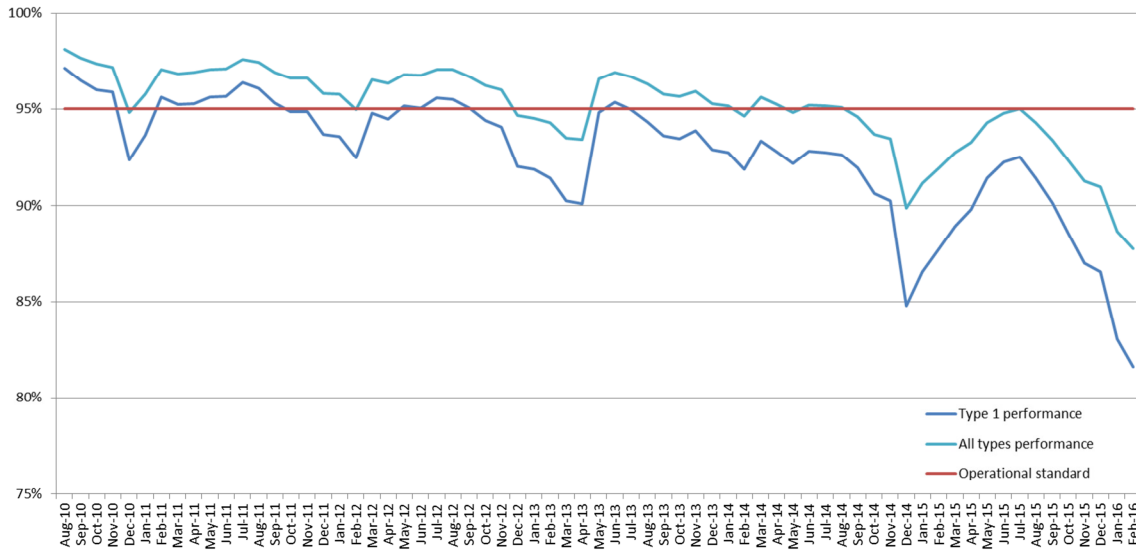
- 5.1. The operational standard for A&E waiting times is that 95% of patients should be admitted, transferred or discharged within 4 hours of their arrival at an A&E department.
- 5.2. 87.8% of patients were seen within 4 hours in all A&E departments this month. This is the lowest performance since monthly data became available in August 2010, and lower than 92.0% for the same month last year.
- 5.3. From April 2015 to February 2016, 92.4% of patients were seen within 4 hours in all A&E departments. This compares to 93.7% from April 2014 to February 2015
- 5.4. 81.6% of patients were seen within 4 hours in type 1 A&E departments, compared to 87.8% for the same month last year.
- 5.5. 5 out of 138 reporting trusts with type 1 departments achieved the standard on all types for the month.
- 5.6. At organisation level, when looking at the 138 trusts that have a type 1 department, there is significant variation with performance ranging from 66.4% to 98.5% on all types of A&E (Table 2).

**Table 2: Proportion of patients spending 4 hours or less in A&E
Highest and lowest performing trusts that have a type 1 department**

| Trust Name | Type 1 performance | All types performance |
|---|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Luton And Dunstable University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust | 97.3% | 98.2% |
| Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust | 97.1% | 97.1% |
| Harrogate And District NHS Foundation Trust | 94.6% | 95.4% |
| The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust | 91.6% | 95.4% |
| South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust | 94.7% | 95.2% |
| Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust | 94.4% | 94.4% |
| Wrightington, Wigan And Leigh NHS Foundation Trust | 94.1% | 94.1% |
| Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust | 83.5% | 94.0% |
| Chelsea And Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust | 91.9% | 93.9% |
| Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust | 93.5% | 93.5% |
| Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust | 71.7% | 74.5% |
| The Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust | 73.3% | 74.2% |
| West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust | 61.2% | 74.1% |
| Mid Essex Hospital Services NHS Trust | 71.8% | 73.1% |
| Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust | 65.8% | 72.9% |
| Stockport NHS Foundation Trust | 72.8% | 72.8% |
| Norfolk And Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust | 70.3% | 72.8% |
| Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust | 65.7% | 72.0% |
| North Bristol NHS Trust | 69.5% | 69.5% |
| North Middlesex University Hospital NHS Trust | 67.2% | 67.2% |

5.6. Performance against the standard over the past five years is shown in Chart 5. It is clear from this that performance shows a seasonal pattern with lower percentages seen during winter months, followed by a recovery during spring and summer.

