

# NHS England's winter health check

The latest position on A&E, winter pressures and influenza for the week ending 20 December 2013 by NHS England

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This weekly summary offers an overview of the system and pulls together information on waiting times in A&E, 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:**

“Frontline teams across the NHS have again shown how their hard work keeps waiting times down for patients. Despite the very significant pressure the NHS continues to deliver a good service with 94.8 per cent of those attending A&E treated, admitted or discharged within four hours - just below the 95% target and nearly a percentage point better than the figures this time last year.

“We must not be complacent but I'm pleased and proud of how staff are responding. We are now starting to see the additional £400 million investment to support local services pay off. We will continue to add capacity over the winter months to ensure local health and care systems continue to provide the good service patients have come to expect.

“Although emergency admissions remain very high, they have dropped slightly this week rather than continuing to rise, which is encouraging. The number of cancelled operations remains stable and as expected. Ambulance handover delays are down by 30 per cent compared to the same week last year when the weather was worse.

“However, we know delayed transfers continue to run higher than the equivalent period last winter. Although some of this increase can be attributed to data quality last year, it remains a concern. We have asked local health leaders to redouble their efforts on this issue so as to spot issues early and take action.

“The number of calls to NHS 111 that are answered within 60 seconds have again this week dipped below 95 per cent, although satisfaction with the service remains high with 89 per cent of callers satisfied or very satisfied with the service they received. We continue to watch the situation closely to ensure NHS 111 continues to provide a good service.

“With just a few days left before Christmas, for those who take regular medication, I would remind people to make sure they have enough to last the throughout the holidays. However if you go to visit family or friends and do forget to take you medicine with you, call your doctor who can arrange for an emergency prescription or visit your local pharmacist who will be able to help.

“If you are feeling unwell over Christmas, please don't wait until the New Year to get help or advice. The local pharmacy and NHS 111 both offer expert advice and if your symptoms don't go away, visit your GP or A&E if it's an emergency.”

