

NHS England's winter health check

The latest position on A&E, winter pressures and influenza for the week ending 22 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. We know that when services get stretched it has an impact on our busy A&E departments and patients then have to wait longer than they should. We assess this by trying to ensure 95 per cent of all patients who attend A&E have their treatment completed within four hours, so they are either admitted or discharged within that time. These figures show that last week 96 per cent were treated within four hours. This is the 30th consecutive week this has been achieved.

“The statistics shows that ambulance handover delays and A&E diverts are slightly fewer than last year and cancelled operations slightly more. Whilst we will always strive to keep these to a minimum we should not see these numbers as meaning a significant difference from last year as they are very small changes when considered in the light of how many patients are treated every week – in an average week NHS hospitals admit a quarter of a million patients. However, local clinicians and NHS managers continue to monitor the situation closely so issues can be identified and early action can be taken.

“Last Winter was a tough one for the NHS so this year we started preparing earlier than ever before, with an extra £250m given to those local systems in greatest need to support them over winter. To support those systems not deemed most at risk, NHS England will be distributing a further £150m to help them maintain services and reduce the pressure on A&Es caused by cold weather. The additional money will come from NHS England's expected surplus for the current financial year and will be distributed among local communities based on the number of people they serve.

“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. We will now keep a very close eye on the position so that we can ensure there is a quick response should any issues arise.

“With the drop in temperatures this week, the message from the NHS is look after yourself this winter. If you or someone you know is feeling unwell, seek early and expert advice by visiting the local pharmacy, calling NHS 111 or if the symptoms don't go away, visit your GP. The cold weather has not yet fully started and the most testing periods are still to come. But we are ready for winter and determined to ensure patients get the best service.”

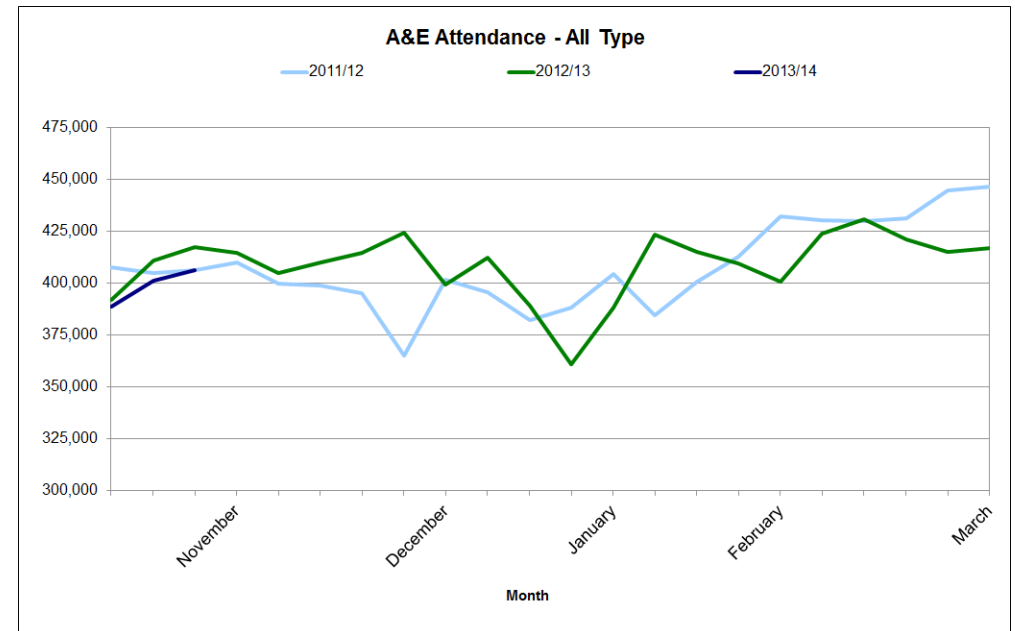
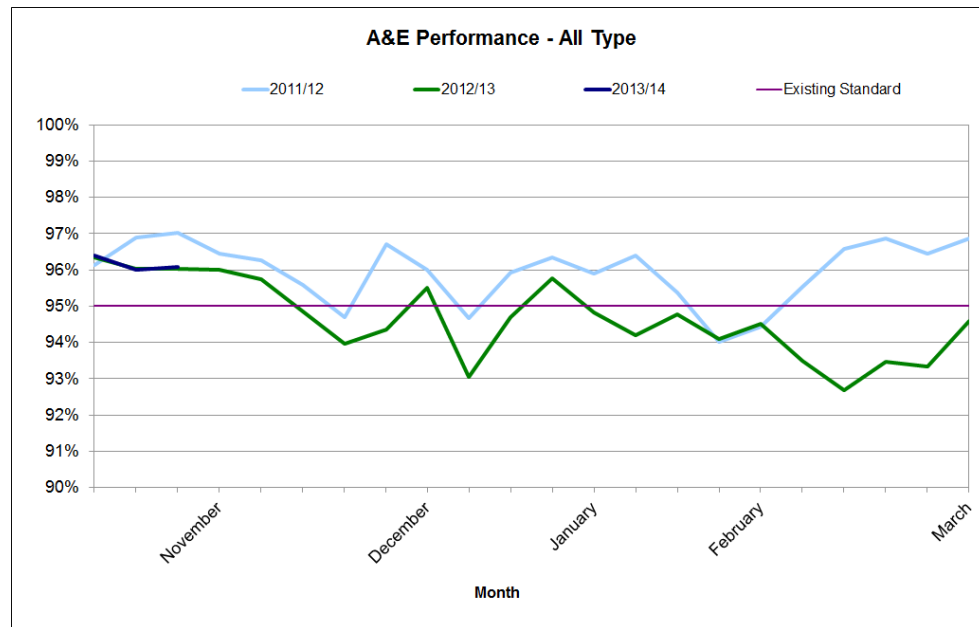
Weekly A&E standard

