

NHS England's winter health check

The latest position on A&E, winter pressures and influenza for the week ending 29 November 2013 by NHS England

This weekly summary offers an overview of the system and pulls together information on waiting times in A&E, ambulance response times, daily situation reports from the NHS, and information on flu rates.

Overview

Dame Barbara Hakin, Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Chief Executive for NHS England, said:

"This week the NHS continues to deliver a good urgent care service for our patients. This is now the 31st consecutive week A&E departments have treated, admitted or discharged over 95 per cent of all patients within four hours.

"We continue to monitor the situation closely, especially now as the weather has started to get colder. This daily monitoring shows that ambulance handover delays, A&E diverts and cancelled operations are down compared to last year. This is encouraging.

"We have seen a slight increase in the number of delayed transfers of care but - while one is too many - I want to stress that these currently remain within what we would expect at this time of year and should not be over-interpreted.

"We do however want to ensure this does not develop into a more serious problem. I have therefore asked healthcare leaders from around the country to take a further look at this issue and see if there is more pre-emptive action that needs to be taken, along with colleagues from social care. We must do everything possible to keep these delays to a minimum.

"It is absolutely right to be totally alive to the risks during winter but it's also important not to call a crisis before it has happened. It is early days but we should be heartened that at the moment we are seeing and treating patients quickly in our A&E departments with those not admitted generally seen and treated in under two hours.

"We know that our A&E departments are trusted by the public and we are determined to maintain the high standards that patients have come to expect. This year we started preparing earlier than ever before, with an extra £400 million given to local systems to help them maintain services and reduce the pressure on A&Es caused by cold weather.

"Everyone is working really hard to make sure we manage this winter just as well as we have done in the past. The challenges are significant but the effort we are putting in to meet those challenges has never been greater and our planning and coordination has never been as meticulous nor as advanced at this stage of the year."

She added: "If they're feeling unwell, I would encourage people not to be afraid to ask for help or advice. The local pharmacy and NHS 111 both offer expert advice and if your symptoms don't go away, visit your GP."

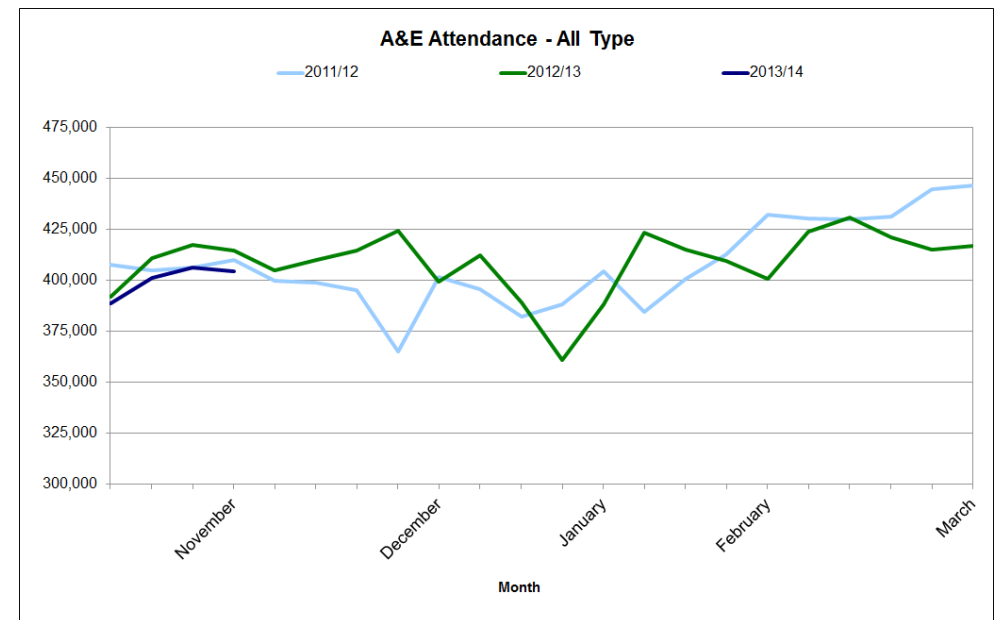
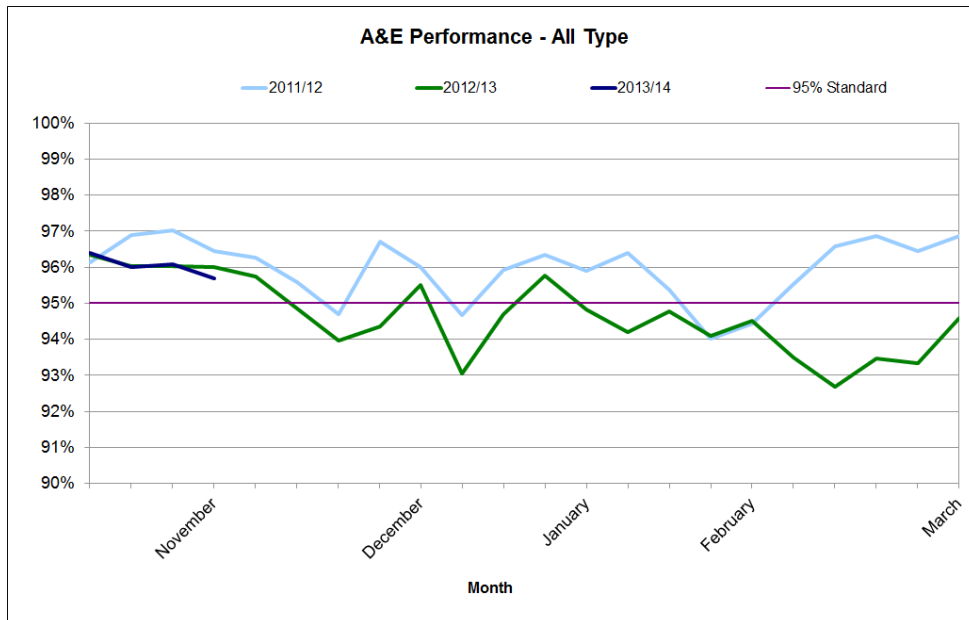
Weekly A&E standard