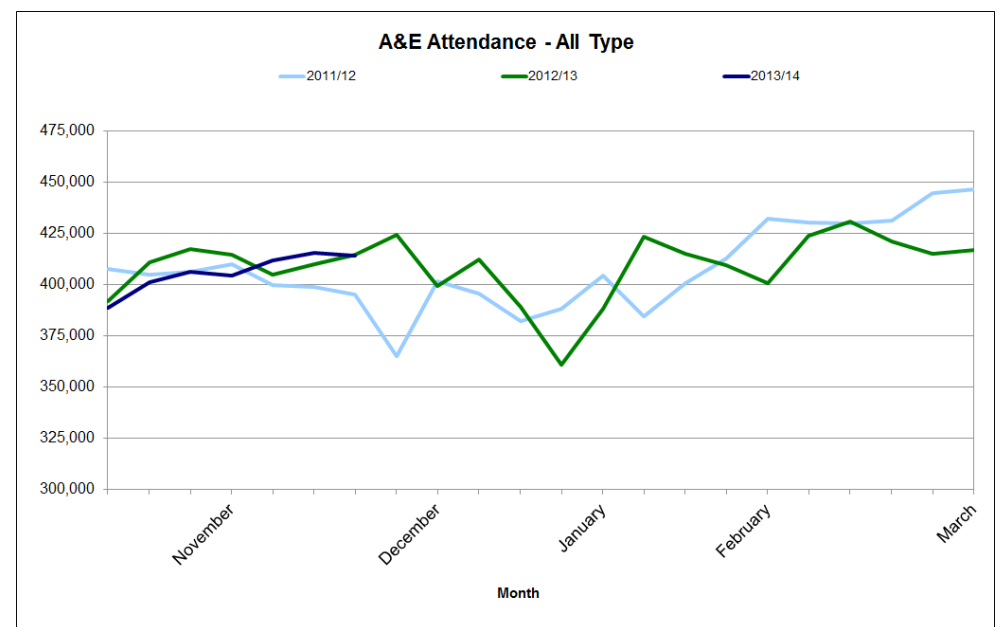
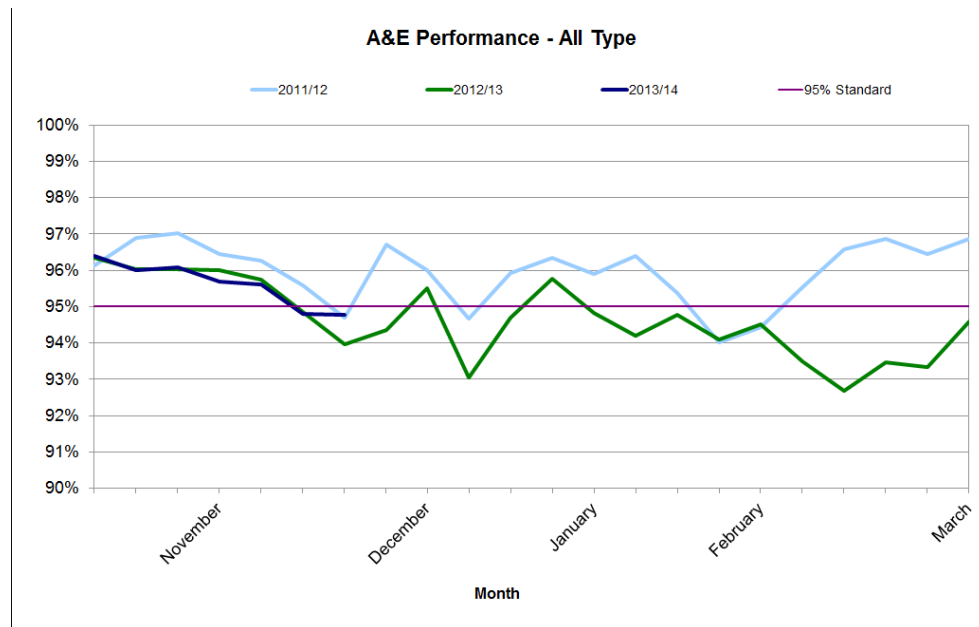
## Weekly A&E standard

