

NHS England's winter health check

The latest position on A&E, winter pressures and influenza for the week ending 17 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

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

“Broadly speaking, this week’s figures paint a stable and encouraging picture.

“Performance is so far holding up relatively well for this tough time of year, further building on the strong delivery over the Christmas holidays. Last week we saw 94.5% of those attending A&E transferred, admitted or discharged within four hours. This was slight improvement on last week, but still a little short of the 95% standard that we aim to meet on average over the quarter.

“These are always the toughest weeks of the year for the NHS but the pressures at the moment appear to be normal for January. That could of course change.

“It is encouraging to see that emergency admissions fell slightly last week, although they remain at historically high levels and this is our biggest concern. Beds unavailable due to delayed transfers remain higher than the equivalent period last year. There has been a rise after Christmas however we have seen signs of this pressure easing in the last few days, which is positive and we will need to keep focussing on this issue.

“It is also encouraging that ambulance turnaround times continue to be lower than last year. Numbers of cancelled operations are in line with what we would expect to see in January. A&E diverts increased slightly, while 12-hour waits are stable.

“Overall, the NHS is currently performing relatively well for the time of year but I stress that there is still a lot of winter to run. It also clear that lots of organisations are having to work extremely hard to stay ahead of the pressures.

“We must all stay focussed and get performance back up above the four-hour standard as soon as possible on behalf of patients. “

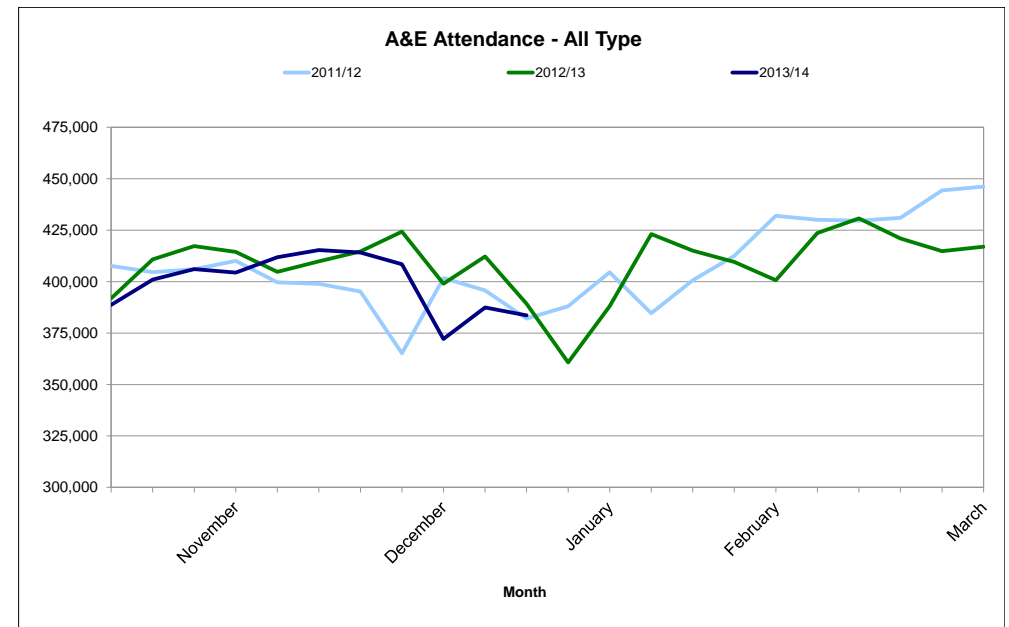
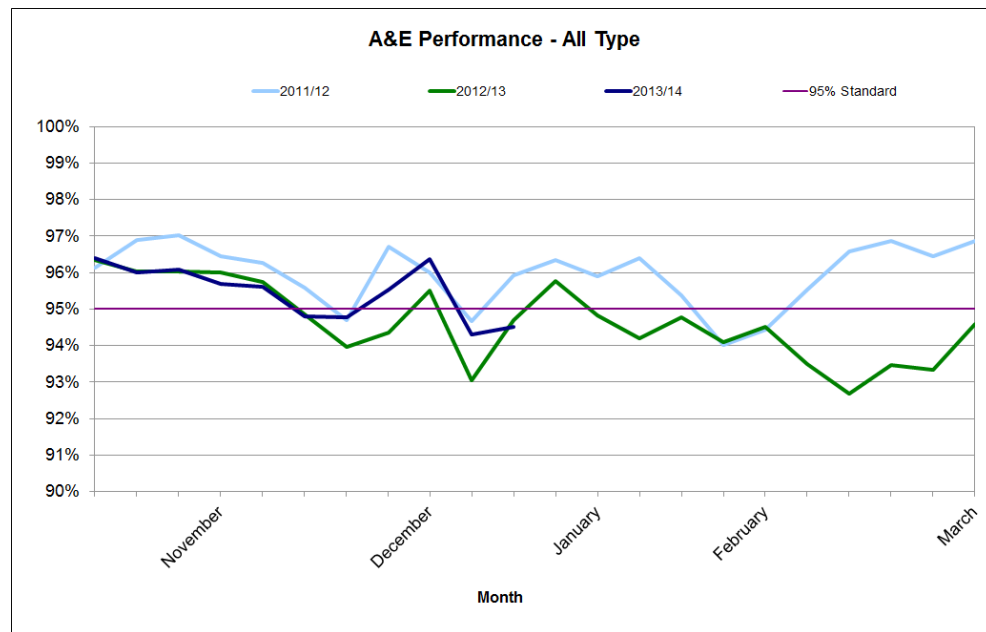
Weekly A&E standard

