

NHS England's winter health check

The latest position on A&E, winter pressures and influenza for the week ending 31 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:

"I am pleased to report patients going to A&E continue to get a good service. This week 96.1 per cent of those attending A&E were transferred, admitted or discharged within four hours during the week ending 26 January.

"This is a fantastic achievement. January is one of the toughest months for the NHS. But, despite higher attendances and a continued rise in emergency admissions, staff continue to deliver and deserve a great deal of credit for the way they have delivered for patients.

"I am encouraged to see this week ambulance handover delays are down by 2,949 when compared to the same week last year, and the number of cancelled operations is also down. The numbers of delayed discharges of care remain stable but we need local healthcare leaders to maintain the pressure on this issue to avoid it becoming a problem. We are also monitoring the situation with great care to make sure the NHS move quickly if it needs to.

"NHS 111 continues to provide a good service for those needing help or advice with 97.31 per cent of the 198,527 calls received this week answered within 60 seconds. Those with respiratory problems and the frail elderly are particularly vulnerable over the colder months, and I would urge anyone who is feeling unwell to seek early help or advice by calling 111 or visiting their local pharmacy. Both offer expert advice but if your symptoms don't go away, please visit your GP or A&E if it's an emergency, before more serious problems develop.

"The NHS is in a strong position to continue to deliver for patients and we are monitoring the situation closely."

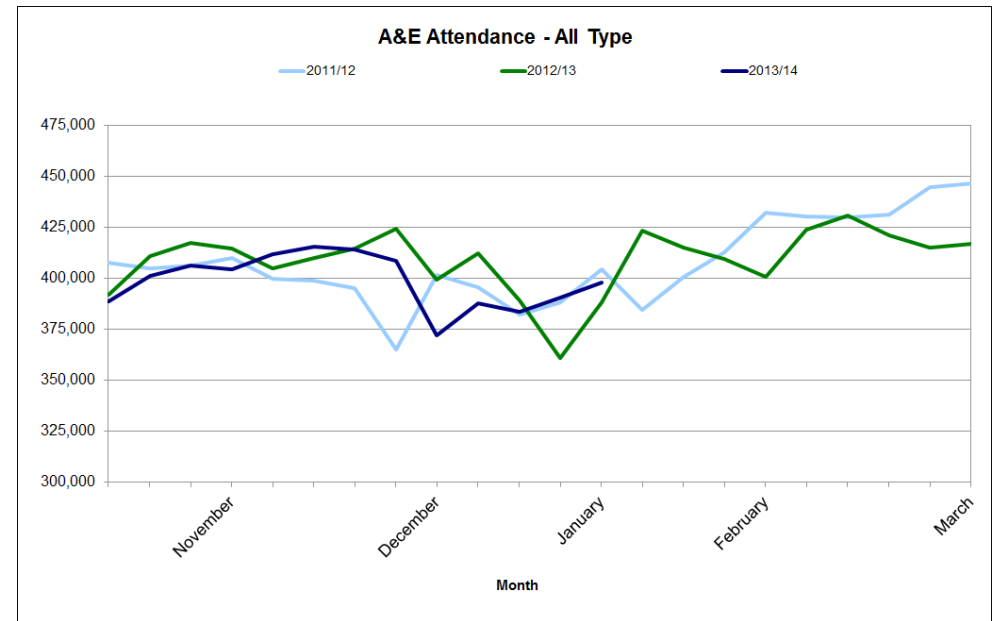
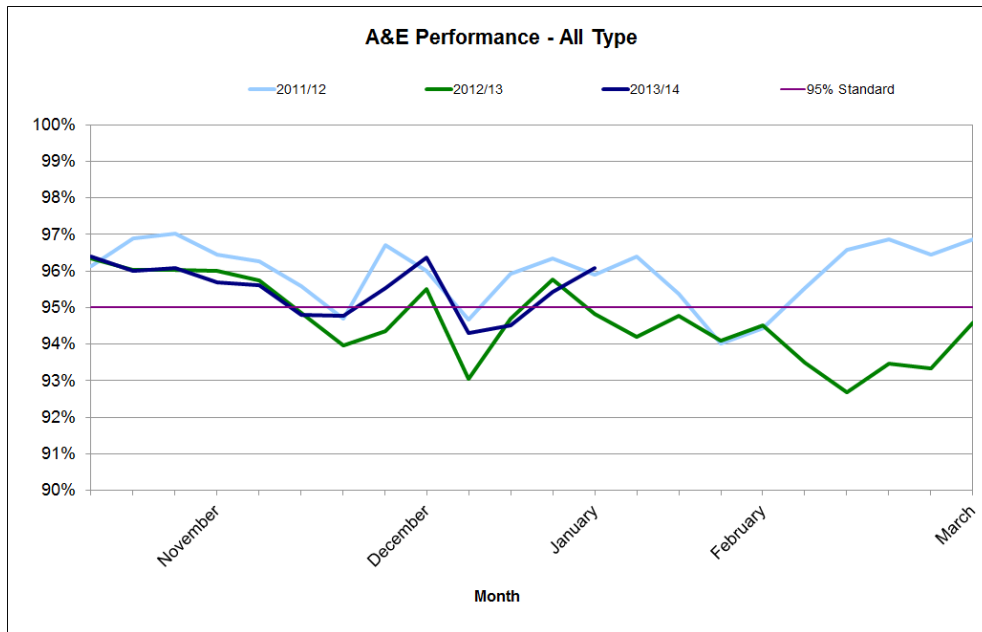
Weekly A&E standard

