

NHS England's winter health check

The latest position on A&E, winter pressures and influenza for the week ending 6 December 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:

"People going to hospital for urgent care continue to get a good service. This is now the 32nd consecutive week A&E departments have treated, admitted or discharged over 95 per cent of all patients within four hours. That is an achievement that needs to be acknowledged.

"Clearly we are beginning to see the winter take hold and that seems to be having an impact on the number of people with coughs and colds. The public can be reassured however that we started preparations early this year and all over the country we have seen the NHS taking action to get ready.

"We are also monitoring the situation with great care to make sure the NHS move quickly if it needs to.

"This week we see that cancelled operations are stable. We remain concerned to avoid further rises in delayed transfers of care. This week the total has in fact edged down very marginally but we need local healthcare leaders to maintain the pressure on this issue to avoid it becoming a problem.

"Other key indicators like ambulance turnaround times are better than this time last year. But we know that ambulance services are under pressure. NHS England has allocated an extra £14 million to CCGs that commission ambulance services on behalf of local their area, so they can secure extra staff and equipment to ensure a good standard of service over the winter months.

"We have also seen some Norovirus in the Southampton and Dorset area. This is not in any way unusual for the time of year and it has not been replicated in other parts of the country. But, as we move into the winter, it is timely to remind people that basic things like frequent hand washing can have a real impact on the spread of infection, [NHS Choices](#) has lots of tips and advice on how to help prevent the spread.

"More generally, anyone who is feeling unwell I would encourage not to be afraid to ask for help or advice. We want seek advice early so we can nip things in the bud. The local pharmacy and NHS 111 both offer expert advice and if your symptoms don't go away, visit your GP."

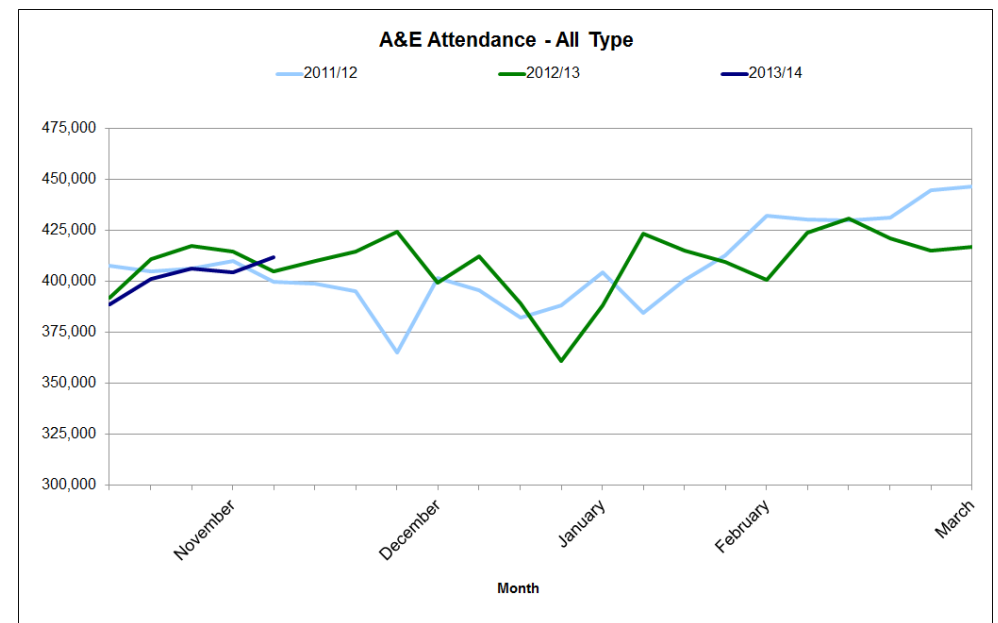
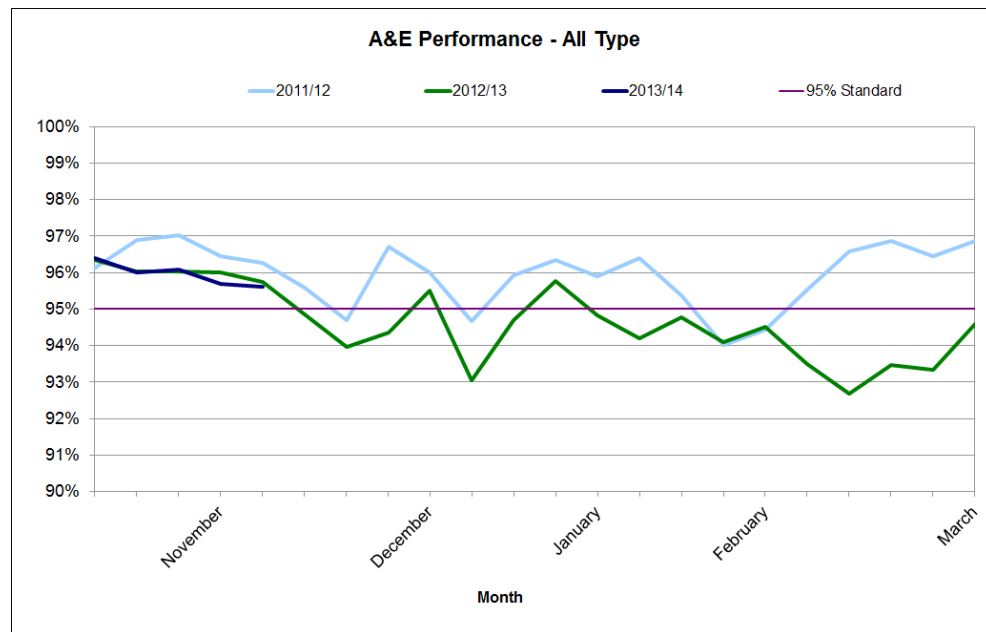
Weekly A&E standard

