

NHS England's winter health check

The latest position on A&E, winter pressures and influenza for the week ending 14 February 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 Sarah Pinto-Duschinsky, Director of Operations & Delivery for NHS England said:

“Last week was very busy, with 418,838 attendances and 106,230 emergency admissions – a high number of emergency admissions for this time of year. This is in line with the emerging trend which has seen a 31 per cent rise in number of people needing emergency admission to hospital over the last ten years.

“This week 94.3 per cent of those attending A&E were transferred, admitted or discharged within four hours during the week ending 9 February. We know there is week on week variation which is why we fully assess how local systems are coping with winter pressures over a longer period. It is of course disappointing that any patient has to wait longer than they should in A&E however we are now seeing many patients than ever before so whilst have not achieved the 95 per cent standard this week, it is important to stress that overall NHS continues to deliver a good service.

“The number of ambulance handover delays and A&E diverts are down on last week and the same week last year. The number of cancelled operations remain stable but the number of delayed transfers of care are up slightly by 42.

“This week 33 patients in England waited 12 hours from the time decision to admit them to there being a bed available for them. 20 of these patients were treated at the Princess Royal University Hospital. 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. There were 10 patients who waited 12 hours from the time of the decision to admit them to there being a suitable bed available at Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust. Again, measures are being put in place locally to reduce waiting times for patients.

“NHS 111 continues to provide a good service for those needing help or advice. This week there were 213,642 calls to NHS 111, compared to the 205,387 calls received last week, with 94.63 per cent of calls received answered within 60 seconds. 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 with great care to make sure the NHS move quickly if it needs to.”

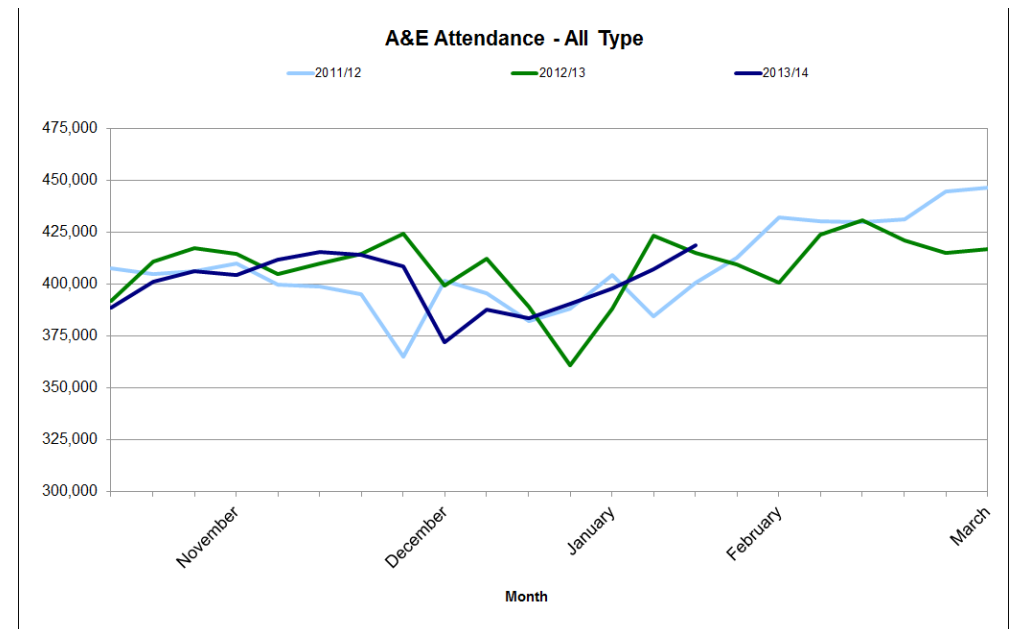
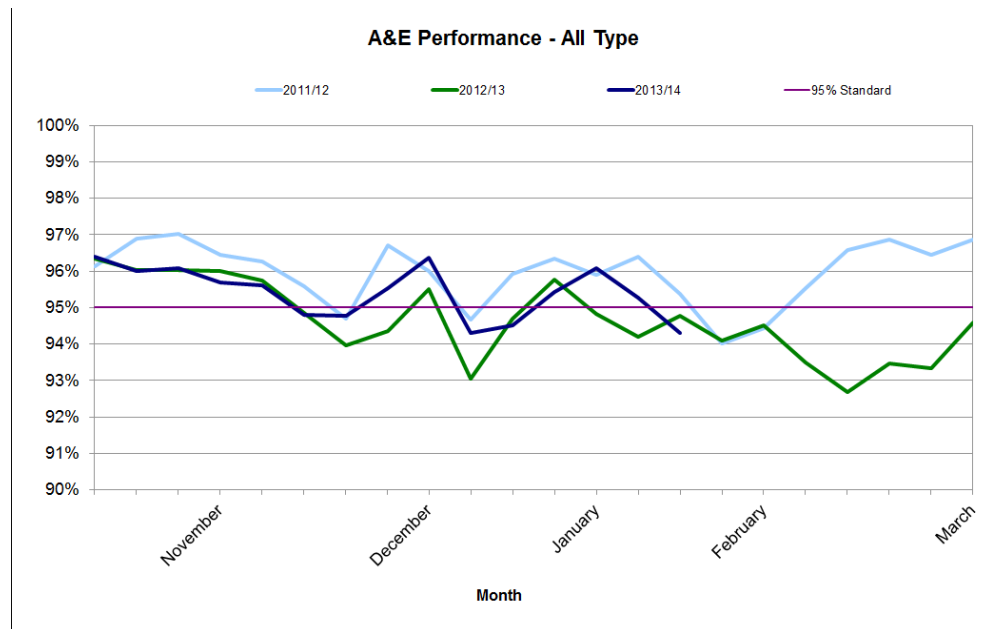
Weekly A&E standard