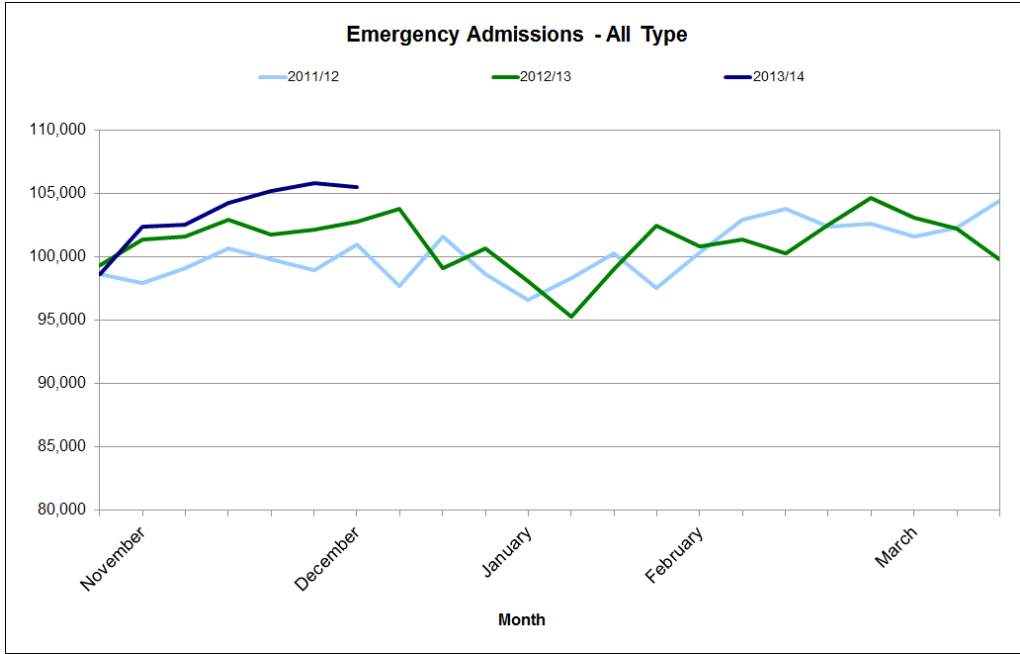
### Summary

The percentage of patients spending under 4 hours in A&E stands at 94.8% this week, unchanged from 94.8% last week, but higher than the same week in 2012. Performance is generally following the same pattern seen last year, as shown in the graph below. Attendances at A&E and emergency admissions are at around the same levels as last week, with emergency admissions remaining at higher levels than seen in previous years. It should be noted that the figures exclude Southend University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, who did not submit a return this week

Indicator	w/e 15 Dec 2013	w/e 8 Dec 2013	w/e 16 Dec 2012
Total A&E attendance	414,123	415,375	414,700
A&E 4 hour standard	94.8%	94.8%	94.0%
Emergency admissions	105,460	105,772	102,779
Number of 12 hour trolley waits	2	5	4
Number of 4 hour waits for admission	3,963	3,683	4,209

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.

