

NHS England's winter health check

The latest position on A&E, winter pressures and influenza for the week ending 10 January 2014 by NHS England

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

Dr Barbara Hakin, Deputy Chief Executive for NHS England, said:

"Despite the traditional pressures on health service in the weeks after Christmas, the NHS continues to deliver for patients. We have seen 94.3 per cent of those attending A&E treated, admitted or discharged within four hours during the week ending 5 January.

"We are really pleased that the A&E target, measured quarterly, has been met for quarter three.

"The first few weeks of the calendar year are generally the toughest for the NHS, but this week's figures, the first week in quarter 4, are over a percentage point better than the same week last year. This is hugely encouraging for patients and follows an excellent performance over the Christmas holiday period.

"All this suggests that the NHS has prepared well and pulled out all the stops on behalf of the public. I want to thank the frontline teams from across the NHS who made this happen - they should be given the credit they deserve.

I am particularly pleased the service has retained such good standards despite the rise in emergency admissions. There were 2,674 more emergency admissions than the same week last year.

The figures show that attendance to A&E appears to be reducing, and of course NHS 111 is now delivering a rapid and responsive across most of the country.

"This week 17 patients waited 12 hours from the time decision to admit them to there being a bed available for them at the Princess Royal University Hospital. This is disappointing but should not be taken out of context. The management of this hospital has been recently taken over by King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust who are putting in place a range of measures to improve the A&E service and reduce waiting times for patients.

"Encouragingly, the number of A&E diverts and ambulance handover delays were down significantly compared to the same period last year. The number of cancelled operations were also down. The number of beds closed due to diarrhoea and vomiting or norovirus-like symptoms remain stable.

"However, the number of delayed transfers of care were up by 278 on the same week last year. We have asked local health leaders to redouble their efforts on this issue so as to spot issues early and take action.

"For the first time this winter, there have been two reported closures however, these were services that receive patients with minor injuries only. In this instance, Wye Valley NHS Trust took an operational decision to redeploy nursing staff from two minor injury units to support their major Emergency Department on a temporary basis.

“Taking a rounded view, the NHS is in a strong position to continue to deliver for patients but we know that the next few weeks will be tough.

"With the temperatures forecast to colder next week, I would remind people that if they are feeling unwell, please do get early help or advice.

"For those with respiratory problems or the frail elderly, colder weather can lead to more serious problems. I would like to remind the public that the local pharmacy and NHS 111 both offer expert advice and if your symptoms don't go away, please visit your GP or A&E if it's an emergency."