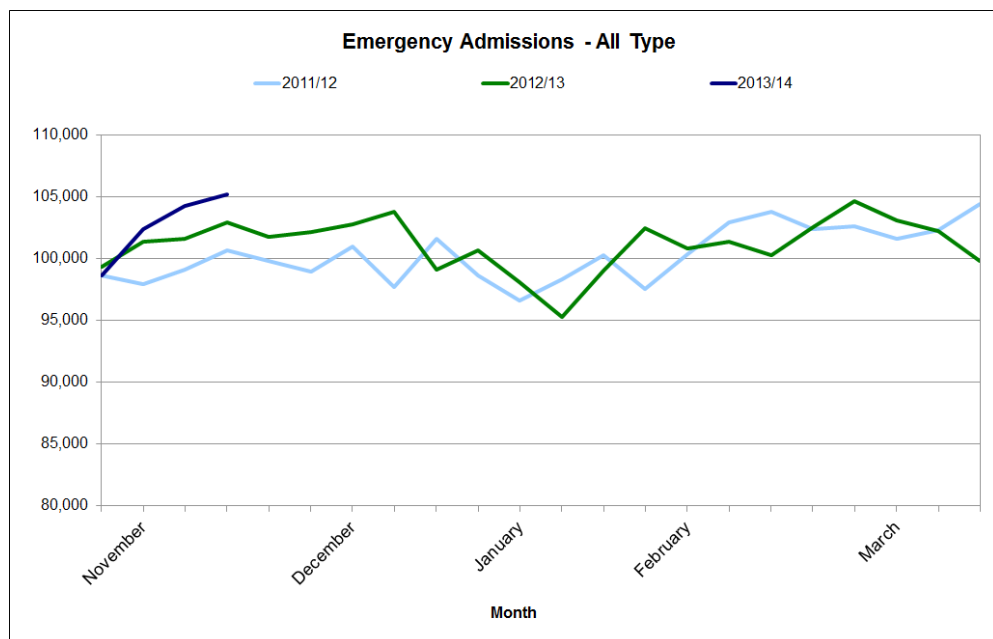
Summary

The percentage of patients spending under 4 hours in A&E stands at 95.6% this week, down slightly from last week and the same week last year. Attendances at A&E have increased this week, although are not unusually high, but emergency admissions have risen again, and are higher than the same time last year.