Summary

The percentage of patients spending under 4 hours in A&E stands at 95.7% this week, down slightly from last week and the same week last year. Attendances at A&E have fallen slightly this week, but emergency admissions have increased and are at a slightly higher level than the same week last year.

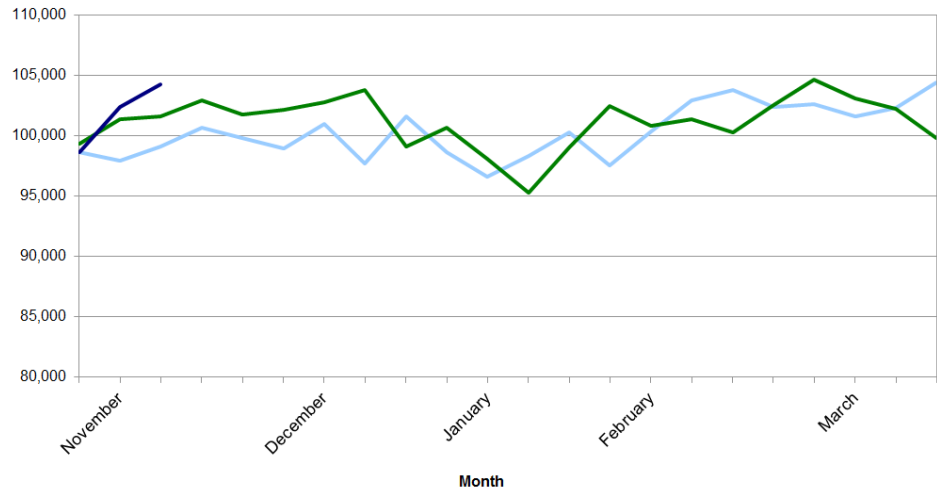
Indicator	w/e 24 Nov 2013	w/e 17 Nov 2013	w/e 25 Nov 2012
Total A&E attendance	404,400	406,100	414,400
A&E 4 hour standard	95.7%	96.1%	96.0%
Emergency admissions	104,300	102,600	102,900
Number of 12 hour trolley waits	3	1	1
Number of 4 hour waits for admission	3,300	2,600	2,700

The full dataset can be found [here](#)



Emergency Admissions - All Type

2011/12 2012/13 2013/14



Situation reports (SITREPs)

Daily situation reports, or SITREPs, are collected from all hospitals during winter and indicate where there are any winter pressures on the service, such as A&E closures, cancelled operations, bed pressures or ambulance delays. Collection for this year started on 4 November and the reporting requirement will be reviewed at the end of February. The data is published weekly on the NHS England website.