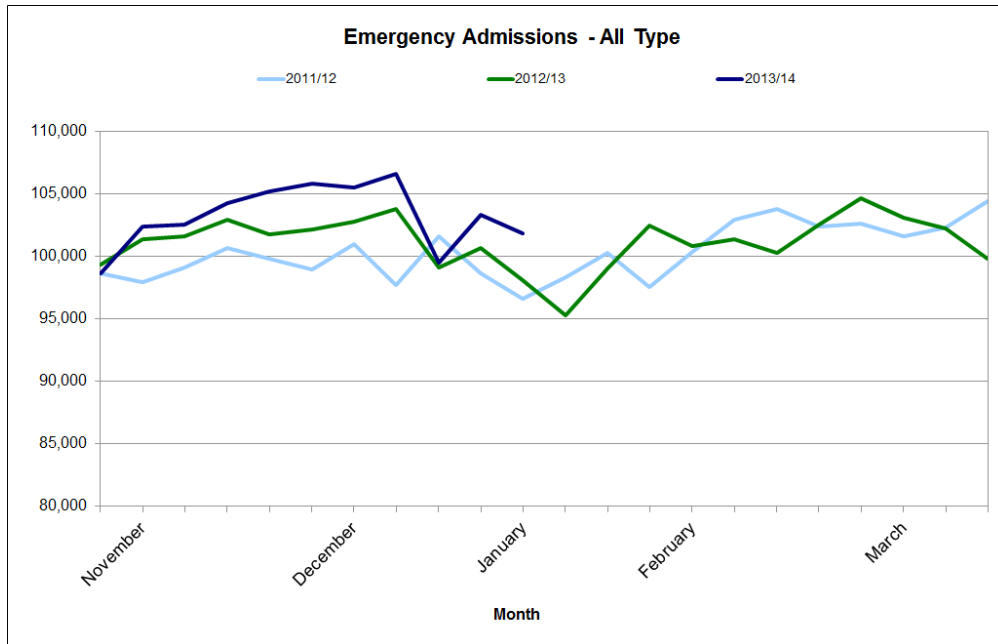
Summary

The percentage of patients spending under 4 hours in A&E stands at 94.5% this week, up slightly from last week, but down a little on the same week in 2013, and still below the 95% standard. Attendances at A&E remain lower than the weeks before Christmas, but this is in line with previous years. Emergency admissions are down on the previous week, but do remain at a higher level than previous years, leading to pressure on A&E departments which can be seen in the higher number of longer waits for admission.