Indicator	w/e 1 Dec 2013	w/e 24 Nov 2013	w/e 2 Dec 2012
Total A&E attendance	411,800	404,400	404,800
A&E 4 hour standard	95.6%	95.7%	95.7%
Emergency admissions	105,200	104,300	101,700
Number of 12 hour trolley waits	0	3	0
Number of 4 hour waits for admission	3,000	3,300	2,900

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





Situation reports (SITREPs)

Daily situation reports, or SITREPs, are collected from all hospitals during winter and indicate where there are any winter pressure 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.

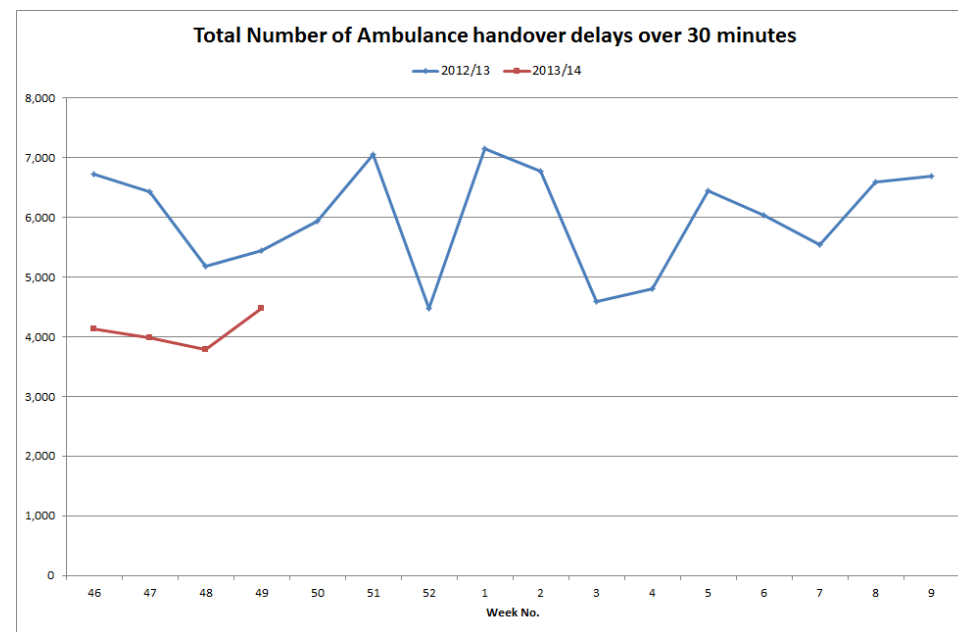
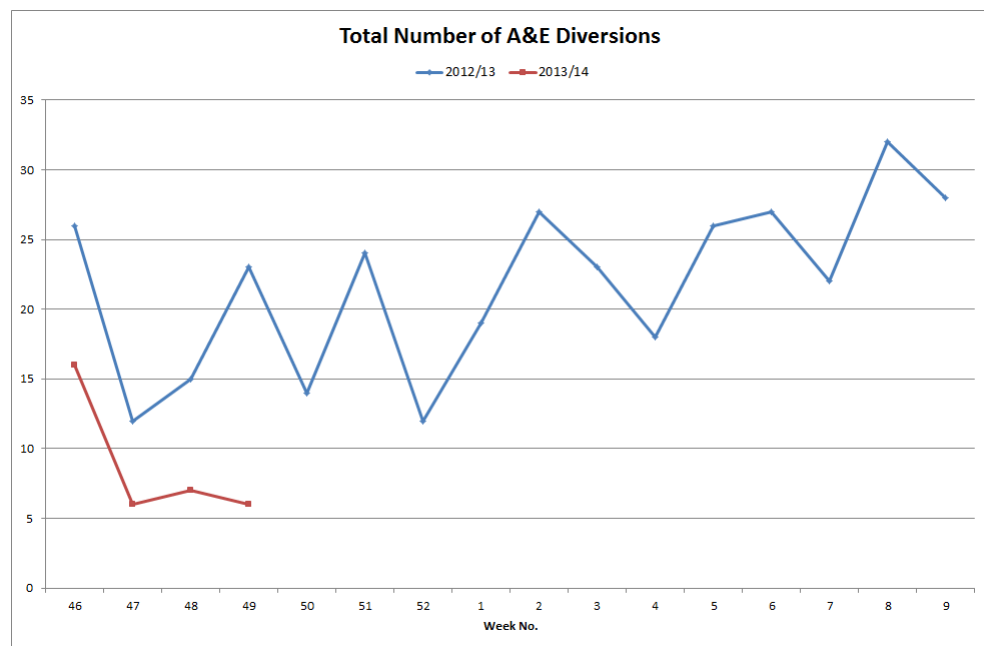
The NHS never shuts but it does sometimes have to alter the way it delivers services. Hospitals sometimes close their accident and emergency departments for short periods of time to walk-in patients and but remain open to those people who need its services. This can happen for many different reasons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