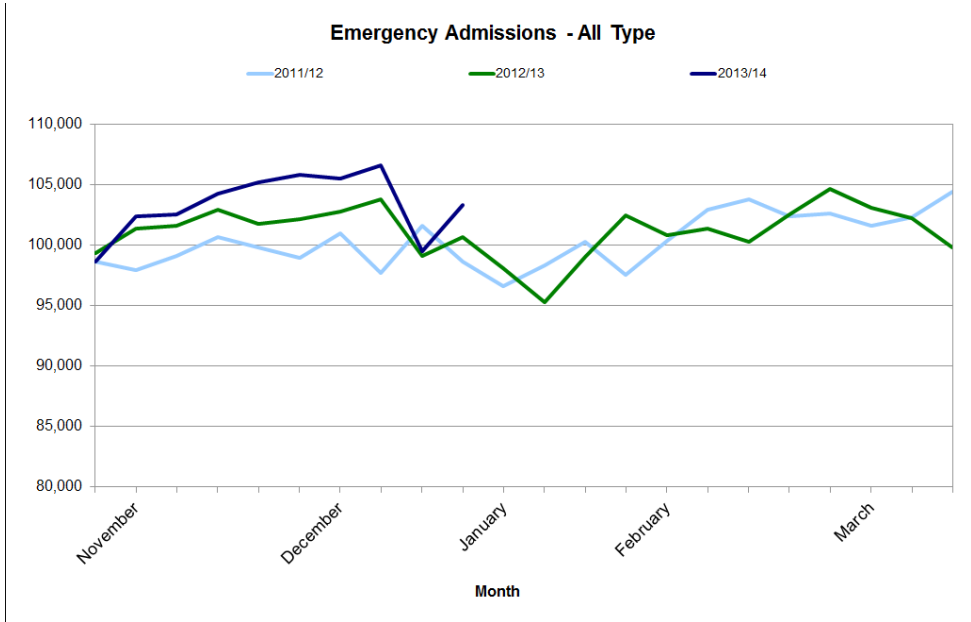
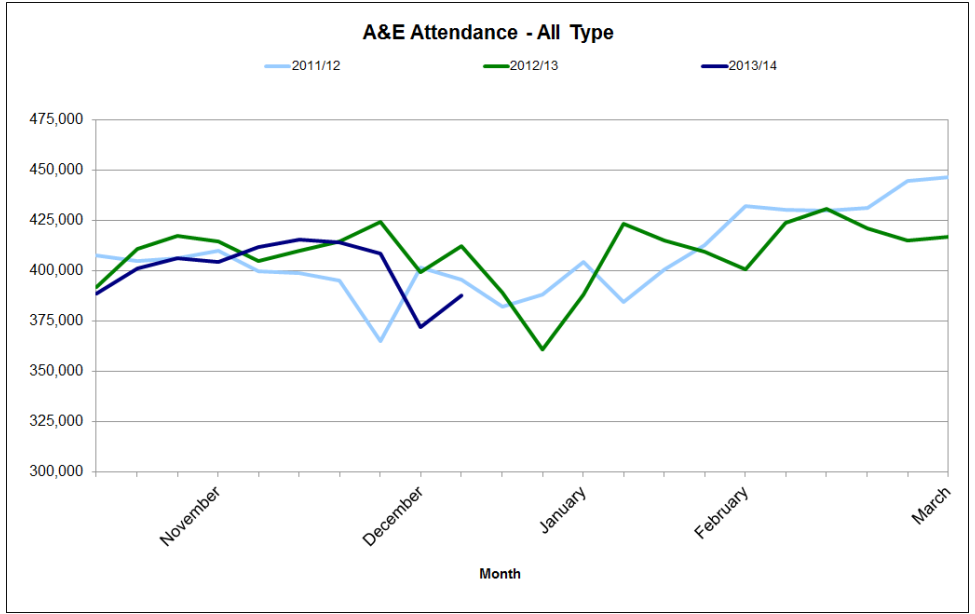
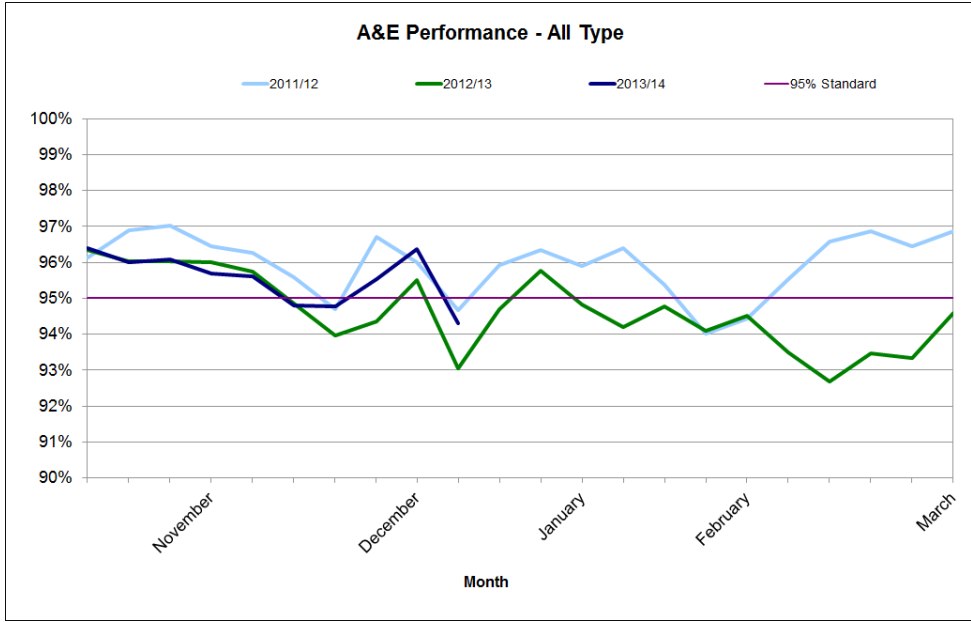
Weekly A&E standard