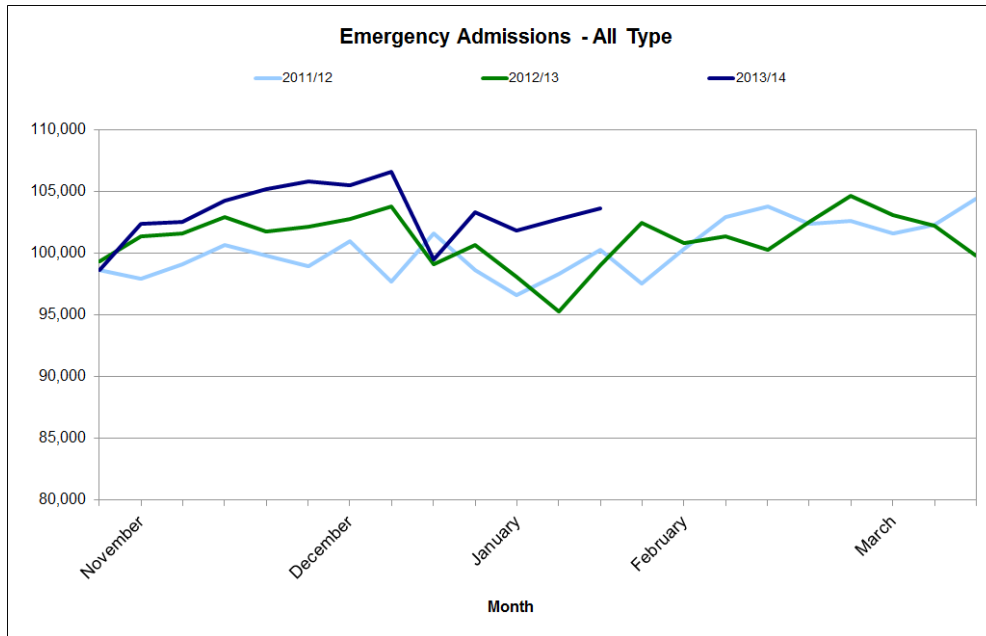
Summary

The percentage of patients spending under 4 hours in A&E last week was 96.1%, a significant improvement on recent weeks and the same period last year. Attendances at A&E, although higher than last week, remain at the levels expected during winter, but emergency admissions remain at a higher level than previous years. However, the number of four hour waits for admission reduced again last week, indicating that pressure on departments has eased since the start of the month.