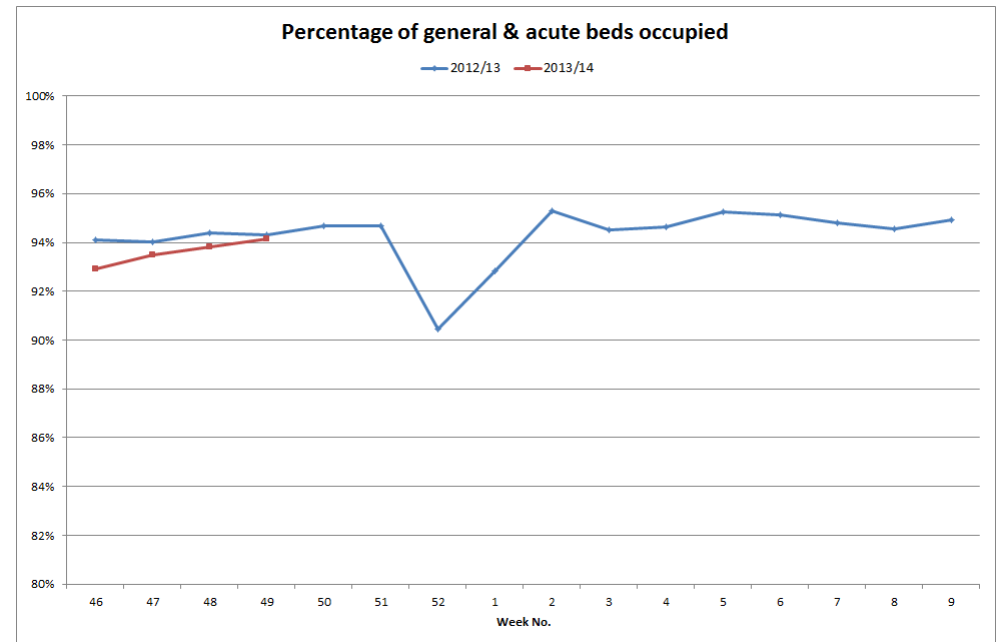
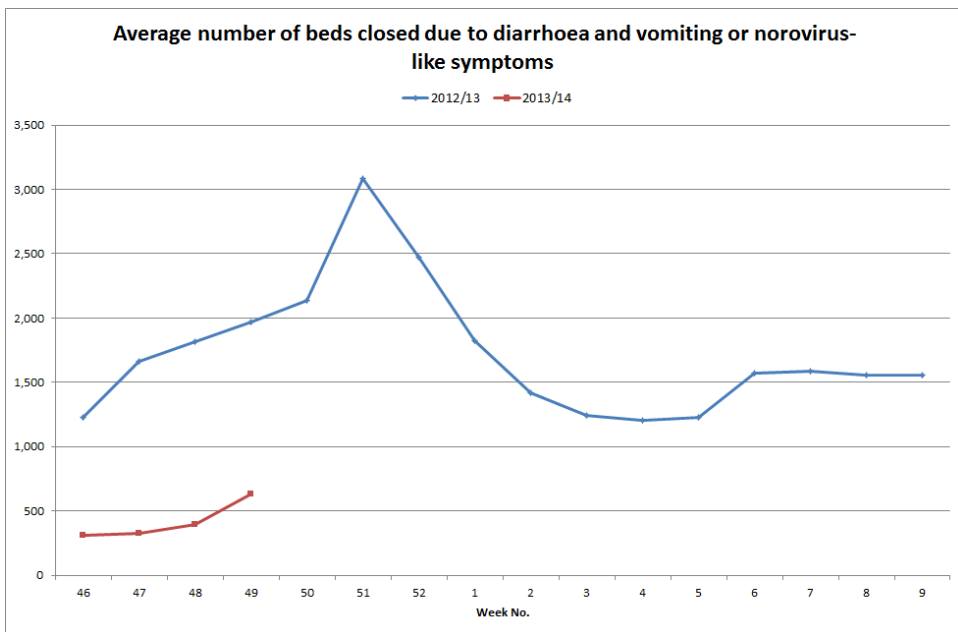
