

Statistical Note: Ambulance Quality Indicators (AQI)

Systems Indicators data for December 2019 show that ambulance services in England had the busiest month for calls and incidents since these measures were first introduced in autumn 2017.

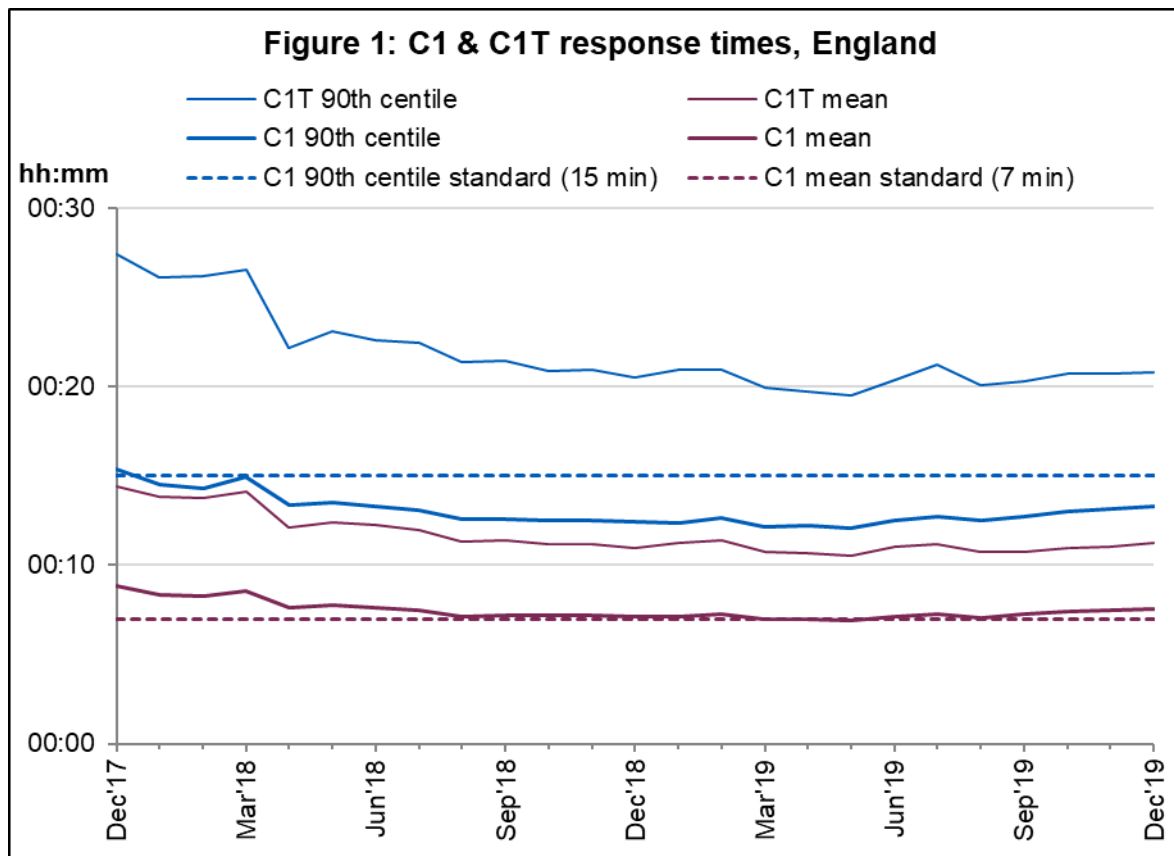
For the fourth consecutive month, response times for all categories in December 2019 were longer than in the previous month.