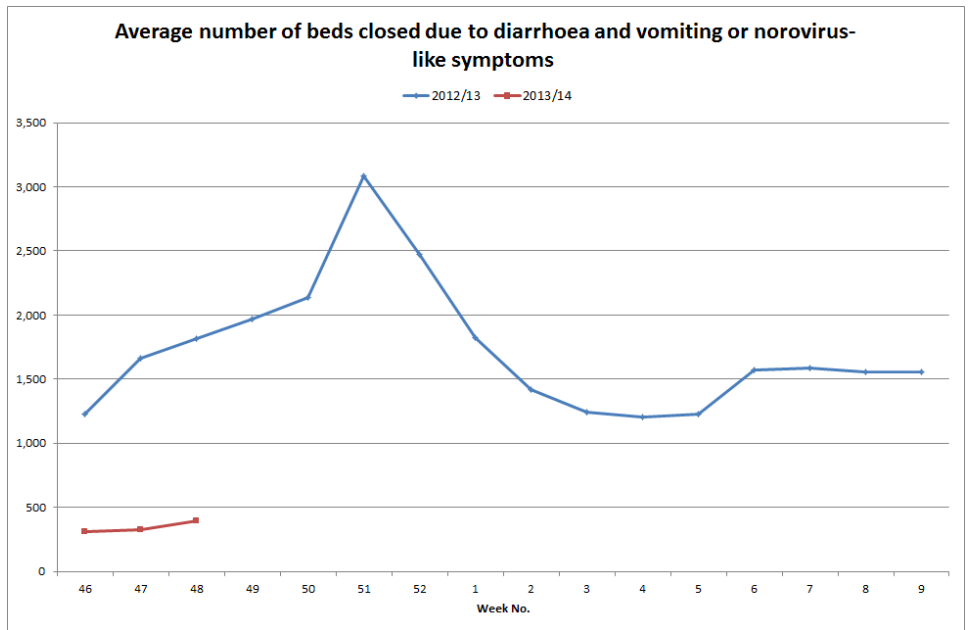
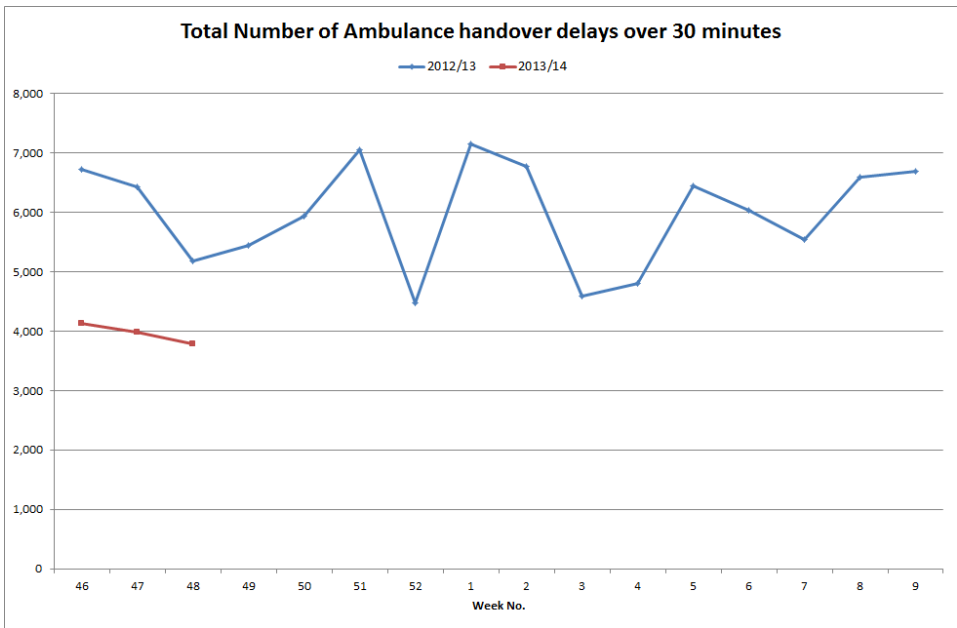
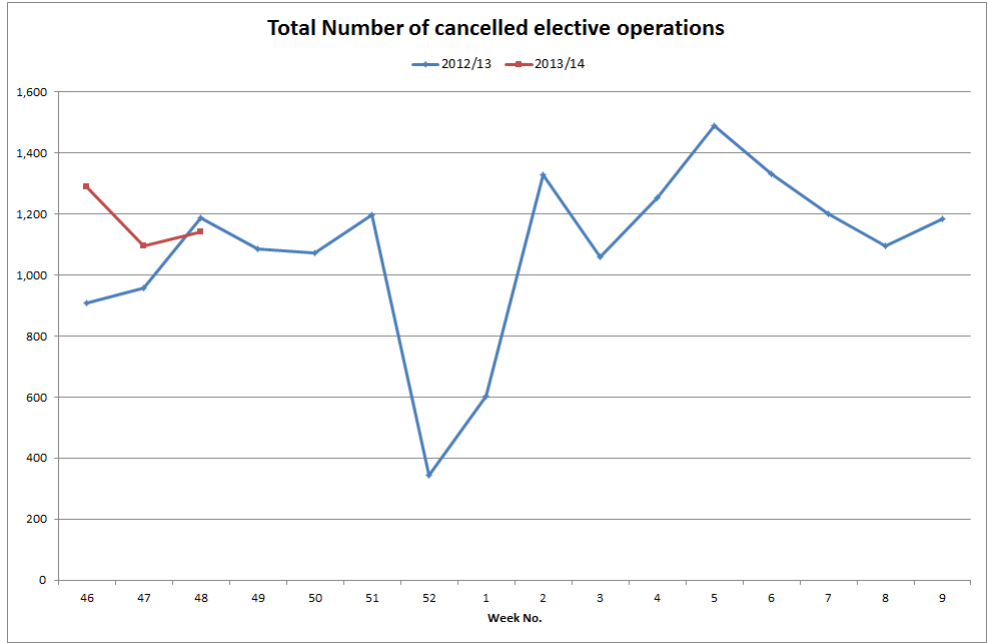
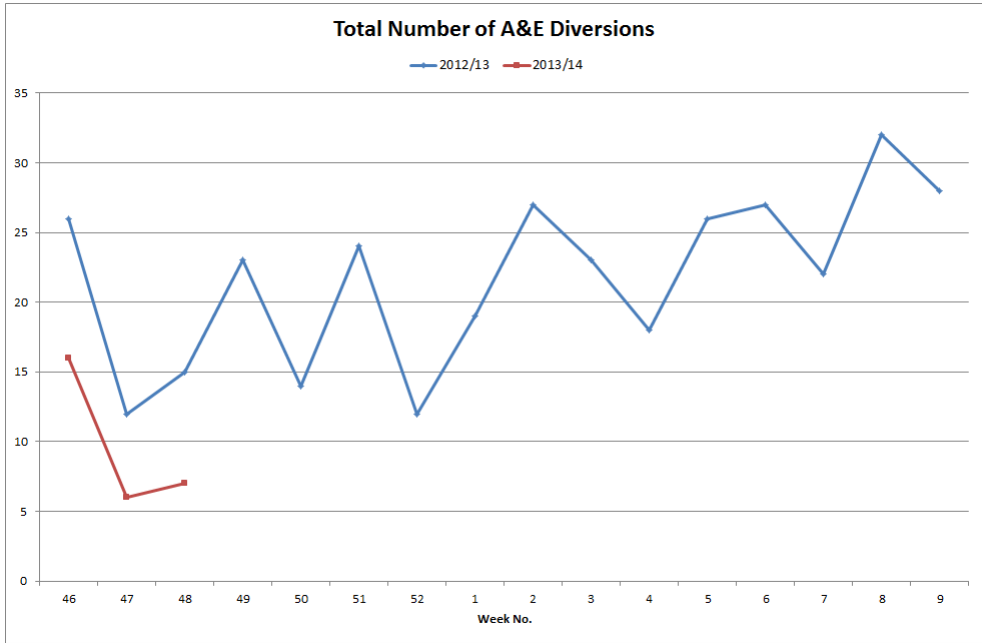
The NHS never shuts but it does sometimes have to alter the way it delivers services. Hospitals sometimes close their accident and emergency departments for short periods of time to walk-in patients and but remain open to those people who need its services. This can happen for many different reasons which might include a major incident in the local area such as a road traffic accident, a breakout of norovirus, or if the hospital is full. Local areas have robust plans in place to deal with temporary closures, which include ambulances directed to nearby hospitals.