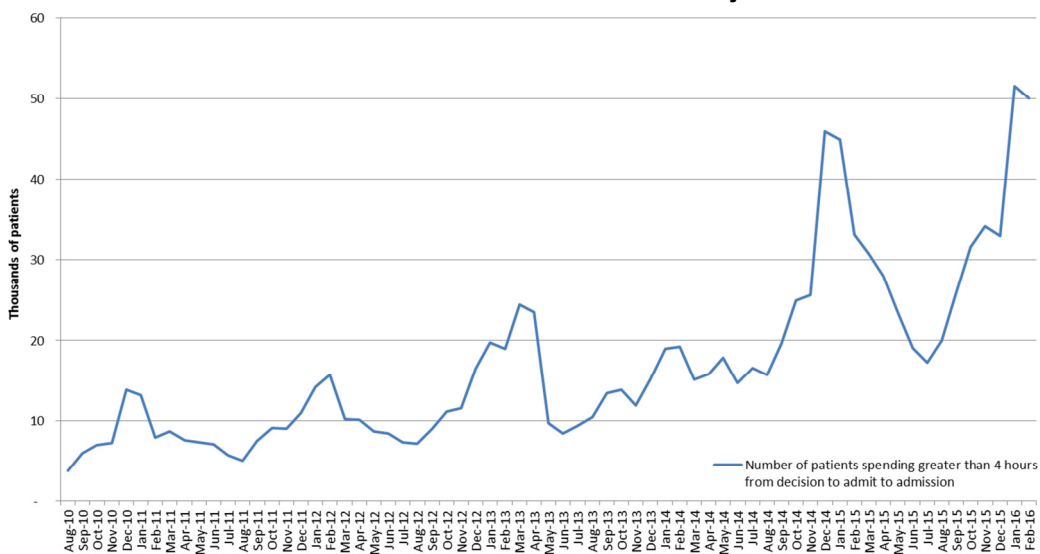
Chart 7: Proportion of patients spending 4 hours or less in A&E Type 1 and all types by month



5.7. In February 2016, there were 50,100 patients who were delayed more than four hours from decision to admit to admission, which is 51.1% higher than 33,100 for the same month last year.

5.8. Chart 6 shows the trend in four hour delays from decision to admit to admission since 2010. The measure is particularly seasonal with much higher figures in the winter months, especially in the most recent winter, which coincides with a fall in performance on the four hour total time standard.

Chart 8: Total number of patients spending more than 4 hours from decision to admit to admission by month



5.9. In February 2016, there were a total of 190 patients spending more than twelve hours from decision to admit to admission, compared to 184 in February 2015.

6 Annex

6.1 Methodology

6.1.1. NHS England compiles A&E attendances and emergency admissions data through a central return that is split into two parts:

- A&E Attendances: This collects the number of A&E attendances, patients spending greater than 4 hours in A&E from arrival to discharge, transfer or admission and the number of patients delayed more than 4 hours from decision to admit to admission.
- Emergency Admissions: This collects the total number of emergency admissions via A&E as well as other emergency admissions (i.e. not via A&E).

6.1.2. The above data items are split by the following categories of A&E department:

- Type 1 Department (Major A&E Department) - A consultant led 24 hour service with full resuscitation facilities and designated accommodation for the reception of accident and emergency patients.
- Type 2 Department – A consultant led single specialty A&E service (e.g. ophthalmology, dental) with designated accommodation for the reception of emergency patients.
- Type 3 A&E department / Type 4 A&E department / Urgent Care Centre = Other type of A&E/minor injury units (MIUs)/Walk-in Centres (WiCs)/Urgent Care Centre, primarily designed for the receiving of accident and emergency patients. A type 3 department may be doctor led or nurse led. It may be co-located with a major A&E or sited in the community. A defining characteristic of a service qualifying as a type 3 department is that it treats at least minor injuries and illnesses (sprains for example) and can be routinely accessed without appointment. An appointment based service (for example an outpatient clinic) or one mainly or entirely accessed via telephone or other referral (for example most out of hours services), or a dedicated primary care service (such as GP practice or GP-led health centre) is not a type 3 A&E service even though it may treat a number of patients with minor illness or injury.

6.1.3. NHS Trusts, NHS Foundation Trusts, Social Enterprises and GP Practices submit data to NHS England via Unify2. Unify2 is NHS England's standard online tool for the collection and sharing of NHS performance data. Once data is submitted and signed-off, NHS England performs central validation checks to ensure good data quality.