Indicator	w/e 12 Jan 2014	w/e 5 Jan 2014	w/e 13 Jan 2013
Total A&E attendance	383,568	387,468	389,236
A&E 4 hour standard (from arrival to admission, transfer or discharge)	94.5%	94.3%	94.7%
Emergency admissions	101,812	103,313	98,092
Number of 12 hour waits for admission	21	23	13
Number of 4 hour waits for admission	5,226	5,128	4,584

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





Situation reports (SITREPs)

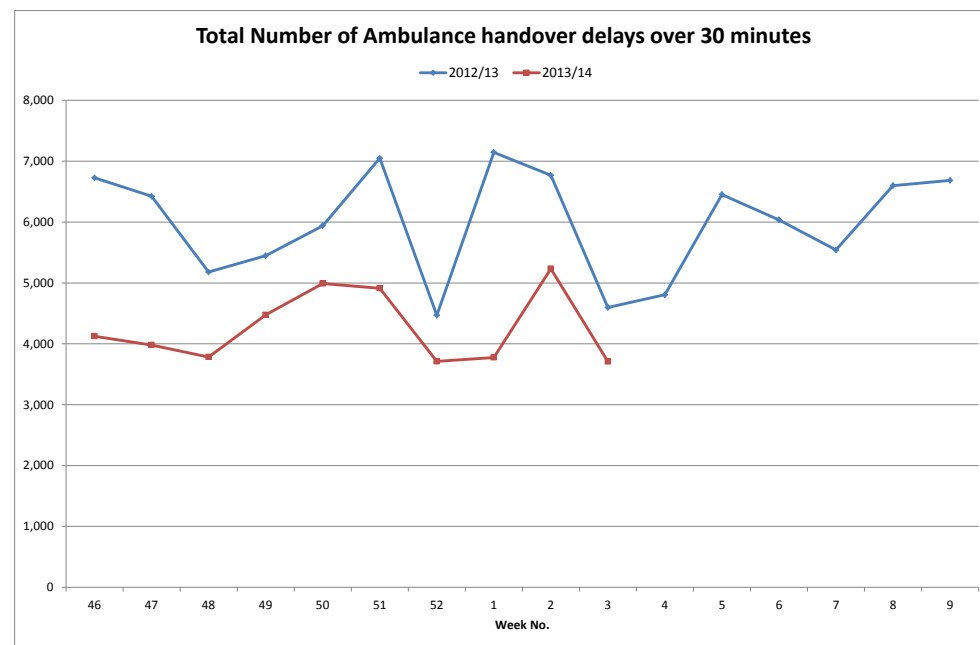
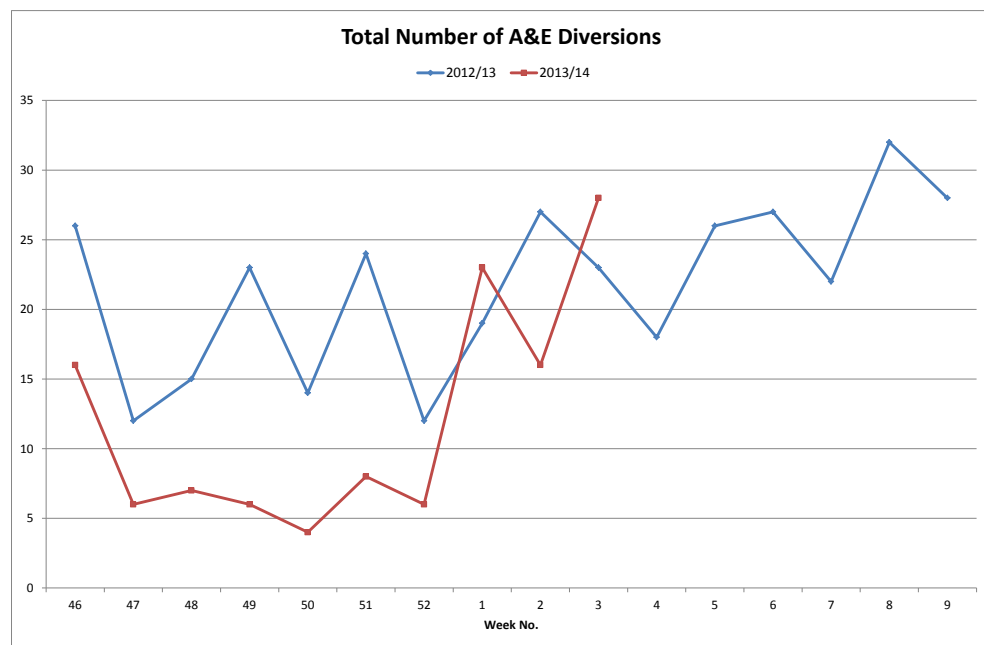
Daily situation reports, or SITREPs, are collected from all hospitals during winter and indicate where there are any winter pressure on the service, such as A&E closures, cancelled operations, bed pressures or ambulance delays. Collection for this year started on 4 November and the reporting requirement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