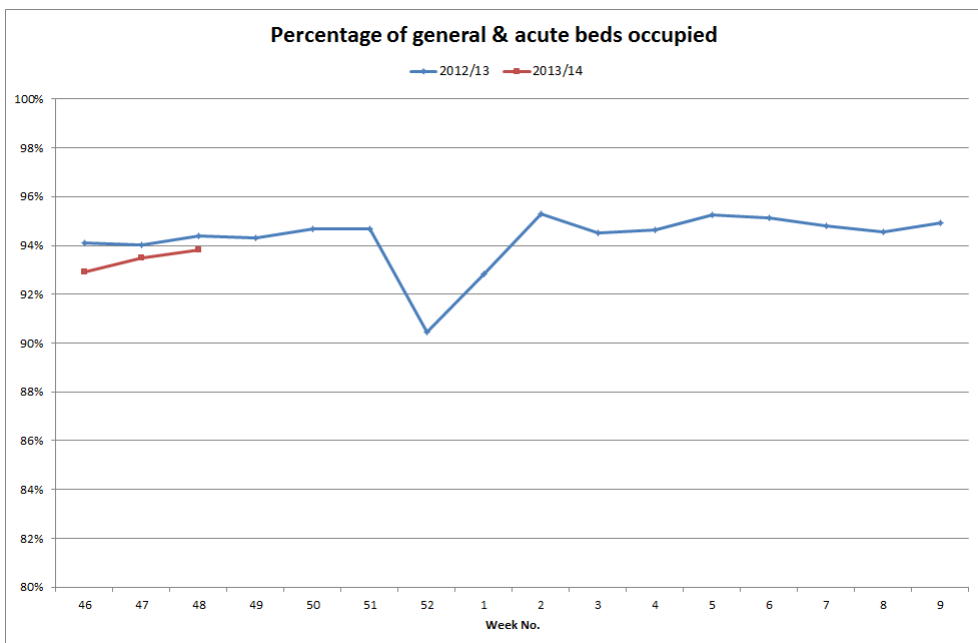
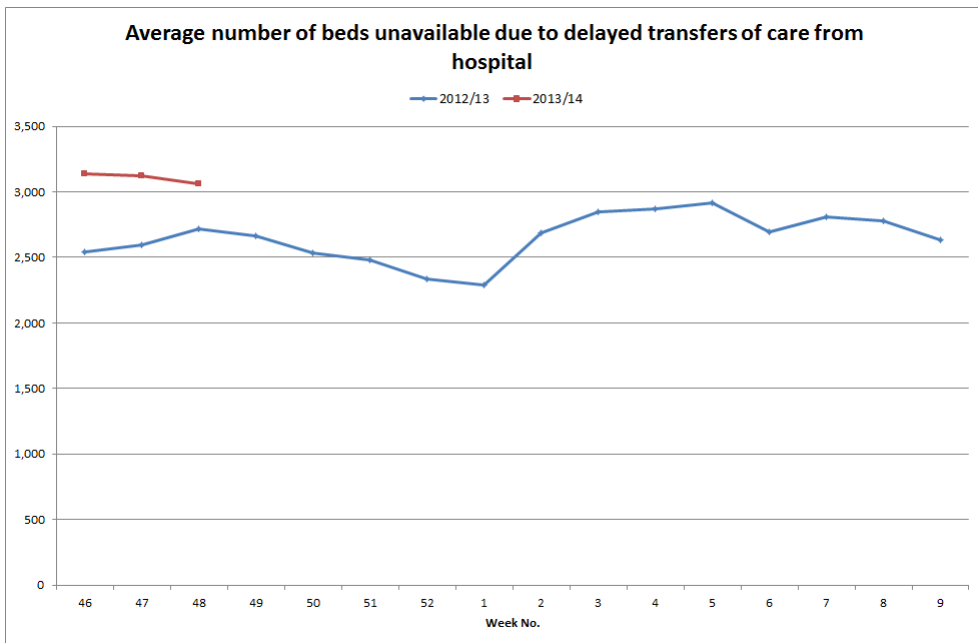
Summary