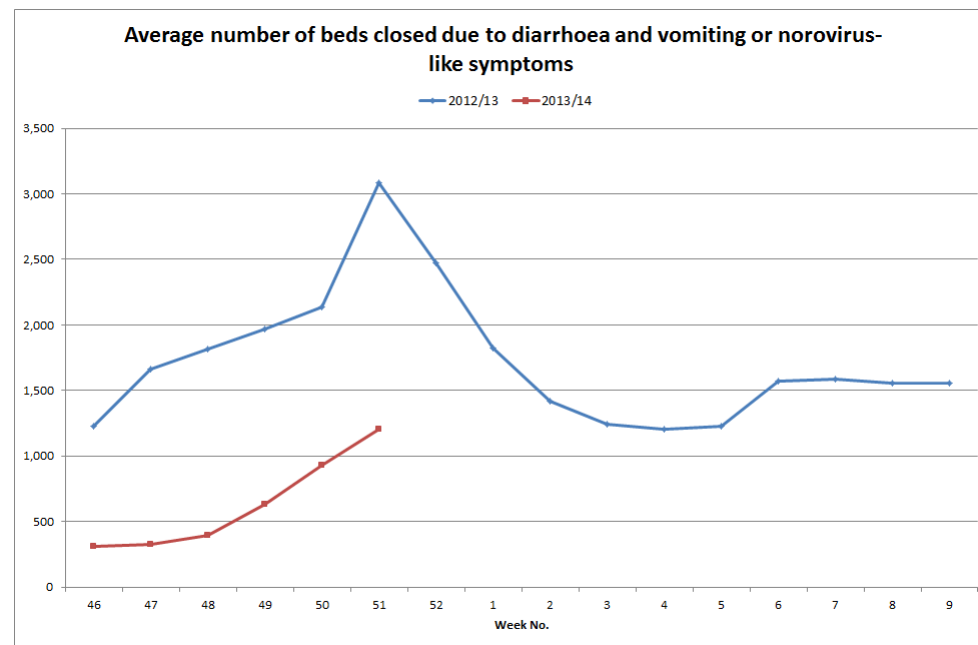
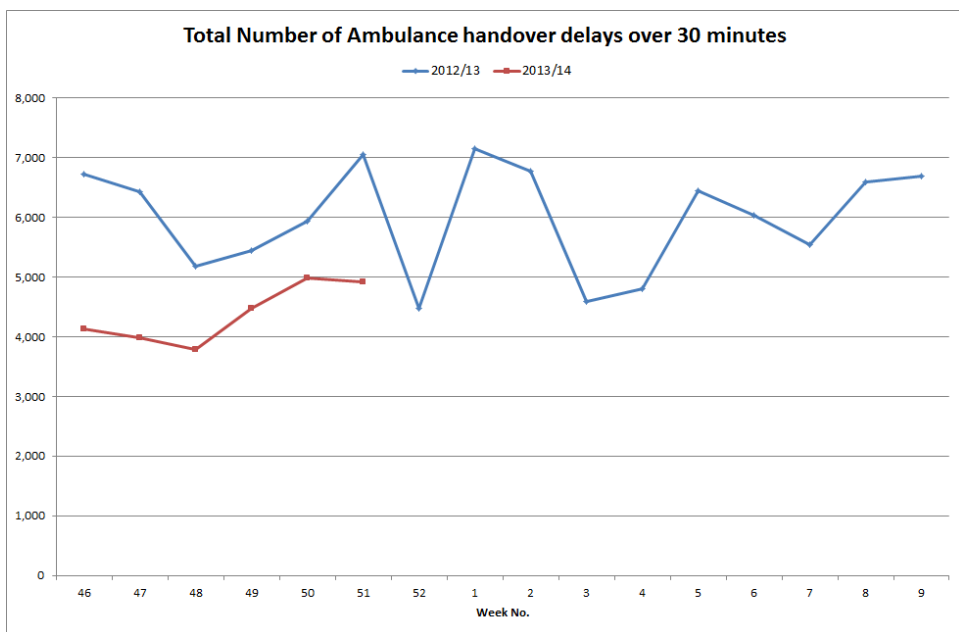
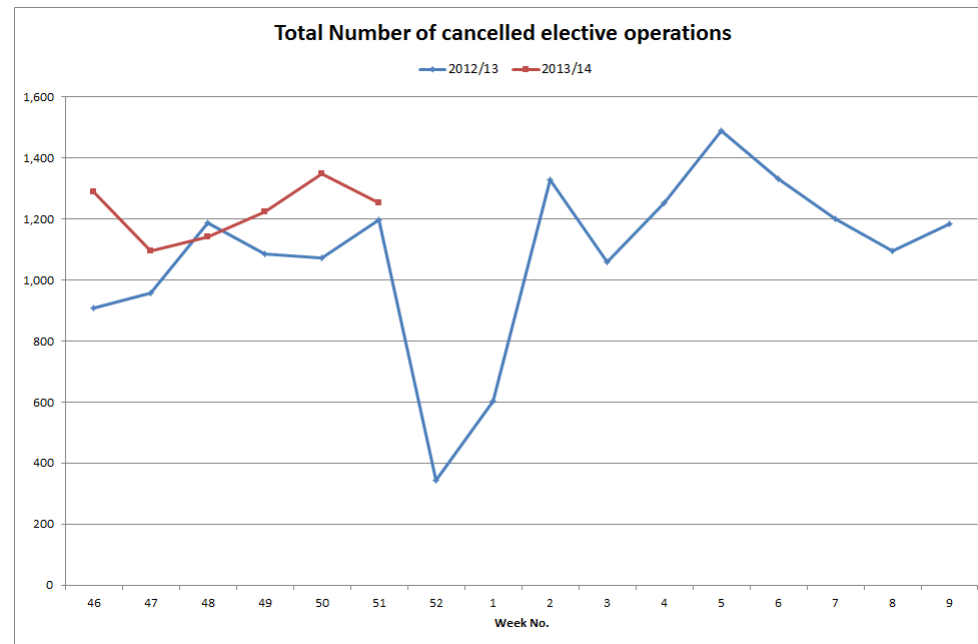
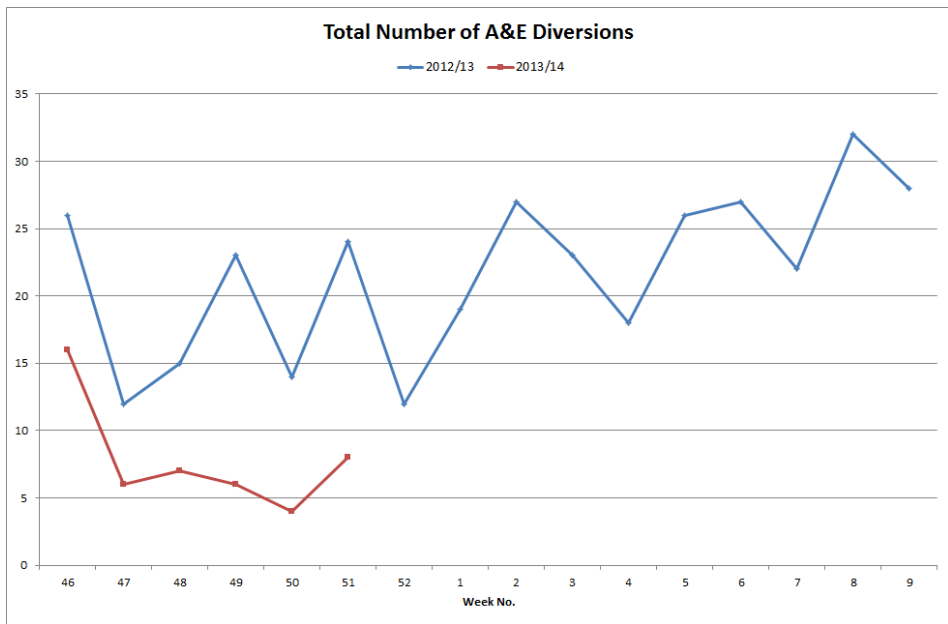
The NHS never shuts but it does sometimes have to alter the way it delivers services. Hospitals sometimes close their accident and emergency departments for short periods of time to walk-in patients and but remain open to those people who need its services. This can happen for many different reasons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