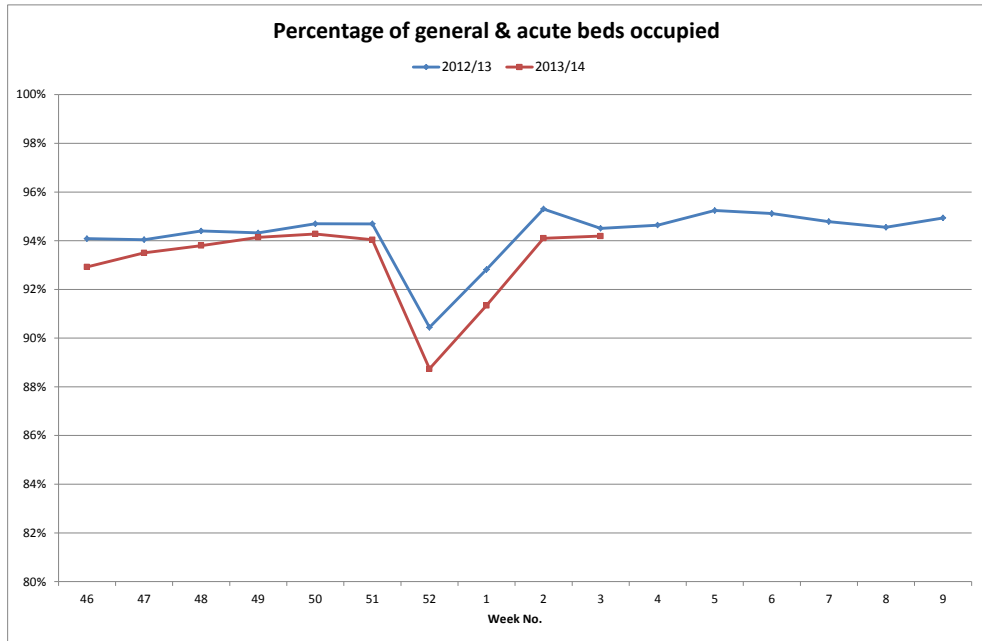
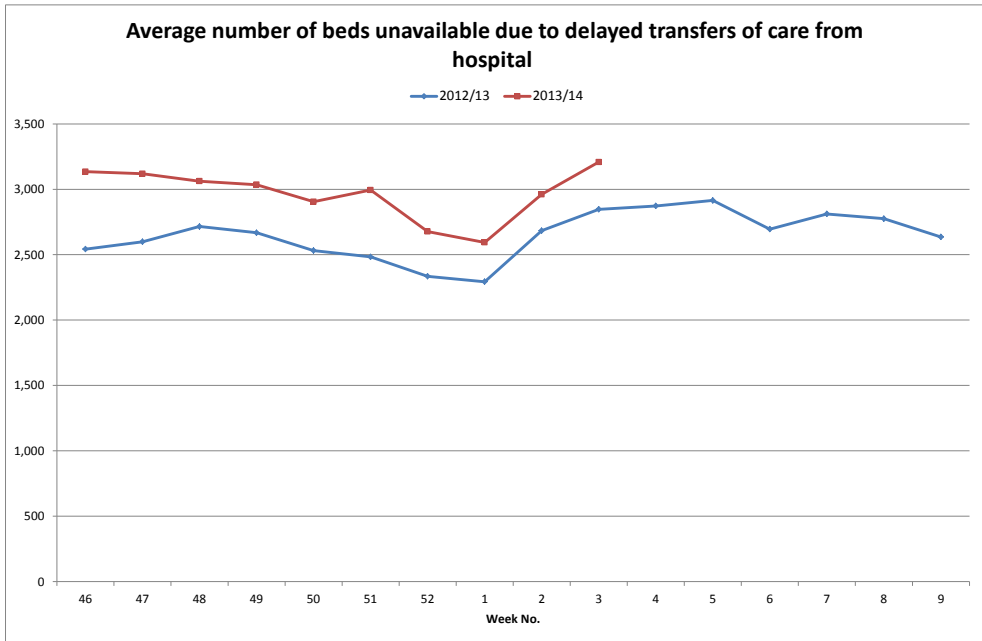
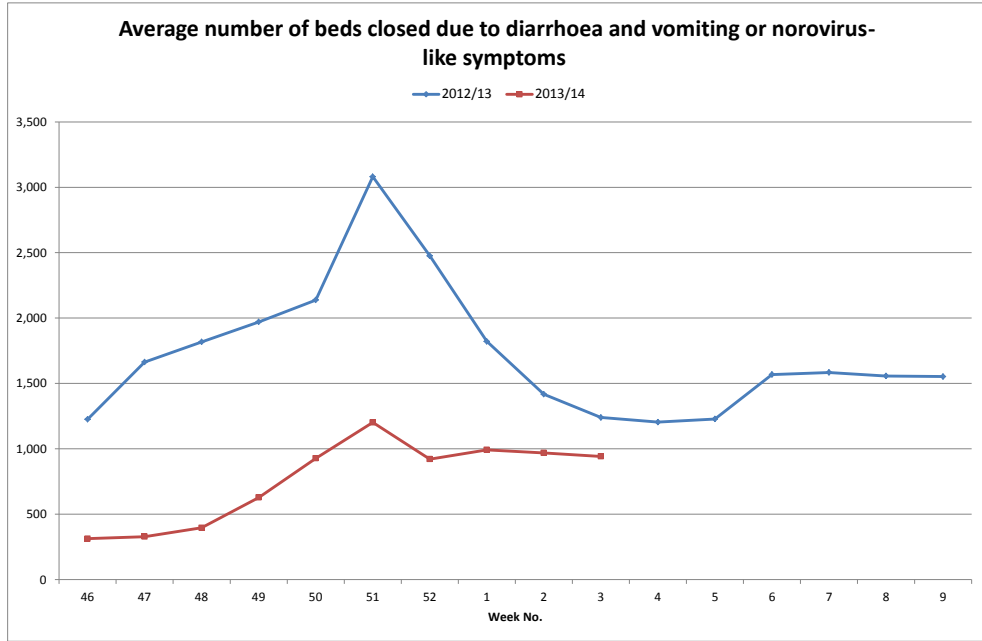
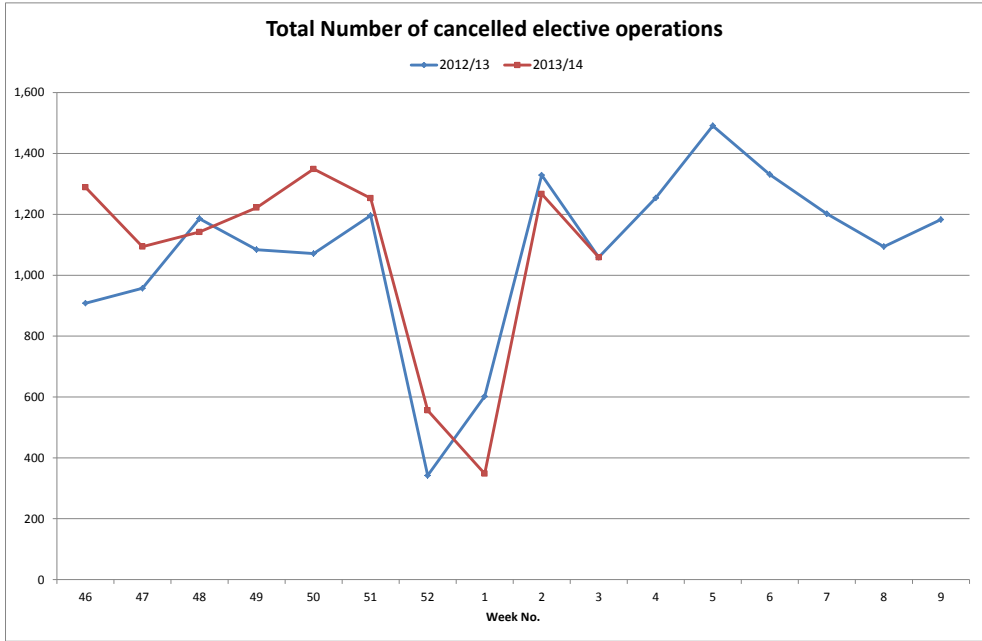
The NHS never shuts but it does sometimes have to alter the way it delivers services. Hospitals sometimes close their accident and emergency departments for short periods of time to walk-in patients and but remain open to those people who need its services. This can happen for many different reasons 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, although there was a small increase in A&E diverts. Cancelled operations continue to follow a similar pattern to 2013. The number of beds closed due to Norovirus like symptoms remains stable at just under 1,000 beds, but beds unavailable due to delayed transfers increased.

