

# NHS Cancelled Elective Operations

**Quarter Ending December 2018**

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# Commentary

This release covers NHS cancelled elective operations in England, during the quarter ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018.

The main points from the latest release are:

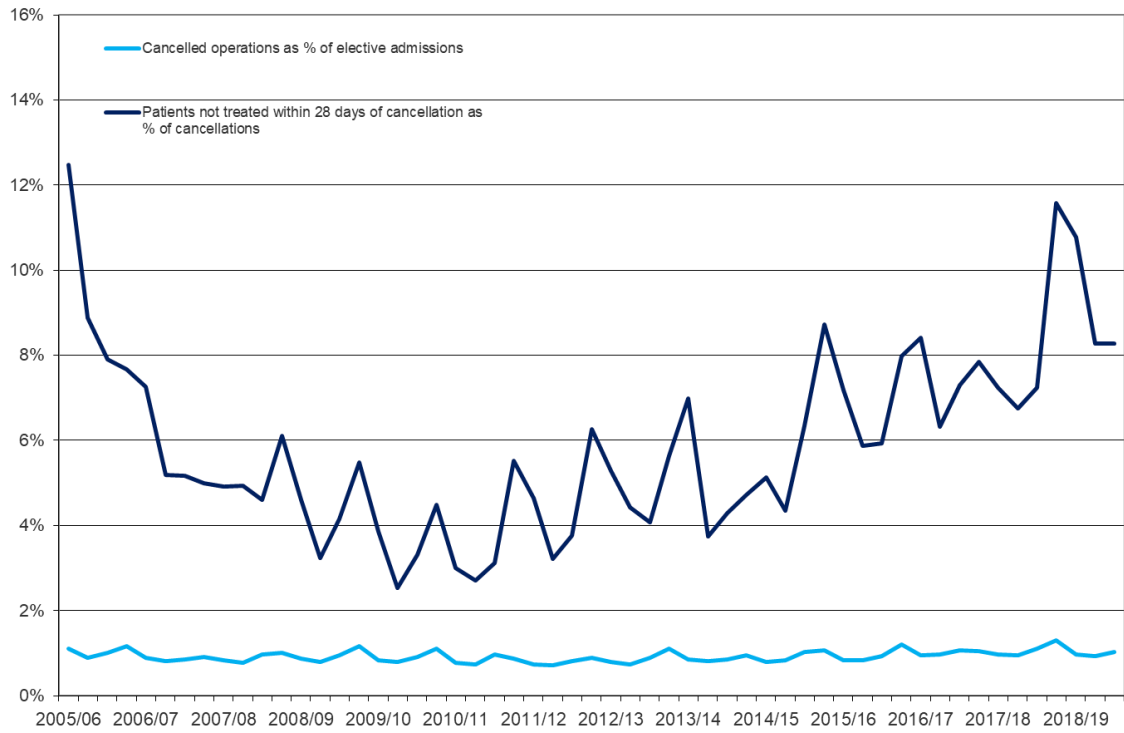
- During the quarter ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018, 20,145 operations were cancelled at the last minute for non-clinical reasons by NHS providers. In the same period in 2017/18, there were 22,013 cancelled operations.
- Cancelled operations during the quarter represented 1.0% of all elective activity, which is slightly less than the corresponding percentage in the same period in 2017/18 (1.1%).
- Of these cancellations 1,666 (8.3%) of patients were not treated within 28 days of a cancellation. In the same period in 2017/18, 1,596 (7.3%) of patients were not treated within 28 days.
- Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Will Adams NHS Treatment Centre did not submit any data for Q3 2018-19.

**Table 1: A summary of the above results in comparison with last quarter and the same period in 2017/18**

Quarter ending	Q3 2017	Q2 2018	Q3 2018
Total Elective activity	1,982,073	1,972,275	1,943,227
Breaches	1,596	1,529	1,666
Cancelled Elective operations	22,013	18,460	20,145
Breaches as % of cancellations	7.3%	8.3%	8.3%
Cancellations as % of total activity.	1.1%	0.9%	1.0%

**Figure 1: Time series of breach and cancellation rates.**

The data for Figure 1 (a national time series) and other full tables by provider and region are available here:



<http://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/cancelled-elective-operations/cancelled-ops-data/>

## Statistical Notes

### 1. Cancelled Elective Operations (QMCO) Data Collection

This publication no longer has National Statistics status. We are undertaking a Continuing Compliance Check with the UK Statistics Authority in order to determine the areas requiring further development in order that the statistics can resume National Statistics status.