Summary

The percentage of patients spending under 4 hours in A&E stands at 94.3% this week, down from 96.4% last week, but higher than the same week in 2013. This reflects the usual pattern of performance during and after the Christmas period (as shown in the graph below). Attendances at A&E remain low this week compared to the same period last year, but emergency admissions are relatively high, leading to pressure on A&E departments which can be seen in the higher number of longer waits for admission.

Indicator	w/e 5 Jan 2014	w/e 29 Dec 2013	w/e 6 Jan 2013
Total A&E attendance	387,468	372,139	412,216
A&E 4 hour standard (from arrival to admission, transfer or discharge)	94.3%	96.4%	93.0%
Emergency admissions	103,313	99,514	100,639
Number of 12 hour waits for admission	23	2	12
Number of 4 hour waits for admission	5,127	2,077	5,872

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



Situation reports (SITREPs)

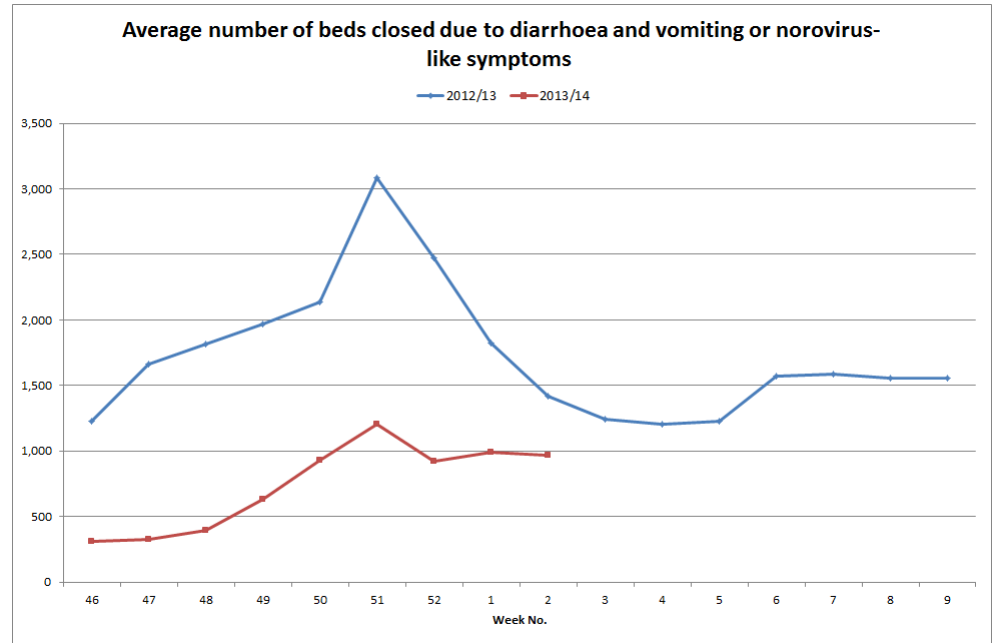
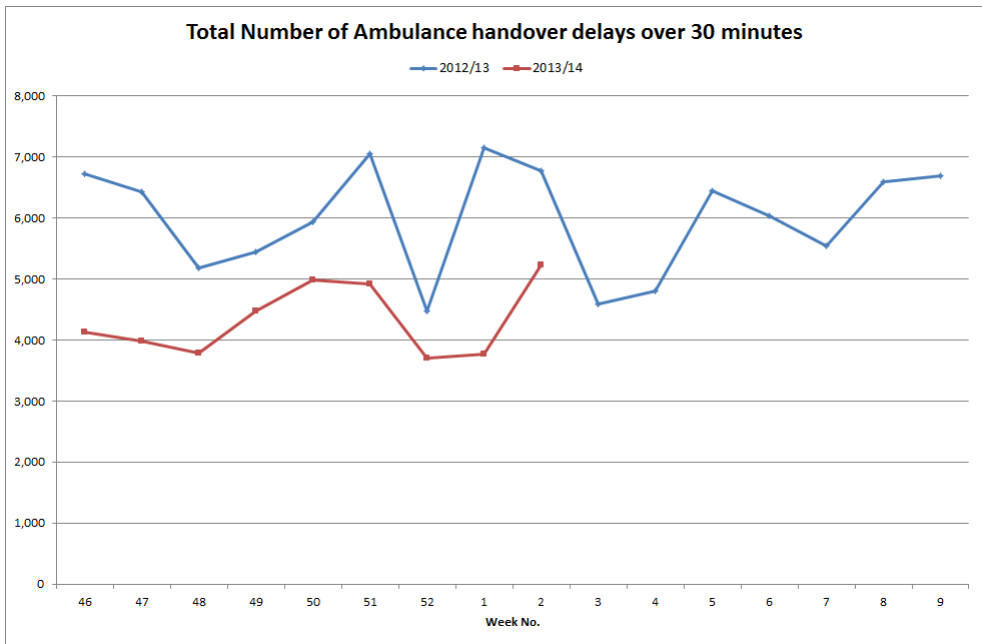
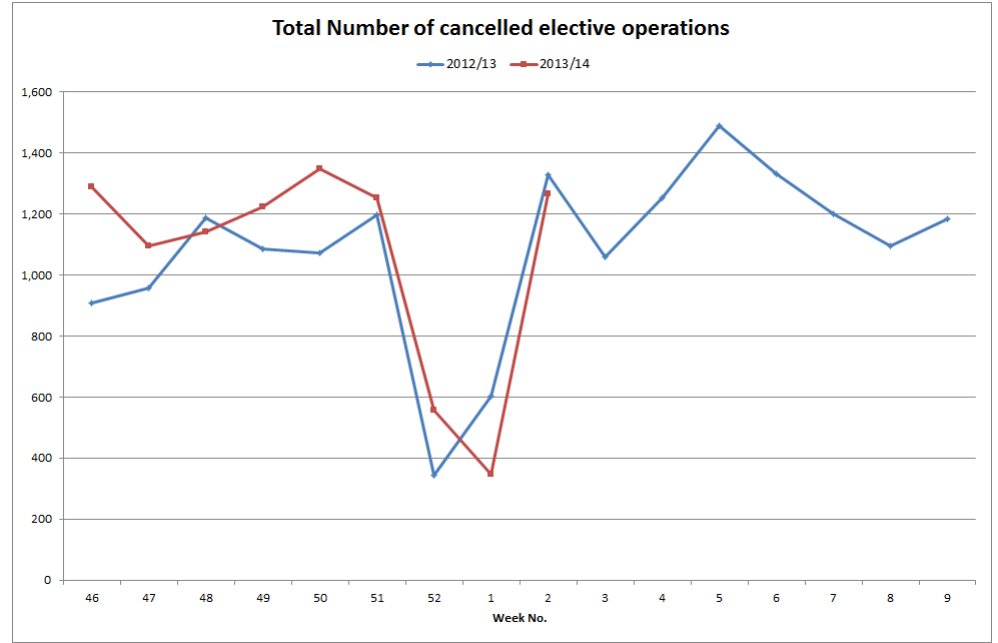
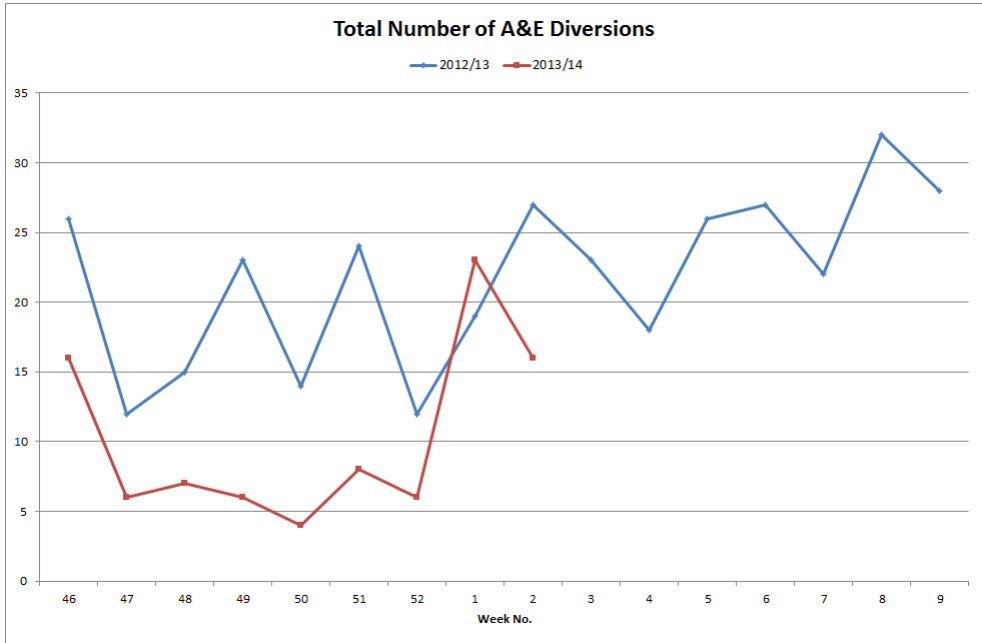
Daily situation reports, or SITREPs, are collected from all hospitals during winter and indicate where there are any winter pressure on the service, such as A&E closures, cancelled operations, bed pressures or ambulance delays. Collection for this year started on 4 November and the reporting requirement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