Indicator	Measure	Week 3, 2014 (w/e 8am 16 Jan)	Week 3, 2013 (w/e 8am 17 Jan)	Cumulative since week 45 (4 Nov)
A&E diverts	Total number of diversions during the week	28	23	129
Ambulance handover delays of over 30 minutes	Total number of delays during the week	3,709	4,579	44,497
Cancelled operations	Number of elective operations cancelled at last minute during the week	1,059	1,059	11,319
Number of beds closed due to diarrhoea and vomiting or norovirus-like symptoms	Average number of beds closed per day	942	1,240	
Number of beds unavailable due to delayed transfers of care from hospital	Average number of beds unavailable per day	3,208	2,847	
General and acute beds occupancy rate	Percentage of beds occupied	94.2%	94.5%	
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 186,691 calls to NHS 111, compared to the 207,472 calls received last week. The number of callers satisfied with the service remains high at 89 per cent.

Indicator	Week Ending: 15/01/2014	Cumulative since 4 Nov
Per cent of calls answered in 60 seconds	98.83%	95.82%
Per cent of calls abandoned	0.30%	0.80%
Per cent of answered calls transferred to clinical advisor	22.60%	21.97%
Per cent of calls triaged	86.30%	84.82%
Per cent of calls offered a call back	6.31%	6.96%
Per cent of calls offered a call back where call back was within 10 minutes	60.26%	55.93%
Per cent of calls triaged where an ambulance was called	11.22%	11.03%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to A&E	7.46%	6.85%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to primary care	62.43%	63.43%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to another service	4.41%	4.56%

Per cent of calls triaged not recommended to another service	14.52%	14.29%
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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.