Cancelled elective operation data is signed off locally and then supplied to NHS England by NHS providers (NHS Trusts and other providers). This report presents a summary of the number of last minute cancelled operations for non-clinical reasons and, of those, the number subsequently re-admitted within 28 days, during the quarter.

The elective cancelled operations standard is a pledge in the Handbook to the NHS Constitution which states “all patients who have operations cancelled, on or after the day of admission (including the day of surgery), for non-clinical reasons to be offered another binding date within 28 days, or the patient’s treatment to be funded at the time and hospital of the patient’s choice.”

The NHS Constitution contains pledges which the NHS is committed to achieve. Pledges go above and beyond legal rights. This means that they are not legally binding, but represent a commitment by the NHS to provide high-quality services.

#### Data availability

Data has been published since Q1 2003-04 in the current format as a Provider collection. Prior to this it was collected and published as part of the QMPC return from Q1 1996-97.

The data is published quarterly to a pre-announced timetable. Publication occurs on the second Thursday of the month, around 6 weeks after the end of the reference quarter.

#### Data Collection

NHS England compiles quarterly data from a return (QMCO) collected from all NHS providers of elective operations via Strategic Data Collection Service (SDCS), the standard online tool for the collection and sharing of NHS performance data. Validation checks are applied to the data. Queries arising from the validation checks are raised with data providers. Trusts are then able to resubmit data or provide NHS England with further explanation of the figures.

The information provides a total of the number of last minute elective operations cancelled for non-clinical reason and the number of patients not treated within 28 days of a last minute elective cancellation (breaches). Breaches are counted at the point in which they occur, i.e. if after 28 days of a last minute cancellation the patient has not been treated then the breach should be recorded.

The quarter's figures are presented in Excel, PDF and Comma Separate Values (CSV) file formats.

## **Data Quality**

This collection is a census so we aim to have a complete return, with data from all Providers. Any exceptions to this are noted. To minimise the risk of definitions being interpreted incorrectly during the data gathering process, guidance is issued to help aid providers and commissioners. The QMCO guidance can be found here:

<http://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/cancelled-elective-operations/>

Validation checks are applied to the data. Queries arising from the validation checks are raised with data providers. Trusts and are then able to resubmit data or provide NHS England with further explanation of the figures. We are happy to answer any queries from users in regards to difficulties in interpreting the data.

## **UK Data Comparison**

### Wales

The Welsh office does not routinely publish this data, although some data was published in the Programme for Government Annual report:

<http://wales.gov.uk/about/programmeforgov/healthcare/performance?code=TR068&lang=en>

### Scotland

The Scottish office does not routinely publish this data. They do however publish data for cancellation by service (not necessarily last minute) which can be found here:

<http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Inpatient-Day-Cases-and-Outpatients/>

### Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety have published this data in the past. However, this has now been discontinued and in the future only data on cases operated on will be published. The last data published from Northern Ireland on cancelled operations can be found here:

<http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/statistics/hs-inpatient-day-case-stats-13-14.pdf>  
(page 33)

## 2. Data Revision Policy

Revisions to published figures are released on a six-monthly basis and in accordance with the NHS Operations team's revision policy. The revisions policy can be found here:

[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130107105354/http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod\\_consum\\_dh/groups/dh\\_digitalassets/@dh/@en/@ps/@sta/@perf/documents/digitalasset/dh\\_133692.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130107105354/http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/@ps/@sta/@perf/documents/digitalasset/dh_133692.pdf)

## 3. Glossary

### **Elective Operations**

Operations that are organised in advance.

### **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.

### **Last Minute**

A cancellation is last minute if it occurs after the patient has arrived in hospital or on the day of the operation or surgery.

### **Non-Clinical**

Some common non-clinical reasons for cancellations by the hospital include:

- ward beds being unavailable;
- surgeon being unavailable;
- emergency cases needing the theatre;
- theatre list over-running;
- equipment failure;
- administrative errors;
- anaesthetists unavailable;
- theatre staff unavailable
- critical care bed not available.

These examples are based on information from the Modernisation Agency's Theatres Project and do not necessarily cover all non-clinical reasons

## 4. Feedback

We welcome feedback on the content and presentation of these statistics and those published on the NHS England website. If anyone has any comments or feedback, then please email [england.nhsdata@nhs.net](mailto:england.nhsdata@nhs.net)

## 5. Additional Information

A full detail of data for individual organisations is available at:

<http://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/cancelled-elective-operations/cancelled-ops-data/>

## 6. Press enquiries

For press enquiries please e-mail the NHS England media team at [nhsengland.media@nhs.net](mailto:nhsengland.media@nhs.net) or call 07768 901293

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