Summary

The percentage of patients spending under 4 hours in A&E stands at 96.1% this week, up slightly from last week and the same week last year. Attendances at A&E and emergency admissions have increased since last week, although they are at levels comparable to recent weeks and similar weeks in previous years.

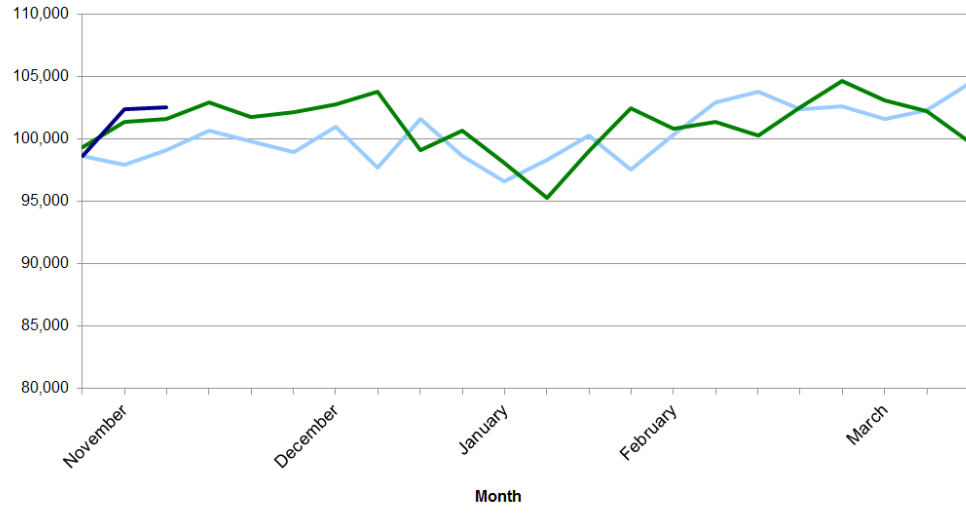
Indicator	w/e 17 Nov 2013	w/e 10 Nov 2013	w/e 18 Nov 2012
Total A&E attendance	406,100	401,000	417,300
A&E 4 hour standard	96.1%	96.0%	96.0%
Emergency admissions	102,600	102,400	101,600
Number of 12 hour trolley waits	1	1	0
Number of 4 hour waits for admission	2,600	2,600	2,700

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.