Data availability

6.1.4. A&E attendances and emergency admissions data are published to a pre-announced timetable, usually every second Thursday of the month. The data is published on the NHS England website here:

<http://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/ae-waiting-times-and-activity/>

Data revisions

6.1.5. Revisions to published figures are released on a six monthly basis and in accordance with the NHS England Analytical Services (National) team's revision policy. The revisions policy can be found here:

<http://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/code-compliance/#Unifypolicy>

- 6.1.6. The most recent set of revisions were published on 11th of February 2016. The A&E attendances and emergency admissions data contained in this report may be subject to further revision.

Data comparability

- 6.1.7. Data has been published monthly since June 2015. Before this, data was published weekly from November 2010 to June 2015. Prior to November 2010, data was briefly collected monthly between August 2010 and October 2010 and was collected quarterly from 2003/04 until September 2011.

In order to provide meaningful comparisons of recent monthly data to previous years, we have created an estimated monthly time series from the official weekly data. Monthly figures prior to June 2015 should be regarded as estimates. This monthly time series forms the basis of the analysis, and is also published on our web page.

- 6.1.8. Revised guidance for the A&E attendances and emergency admissions collection applied from December 2015 data onwards. The definition for delays for emergency admissions via A&E from decision to admit to admission was amended to include patients who are transferred to another provider (disposal code 7). This was to ensure that such patients are counted in the number of patients spending more than 4 or more than 12 hours from decision to admit to admission. This change did not affect the measures of A&E attendances, the numbers waiting four hours from arrival to discharge, transfer or admission, and total emergency admissions which still focus purely on attendances at the same healthcare provider (disposal code 1).

Analysis based on Hospital Episode Statistics A&E data suggested that up to around 9% per year more additional patients may be brought in scope for the time from decision to admit to admission measure. It also suggested the monthly A&E return might capture in the order of an extra 40 to 240 (3% to 20%) 12 hour waits per year.

- 6.1.9. The data can also be compared to A&E data for Wales collected by the Welsh Government, data for Scotland collected from Information Services Division (ISD) Scotland and data for Northern Ireland collected from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.
- 6.1.10. The Welsh Government publishes monthly data on A&E attendances and performance against the 4-hour standard. Data can be found here:
<https://stats.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/NHS-Hospital-Waiting-Times/Accident-and-Emergency>
- 6.1.11. ISD Scotland now publishes a weekly update on A&E attendances and performance against the 4-hour standard. This can be found here:
<http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Emergency-Care/Publications/index.asp?ID=1251>
- 6.1.12. The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety publishes quarterly data on A&E attendances and performance against the 4-hour standard. Data can be found here:
<http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/statistics/hospital/waitingtimes-emergency.htm>

6.2 Glossary

4-Hour Standard

The national standard whereby 95% of all patients are admitted, transferred or discharged within 4 hours of arrival.

A&E Attendance

The presence of a patient in an A&E service seeking medical attention.

A&E Type

Collectively the term All Types includes the following department types:

Type 1) Major A&E Departments

Type 2) Single Specialty A&E service (e.g. ophthalmology, dental)

Type 3) Other type of A&E such as Minor Injury Units and Walk-in Centres

Emergency admission

Admission to a hospital bed as an emergency. These can be split into admissions via an A&E department or from other sources (e.g. direct from a GP).

Provider

An organisation that provides NHS treatment or care, for example, an NHS acute trust, mental health trust, community provider, or an independent sector organisation.

Type 1 A&E

A large hospital department which provides a consultant-led, 24 hour service with full resuscitation facilities and designated accommodation for the reception of emergency patients.

Waiting Time

The time of arrival until the time of admission, transfer or discharge.

Delay to admission

The time a patient waited for an admission and is measured from decision to admit to admission (also known as a 'trolley wait').

6.3 Feedback Welcomed

We welcome feedback on the content and presentation of the A&E and emergency admissions statistics within this quarterly statistical report and those published on the NHS England website. If anyone has any comments on this, or any other issues regarding A&E data and statistics, then please email Unify2@dh.gsi.gov.uk

6.4 Additional Information

Full details of A&E and emergency admissions data for individual organisations are available at:

<http://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/ae-waiting-times-and-activity/>

For press enquiries please contact the NHS England media team on 0113 825 0958 or 0113 825 0959.

Email enquiries should be directed to: nhsengland.media@nhs.net

The Government Statistical Service (GSS) statistician with overall responsibility for the data in this report is:

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