Indicator	w/e 26 Jan 2014	w/e 19 Jan 2014	w/e 27 Jan 2013
Total A&E attendance	397,759	390,355	388,036
A&E 4 hour standard (from arrival to admission, transfer or discharge)	96.1%	95.4%	94.8%
Emergency admissions	103,638	103,071	99,038
Number of 12 hour waits for admission	0	2	6
Number of 4 hour waits for admission	3,202	4,068	4,240

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





Situation reports (SITREPs)

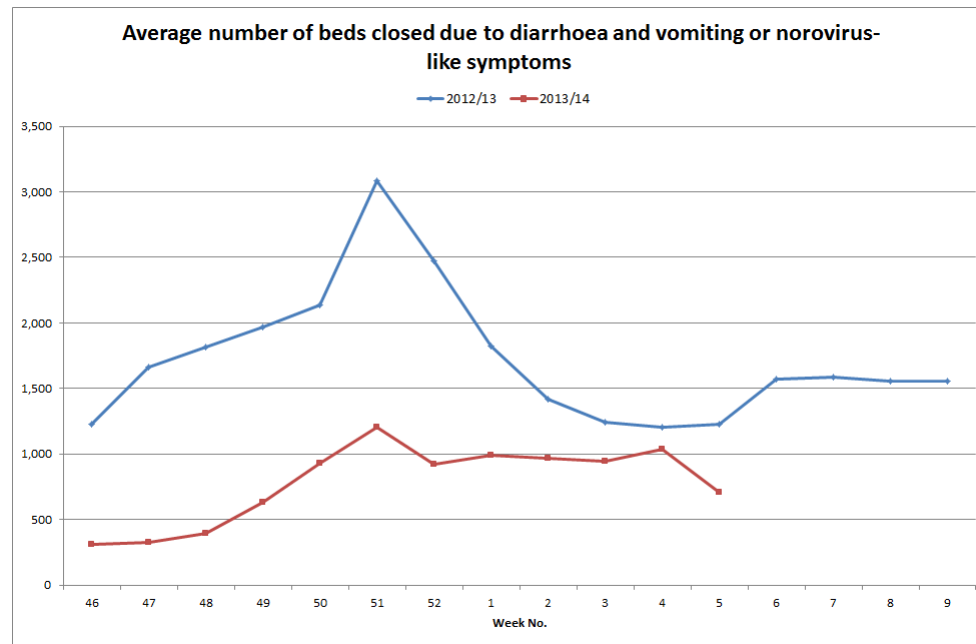