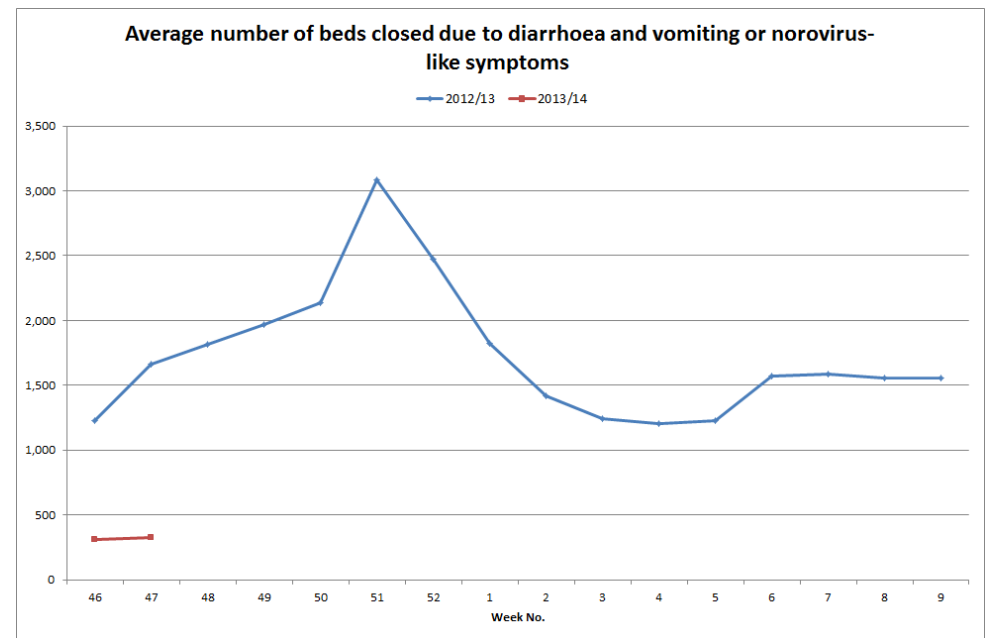
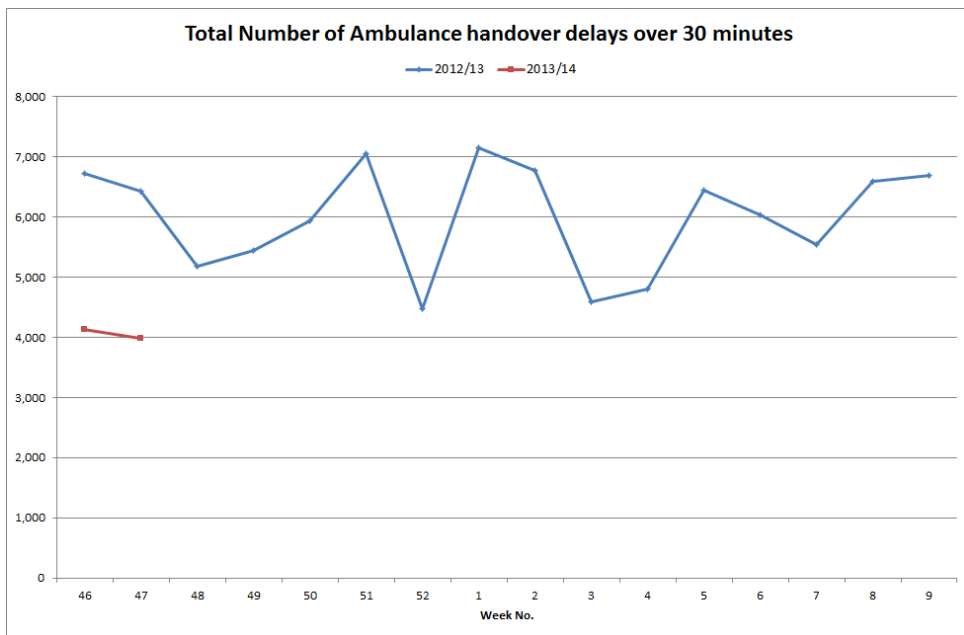
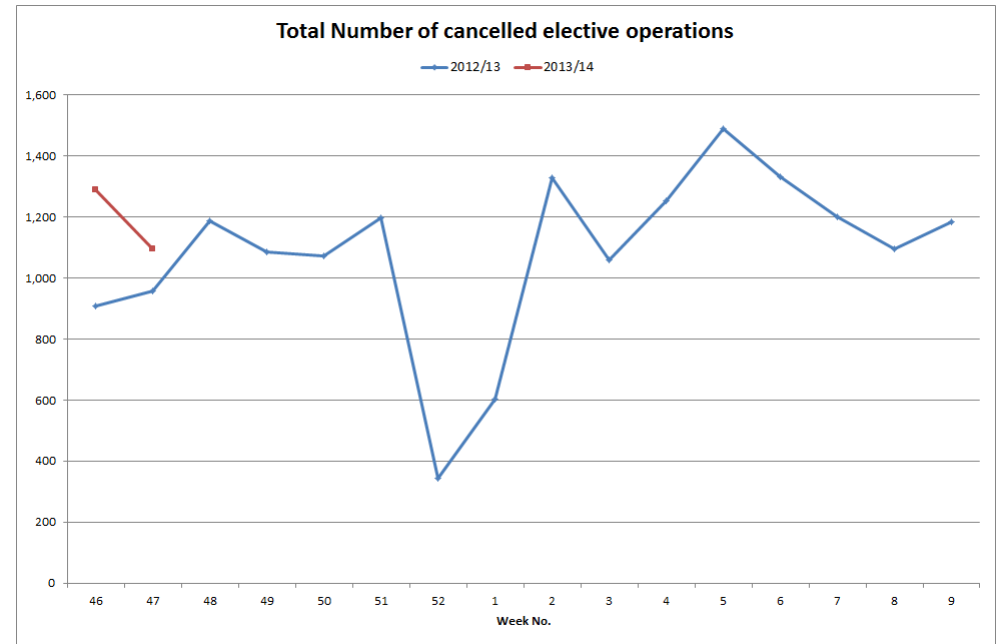
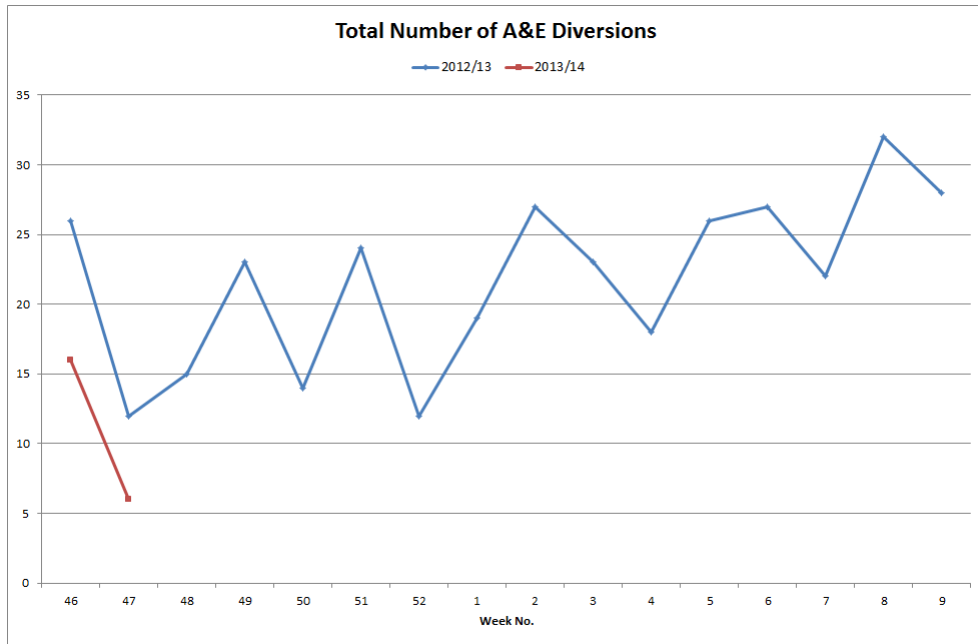
The NHS never shuts but it does sometimes have to alter the way it delivers services. Hospitals sometimes close their accident and emergency departments for short periods of time to walk-in patients and but remain open to those people who need its services. This can happen for many different reasons 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.