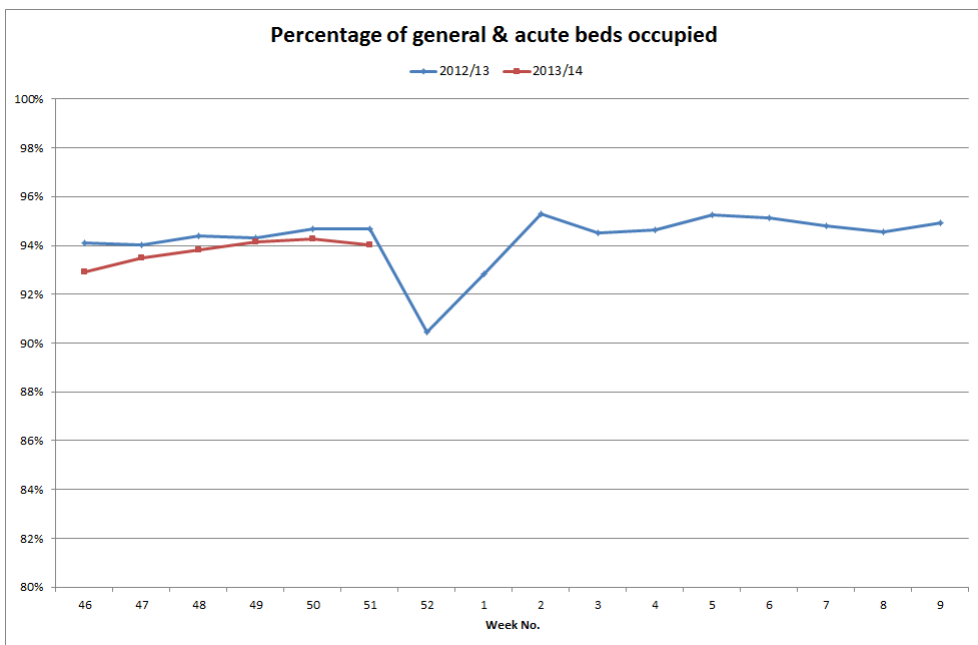
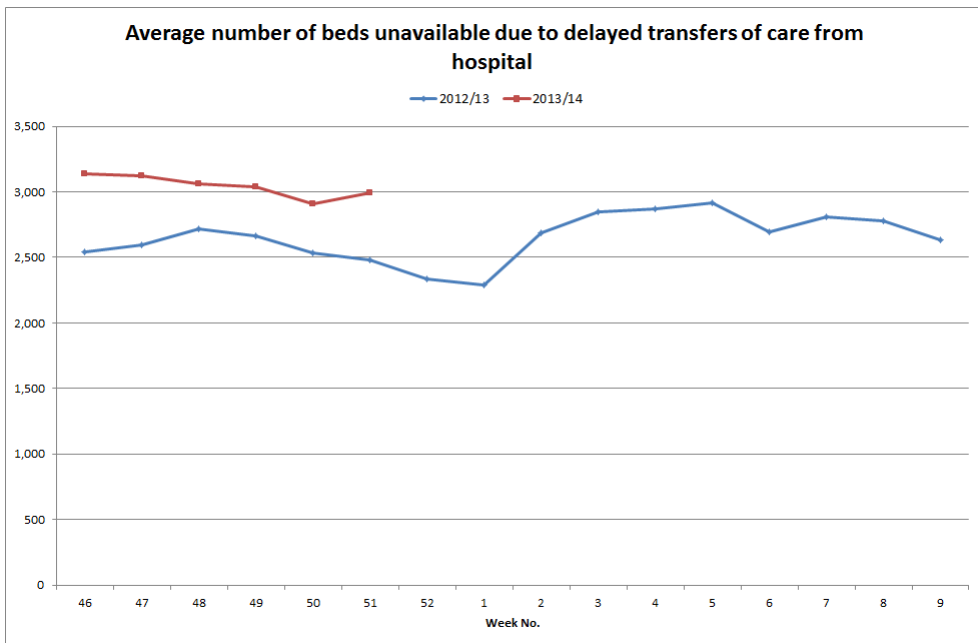
### Summary