1. Systems Indicators

1.1 Response times

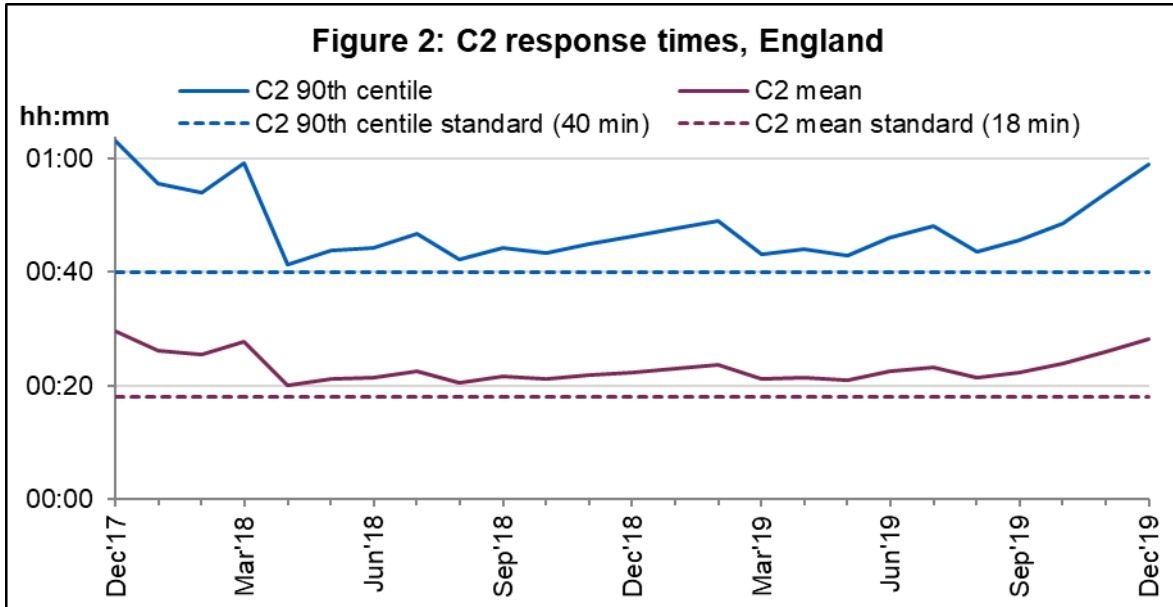
The mean average C1 response time across England was 7 minutes 35 seconds in December 2019, longer than the standard of 7 minutes. The C1 90th centile response times averaged 13:18 across England in December, meeting the standard of 15 minutes. Of the six ambulance response standards in the Handbook¹ to the NHS constitution, this was the only one to be met.

For C1T (arrival of transporting vehicle, for C1 patients transported) the mean and 90th centile response times were 11:14 and 20:47 respectively.



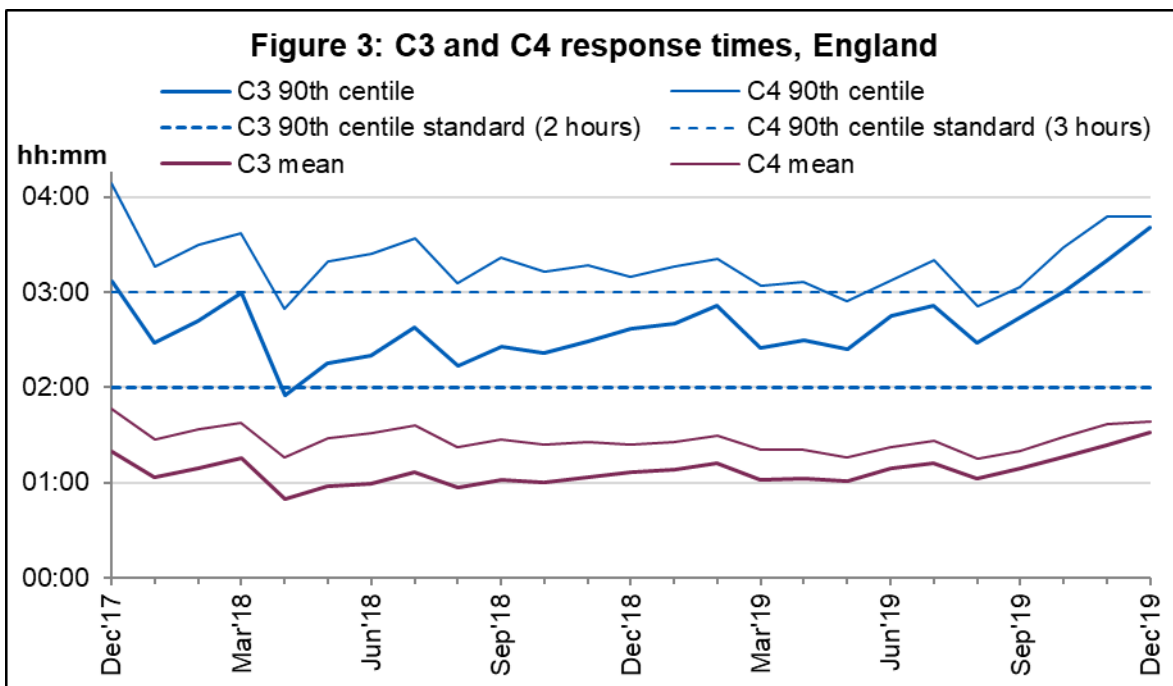
¹ Ambulance standards are in the Handbook to the NHS Constitution: www.gov.uk/government/publications/supplements-to-the-nhs-constitution-for-england