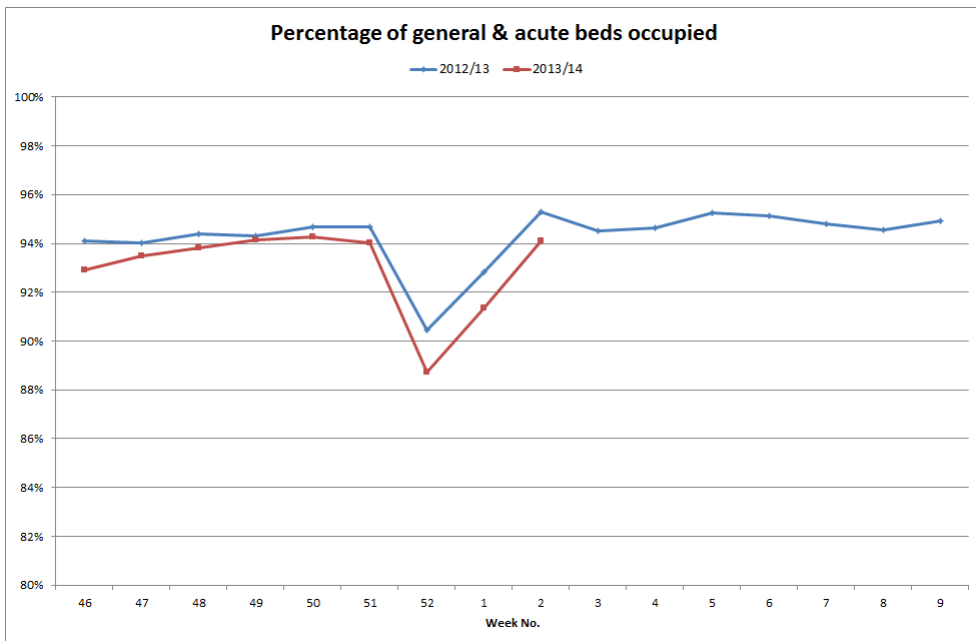
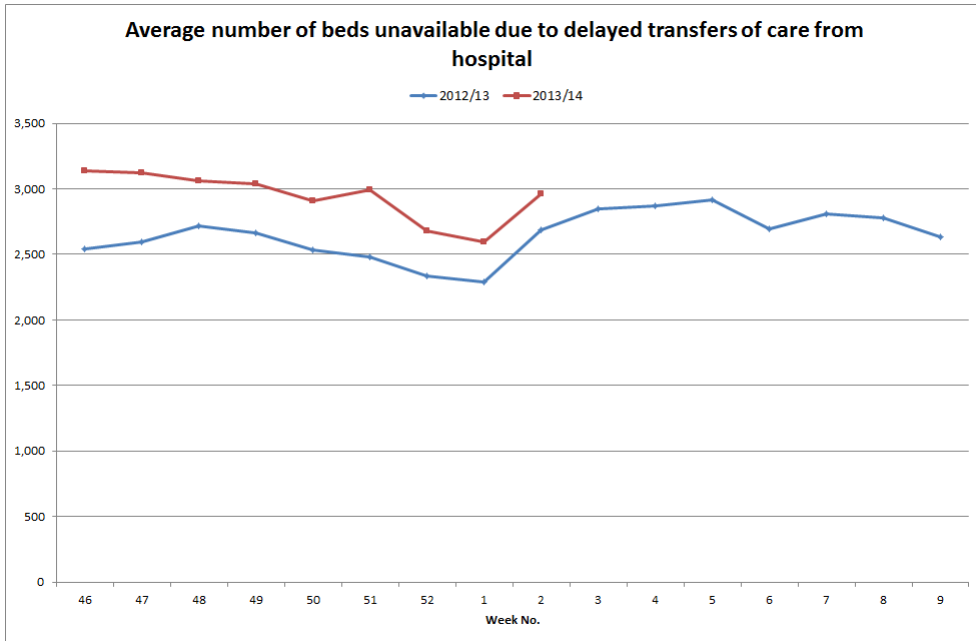
The NHS never shuts but it does sometimes have to alter the way it delivers services. Hospitals sometimes close their accident and emergency departments for short periods of time to walk-in patients and but remain open to those people who need its services. This can happen for many different reasons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