This week's figures suggest that the current pressures remain comparable with the same period last year and that there are no major problems. Ambulance handover delays are lower than the same period last year, as are beds closed due to norovirus-like symptoms. However, delayed transfers remain slightly higher than the equivalent period last year, although some of this increase can be attributed to data quality last year.

Indicator	Measure	Week 48, 2013 (w/e 8am 28 Nov)	Week 48, 2012 (w/e 8am 29 Nov)	Cumulative since week 45 (4 Nov)
A&E diverts	Total number of diversions during the week	7	15	38
Ambulance handover delays of over 30 minutes	Total number of delays during the week	3,783	5,180	13,687
Cancelled operations	Number of elective operations cancelled at last minute during the week	1,142	1,186	4,265
Number of beds closed due to diarrhoea and vomiting or norovirus-like symptoms	Average number of beds closed per day	396	1,818	
Number of beds unavailable due to delayed transfers of care from hospital	Average number of beds unavailable per day	3062	2,716 ¹	
General and acute beds occupancy rate	Percentage of beds occupied	93.8%	94.4%	
A full breakdown of the data can be found at here				

¹ Data quality issues remain with 2012 figures from daily return





NHS 111

The NHS 111 number is an easy to remember number to make it easier for the public to access urgent healthcare services. NHS 111 is free to call and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year to respond to people's healthcare needs when:

- you need medical help fast, but it's not a 999 emergency;
- you don't know who to call for medical help or you don't have a GP to call;
- you think you need to go to A&E or another NHS urgent care service; or
- you require health information or reassurance about what to do next.

NHS England collects and publishes data on the NHS 111 service on a monthly basis. Over the winter months, this information will be made available weekly.

Summary

This week there were 187,405 calls to NHS 111. The number of callers satisfied with the service remains high at 92 per cent.

Indicator	Week 47, 2013 (w/e 20 Nov)	Cumulative since 4 Nov
Per cent of calls answered in 60 seconds	96.21%	96.72%
Per cent of calls abandoned	0.77%	0.71%
Per cent of answered calls transferred to clinical advisor	22.23%	22.47%
Per cent of calls triaged	84.68%	84.04%
Per cent of calls offered a call back	7.46%	6.86%
Per cent of calls offered a call back where call back was within 10 minutes	50.69%	52.75%
Per cent of calls triaged where an ambulance was called	11.17%	11.36%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to A&E	7.22%	7.43%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to primary care	62.46%	61.98%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to another service	4.72%	4.71%
Per cent of calls triaged not recommended to another service	14.28%	14.70%

Public Health Surveillance

Summary

The figures this week from Public Health England show indicators of flu activity are at minimal levels, suggesting no community transmission at this week. More information on mortality and syndromic surveillance, as well as circulating infections is available from Public Health England and can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/winter-health-watch>

Key facts

Key facts:

- Last year, there were over 21 million visits to A&E or nearly 60,000 attendances every day
- Attendances at hospital A&E departments have increased by more than two million over the last decade
- There were 6.9 million attendances at walk in centres and minor injury units in 2012/13, with activity at these facilities increasing rapidly since these data were first recorded a decade ago.
- The average number of consultations in general practice per patient rose from 4.1 to 5.5 per year between 1999 and 2008
- The number of calls received by the ambulance service over the last decade has risen from 4.9 million to 9.1 million
- Emergency admissions to hospitals in England have increased year on year, rising 31 per cent between 2002/03 to 2012/13.