Figure 2 shows that the mean average response time for England, in December 2019, for all C2 incidents, was 28:08, an increase of more than 2 minutes on November, and the longest since December 2017. The C2 90th centiles averaged 58:57 across England, an increase of more than 5 minutes on November.



Across England, the C3 mean average response time, in December was 1:31:16. The C3 90th centile times averaged 3:40:42, more than 100 minutes longer than the standard of two hours. Both were the longest times in the series (Figure 3).

The C4 mean average response time was 1:38:39 in December. The C4 90th centile times averaged 3:47:35, longer than the standard of three hours, and the longest time since December 2017.



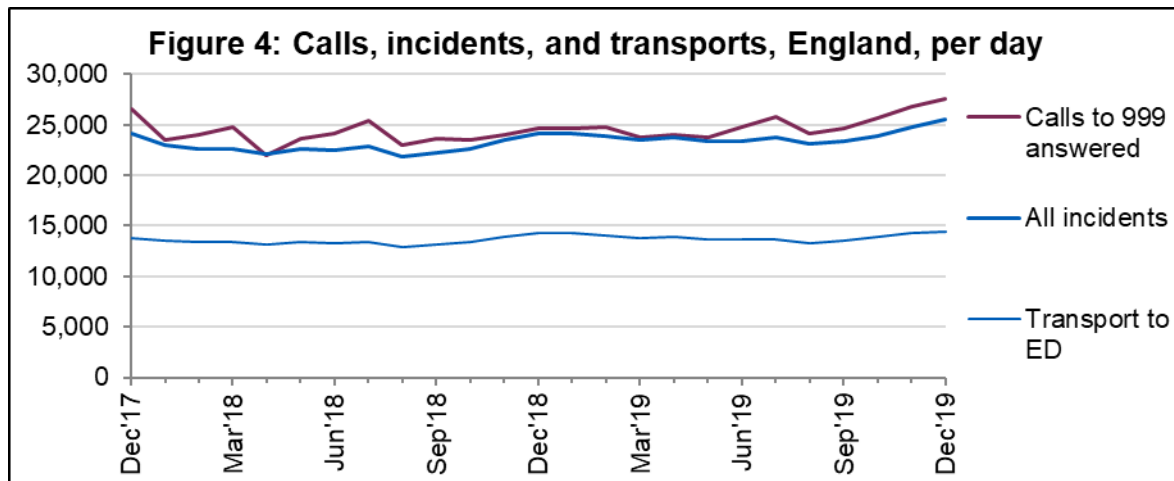
1.2 Other Systems Indicators

Across England, the mean average call answer time in December 2019 was 8 seconds, and the 90th centile times averaged 21 seconds, less than in the previous six months.

Per day, there were (Figure 4):