The figures for last week suggest that winter pressures remain broadly comparable with the same period last year and that there are no major problems, although the last two weeks have seen a larger number of A&E diverts. As expected after Christmas, there has been an increase in ambulance handover delays and cancelled operations, but these are at lower levels than last winter. The number of beds closed due to Norovirus like symptoms remains stable at just under 1,000 beds, and beds unavailable due to delayed transfers remain higher than last year, and have seen the usual post Christmas increase.

Indicator	Measure	Week 2, 2014 (w/e 8am 9 Jan)	Week 2, 2013 (w/e 8am 10 Jan)	Cumulative since week 45 (4 Nov)
A&E diverts	Total number of diversions during the week	16	27	45
Ambulance handover delays of over 30 minutes	Total number of delays during the week	5,226	6,769	40,780
Cancelled operations	Number of elective operations cancelled at last minute during the week	1,267	1,329	10,260
Number of beds closed due to diarrhoea and vomiting or norovirus-like symptoms	Average number of beds closed per day	969	1,417	
Number of beds unavailable due to delayed transfers of care from hospital	Average number of beds unavailable per day	2,961	2,683	
General and acute beds occupancy rate	Percentage of beds occupied	94.1%	95.3%	
A full breakdown of the data can be found at here				





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 207,472 calls to NHS 111. The number of callers satisfied with the service remains high at 89 per cent.

Indicator	Week Ending: 8/1/2014	Cumulative since 4 Nov
Per cent of calls answered in 60 seconds	97.54%	95.53%
Per cent of calls abandoned	0.48%	0.85%
Per cent of answered calls transferred to clinical advisor	20.86%	21.91%
Per cent of calls triaged	80.26%	84.68%
Per cent of calls offered a call back	5.93%	7.02%
Per cent of calls offered a call back where call back was within 10 minutes	60.07%	55.56%
Per cent of calls triaged where an ambulance was called	11.30%	11.01%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to A&E	7.11%	6.79%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to primary care	63.25%	63.53%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to another service	4.26%	4.57%
Per cent of calls triaged not recommended to another service	14.11%	14.27%

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.