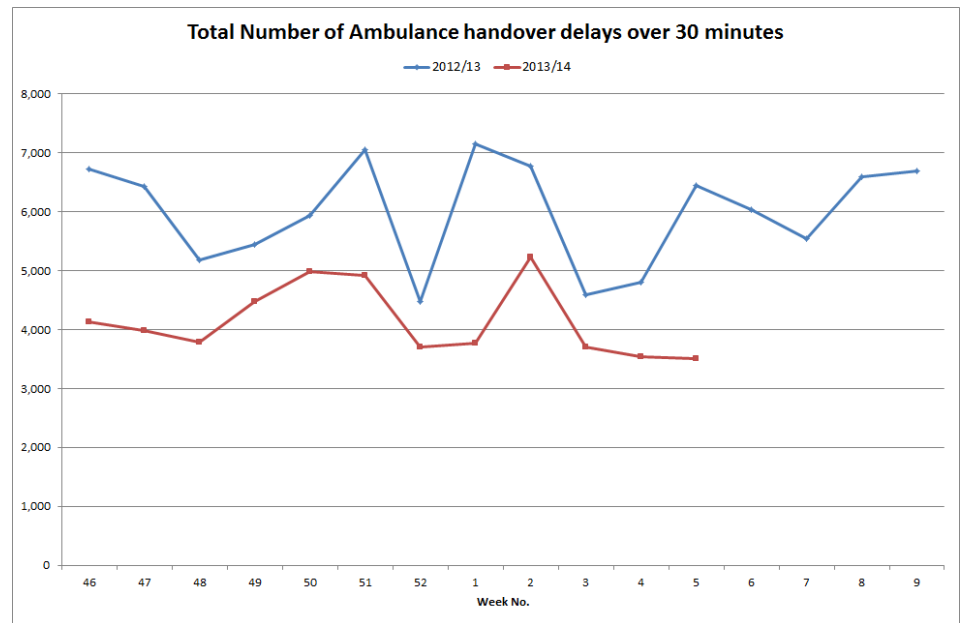
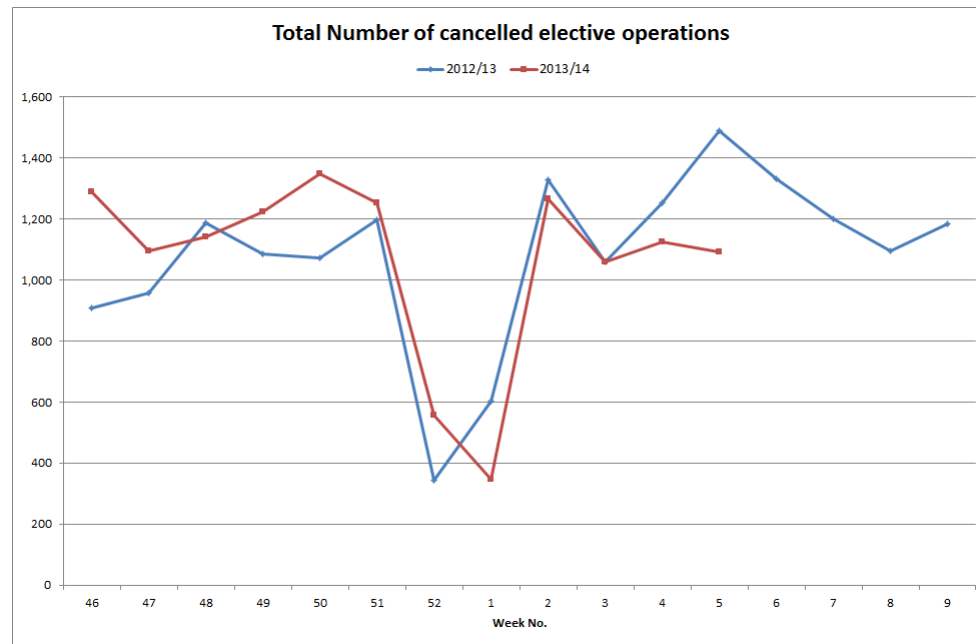
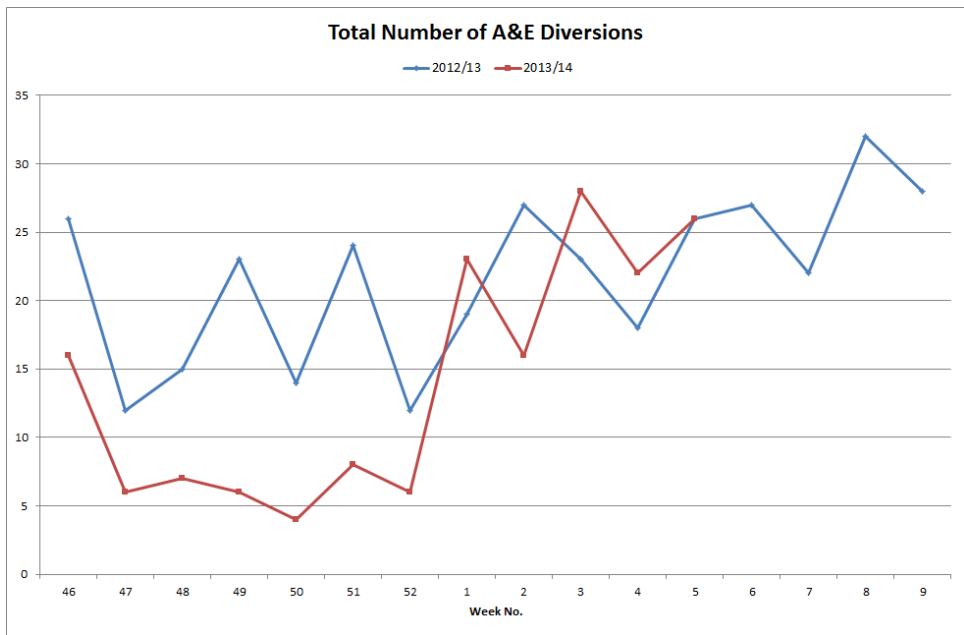
Daily situation reports, or SITREPs, are collected from all hospitals during winter and indicate where there are any winter pressure on the service, such as A&E closures, cancelled operations, bed pressures or ambulance delays. Collection for this year started on 4 November and the reporting requirement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