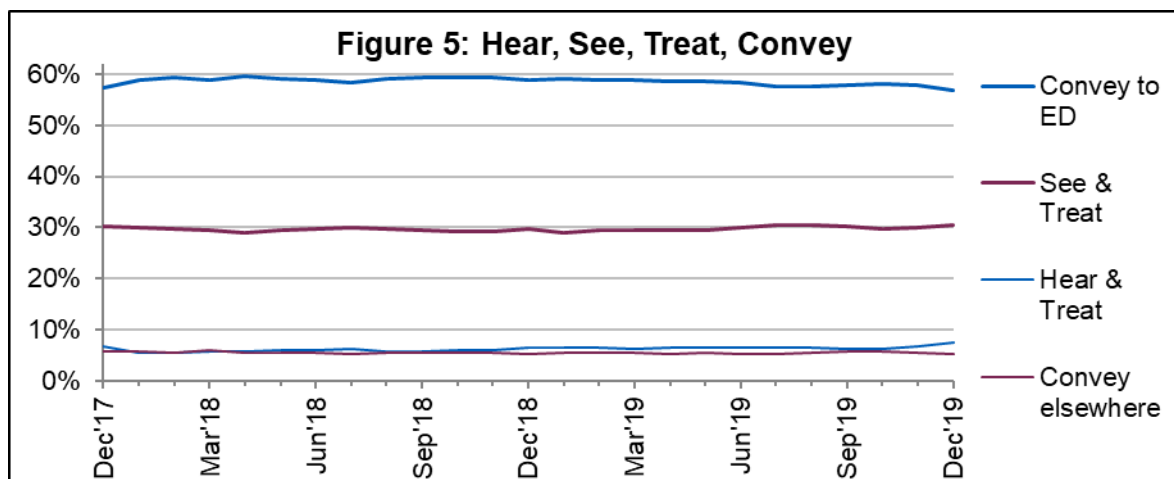
- 27.5 thousand calls to 999 answered in December, a 2.8% increase on November;
- 25.5 thousand incidents received a response (whether on the telephone or on the scene) from an ambulance service in December, 2.8% more than November;
- 14.5 thousand incidents where a patient was transported to an Emergency Department (ED) in December, 0.9% more than in November.

For all these measures, this made December 2019 the busiest month per day since the measures were first introduced in autumn 2017.



In December 2019, 7.4% of incidents were resolved on the telephone (hear and treat), the highest proportion in the series. This could be due to ambulance services improving their telephone advice, but could also be due to how services manage demand during particularly busy times.

Other incidents in December 2019 (Figure 5) comprised 56.8% where a patient was transported to an Emergency Department (ED), 5.3% with a patient transported elsewhere, and 30.4% with a patient attended but not transported (see and treat).



2. Clinical Outcomes

As described in the 13th December statistical note, the Christmas holiday period has caused a delay in the delivery of stroke data, so we have not had time to write a discussion of the data in this document. However, the latest data, for August 2019, for stroke and all other clinical outcomes, can be found in our published spreadsheets.

3. Further information on AQI

3.1 The AQI landing page and Quality Statement

www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/ambulance-quality-indicators, or <http://bit.ly/NHSAQI>, is the AQI landing page, and it holds:

- a Quality Statement for these statistics, which includes information on relevance, accuracy, timeliness, coherence, and user engagement;
- the specification guidance documents for those who supply the data;
- timetables for data collection and publication;
- time series spreadsheets and csv files from April 2011 up to the latest month;
- links to individual web pages for each financial year;
- contact details for the responsible statistician (also in section 3.4 below).

Publication dates are also at

www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements?keywords=ambulance.

The web pages for each financial year hold:

- separate spreadsheets of each month's data;
- this Statistical Note, and equivalent versions from previous months;
- the list of people with pre-release access to the data.

3.2 Related statistics

Ambulance handover delays of over 30 minutes at each Emergency Department are published by NHSEI during winter 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15, 2017-18, 2018-19, and 2019-20, at www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/winter-daily-sitreps.

The Quality Statement described in section 3.1 includes information on:

- the “Ambulance Services” publications² by NHS Digital, with data from before 2000, to 2014-15;
- a dashboard with an alternative layout for AQI data up to April 2016;
- the comparability of data for other countries of the UK:

Wales: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/NHS-Performance/Ambulance-Services>

Scotland: See Quality Improvement Indicators (QII) documents at www.scottishambulance.com/TheService/BoardPapers.aspx

² <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/ambulance-services>



Northern www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/emergency-care-and-ambulance-statistics
Ireland: [statistics](#)

3.3 AQI Scope

The AQI include calls made by dialling either the usual UK-wide number 999 or its international equivalent 112. As described in the specification guidance mentioned in section 3.1, incidents resulting from a call to NHS 111 are included in all Systems Indicators the except call data items, A1 to A6.

3.4 Contact information

Media: NHSEI Media team, nhsengland.media@nhs.net, 0113 825 0958.

The person responsible for producing this publication is Ian Kay; Finance, Performance and Planning Directorate; NHS England and NHS Improvement; 0113 825 4606; i.kay@nhs.net; Room 5E24, Quarry House, Leeds, LS2 7UE.

3.5 National Statistics

The UK Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods; and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.