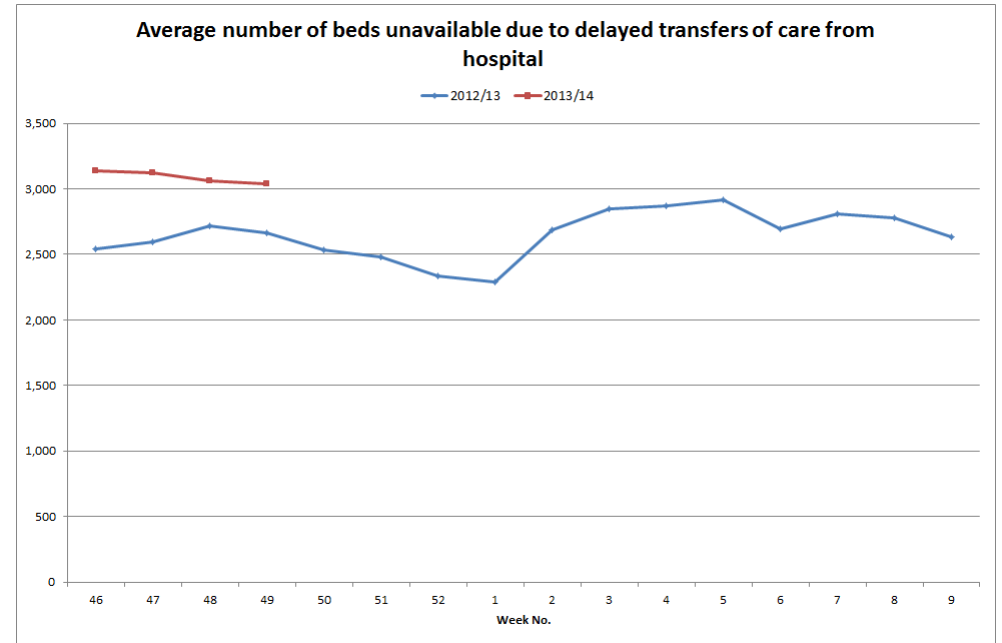
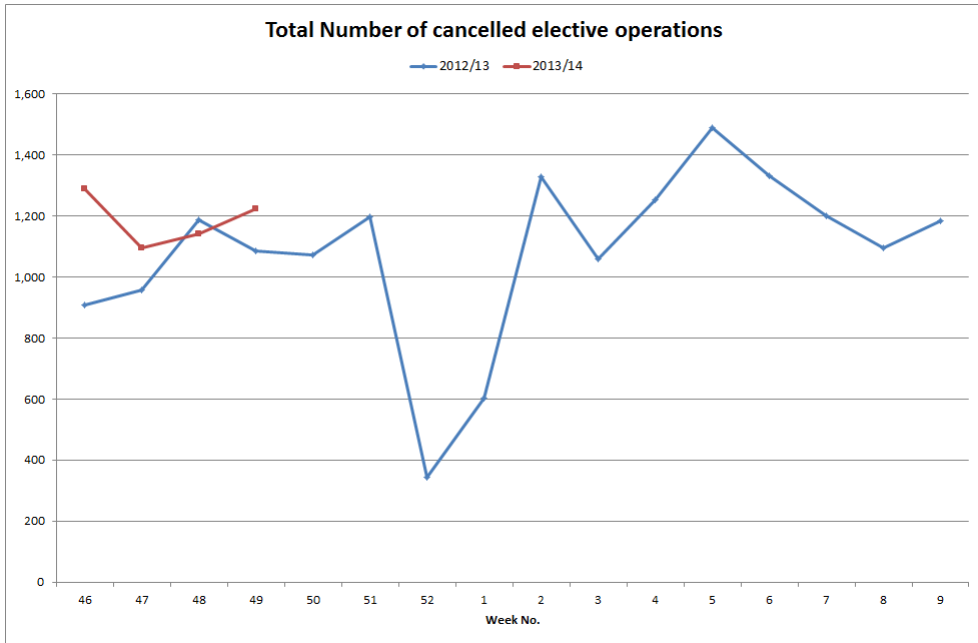
Summary