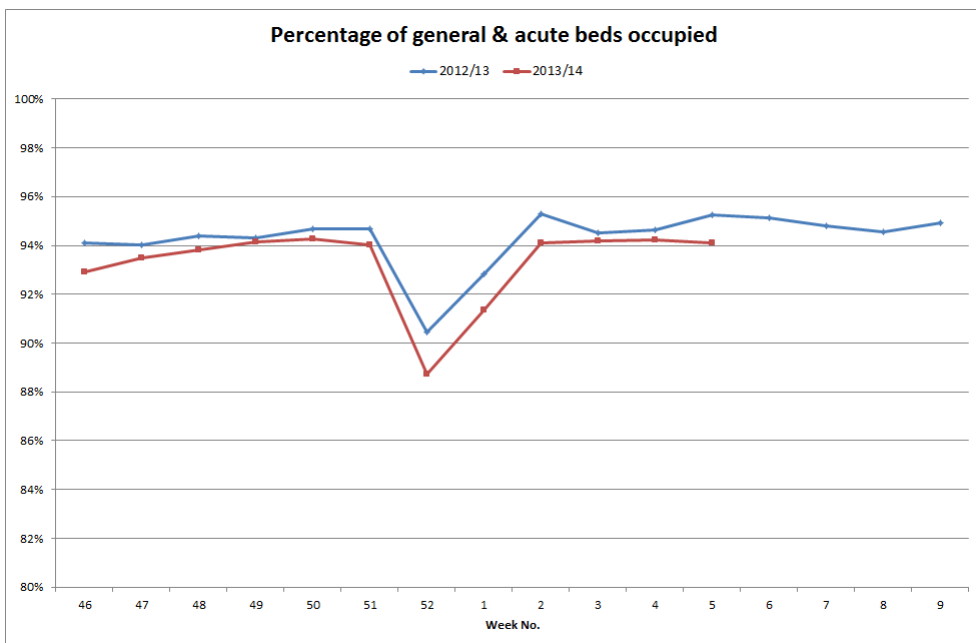
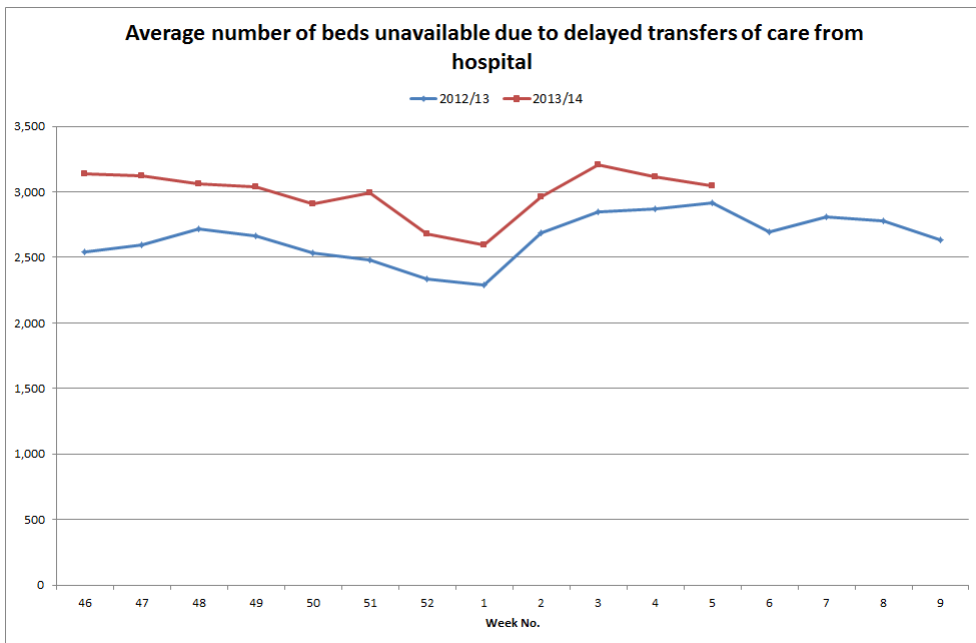
The NHS never shuts but it does sometimes have to alter the way it delivers services. Hospitals sometimes close their accident and emergency departments for short periods of time to walk-in patients but remain open to those people who need its services. This can happen for many different reasons which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