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

Indicator	Measure	Week 51, 2013 (w/e 8am 19 Dec)	Week 51, 2012 (w/e 8am 20 Dec)	Cumulative since week 45 (4 Nov)
A&E diverts	Total number of diversions during the week	8	24	56
Ambulance handover delays of over 30 minutes	Total number of delays during the week	4,913	7,050	28,067
Cancelled operations	Number of elective operations cancelled at last minute during the week	1,253	1,196	8,089
Number of beds closed due to diarrhoea and vomiting or norovirus-like symptoms	Average number of beds closed per day	1,202	3,081	
Number of beds unavailable due to delayed transfers of care from hospital	Average number of beds unavailable per day	2,994	2,483 <sup>1</sup>	
General and acute beds occupancy rate	Percentage of beds occupied	94.0%	94.7%	
A full breakdown of the data can be found at <a href="#">here</a>				

<sup>1</sup> 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 211,560 calls to NHS 111. The number of callers satisfied with the service remains high at 89 per cent.

Indicator	Week Ending: 18/12/2013	Cumulative since 4 Nov
Per cent of calls answered in 60 seconds	94.24%	95.58%
Per cent of calls abandoned	0.95%	0.85%
Per cent of answered calls transferred to clinical advisor	21.65%	22.31%
Per cent of calls triaged	85.14%	84.82%
Per cent of calls offered a call back	7.45%	7.17%
Per cent of calls offered a call back where call back was within 10 minutes	54.60%	53.43%
Per cent of calls triaged where an ambulance was called	11.18%	11.20%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to A&E	6.72%	7.09%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to primary care	63.00%	62.72%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to another service	4.45%	4.62%
Per cent of calls triaged not recommended to another service	14.67%	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.