This week's figures suggest that the current pressures remain comparable with the same period last year and that there are no major problems, although signs of winter pressure are increasing, particularly with beds closed due to norovirus like symptoms. Ambulance handover delays have increased, but remain at lower levels than last year, and cancelled operations have also seen a rise this week. Delayed transfers have fallen slightly but remain higher than the equivalent period last winter, although some of this increase can be attributed to data quality last year.

Indicator	Measure	Week 49, 2013 (w/e 8am 5 Dec)	Week 49, 2012 (w/e 8am 6 Dec)	Cumulative since week 45 (4 Nov)
A&E diverts	Total number of diversions during the week	6	23	44
Ambulance handover delays of over 30 minutes	Total number of delays during the week	4,476	5,447	18,163
Cancelled operations	Number of elective operations cancelled at last minute during the week	1,222	1,084	5,487
Number of beds closed due to diarrhoea and vomiting or norovirus-like symptoms	Average number of beds closed per day	628	1,970	
Number of beds unavailable due to delayed transfers of care from hospital	Average number of beds unavailable per day	3,035	2,668 ¹	
General and acute beds occupancy rate	Percentage of beds occupied	94.1%	94.3%	
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 202,097 calls to NHS 111. The number of callers satisfied with the service remains high at 92 per cent.

Indicator	Week 49, 2013 (w/e 6th Dec)	Cumulative since 4 Nov
Per cent of calls answered in 60 seconds	95.51%	96.29%
Per cent of calls abandoned	0.92%	0.78%
Per cent of answered calls transferred to clinical advisor	22.25%	22.63%
Per cent of calls triaged	86.18%	84.58%
Per cent of calls offered a call back	7.24%	6.98%
Per cent of calls offered a call back where call back was within 10 minutes	54.85%	53.88%
Per cent of calls triaged where an ambulance was called	11.03%	11.24%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to A&E	7.01%	7.24%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to primary care	62.73%	62.64%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to another service	4.72%	4.69%
Per cent of calls triaged not recommended to another service	14.53%	14.69%

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.