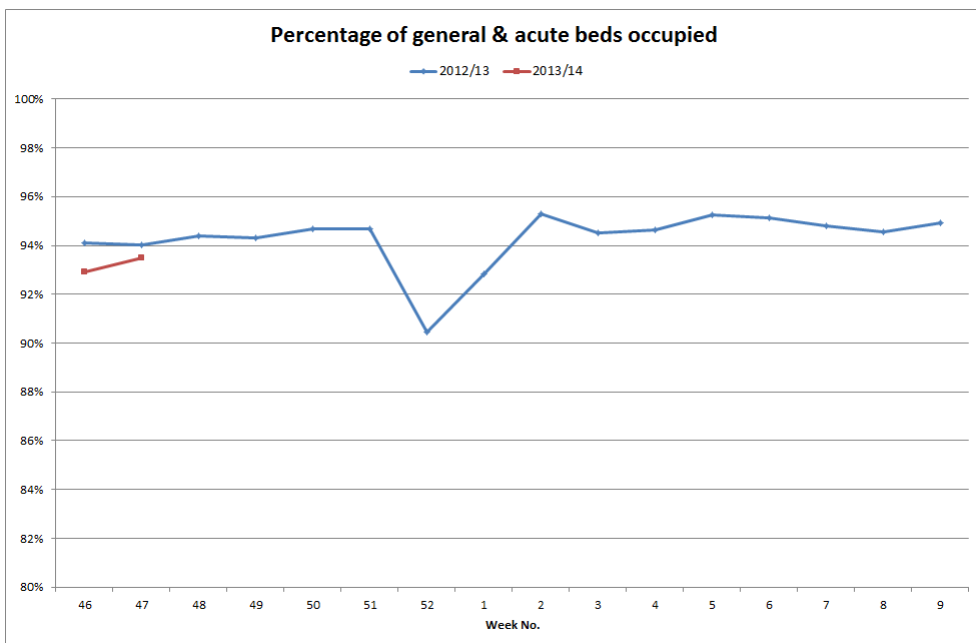
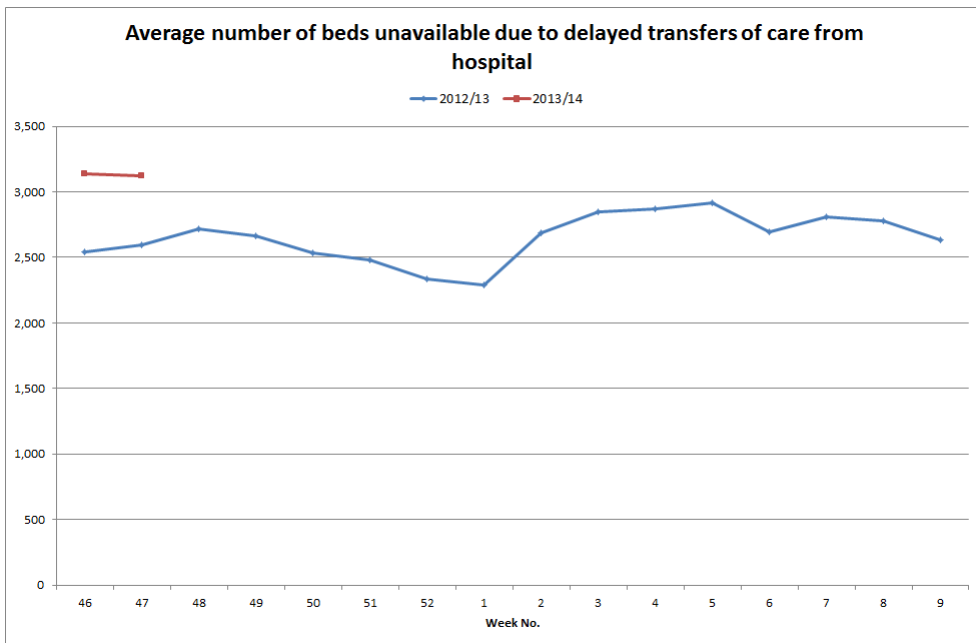
Summary

This week's figures suggest that the current pressures are 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, cancelled operations and delayed transfers remain higher than the equivalent period last year.

Indicator	Measure	Week 47, 2013 (w/e 8am 21 Nov)	Week 47, 2012 (w/e 8am 22 Nov)	Cumulative since week 45 (4 Nov)
A&E diverts	Total number of diversions during the week	6	12	31
Ambulance handover delays of over 30 minutes	Total number of delays during the week	3,981	6,424	9,904
Cancelled operations	Number of elective operations cancelled at last minute during the week	1,094	957	3,123
Number of beds closed due to diarrhoea and vomiting or norovirus-like symptoms	Average number of beds closed per day	328	1,663	
Number of beds unavailable due to delayed transfers of care from hospital	Average number of beds unavailable per day	3,119	2,598 ¹	
General and acute beds occupancy rate	Percentage of beds occupied	93.5%	94.0%	
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.