Daily situation reports for this year continue to generally follow a similar pattern to last winter, but with an improvement on most indicators seen this week, possibly reflective of the milder weather experienced. The number of delayed ambulance handovers has fallen again in the last week and remains at a significantly lower level than last year, and cancelled operations have shown a fall on both last week and last year. The number of beds closed due to Norovirus like symptoms has also reduced this week, as has beds unavailable due to delayed transfers, although these remain at higher levels than last winter.

Indicator	Measure	Week 4, 2014 (w/e 8am 30 Jan)	Week 4, 2013 (w/e 8am 31 Jan)	Cumulative since week 45 (4 Nov)
A&E diverts	Total number of diversions during the week	26	26	177
Ambulance handover delays of over 30 minutes	Total number of delays during the week	3,503	6,452	51,548
Cancelled operations	Number of elective operations cancelled at last minute during the week	1,091	1,491	13,536
Number of beds closed due to diarrhoea and vomiting or norovirus-like symptoms	Average number of beds closed per day	711	1,228	
Number of beds unavailable due to delayed transfers of care from hospital	Average number of beds unavailable per day	3,050	2,915	
General and acute beds occupancy rate	Percentage of beds occupied	94.1%	95.2%	
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. This week there were 198,527 calls to NHS 111, compared to the 186,691 calls received last week. The number of callers satisfied with the service remains high at 89 per cent.

Indicator	Week Ending: 29/01/2014	Cumulative since 4 Nov
Per cent of calls answered in 60 seconds	97.31%	96.08%
Per cent of calls abandoned	0.54%	0.76%
Per cent of answered calls transferred to clinical advisor	22.30%	22.02%
Per cent of calls triaged	84.54%	84.81%
Per cent of calls offered a call back	7.00%	6.97%
Per cent of calls offered a call back where call back was within 10 minutes	56.58%	56.15%
Per cent of calls triaged where an ambulance was called	11.08%	11.04%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to A&E	7.41%	6.94%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to primary care	62.58%	63.27%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to another service	4.00%	4.51%
Per cent of calls triaged not recommended to another service	14.89%	14.37%

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.