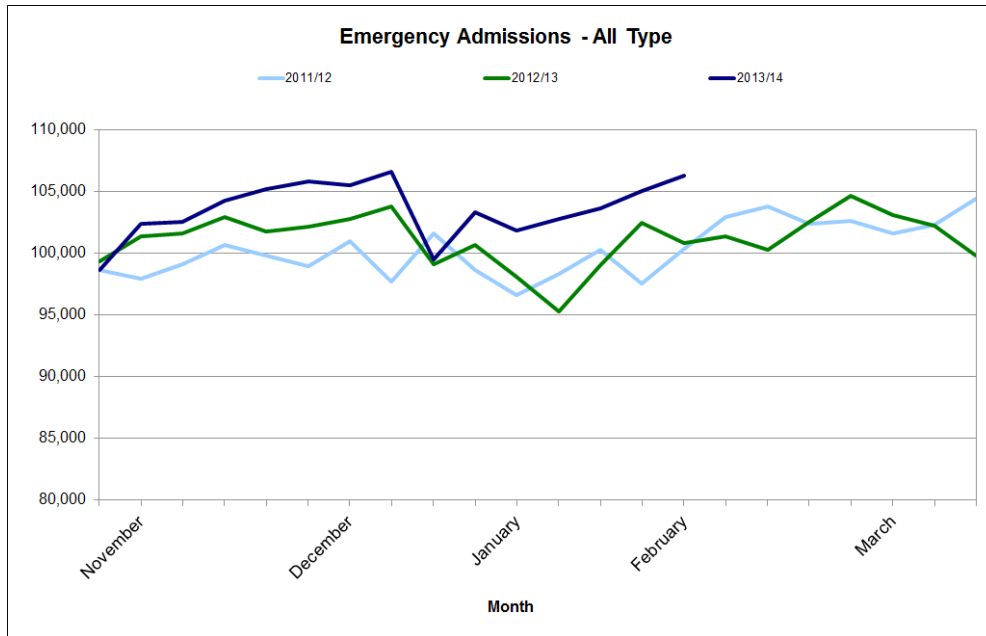
Summary

The percentage of patients spending under 4 hours in A&E last week was 94.3%, which is a percentage point lower than the previous week and lower than the same period last year. Attendances at A&E have risen once again, but remain at levels broadly consistent with the same time in the last two winters. Emergency admissions increased again last week and remain at a consistently higher level than previous years. This has impacted on the number of long waits for admission, which included 33 twelve hour waits across three trusts.

Indicator	w/e 9 Feb 2014	w/e 2 Feb 2014	w/e 10 Feb 2013
Total A&E attendance	418,838	406,931	415,039
A&E 4 hour standard (from arrival to admission, transfer or discharge)	94.3%	95.3%	94.8%
Emergency admissions	106,230	105,053	100,834
Number of 12 hour waits for admission	33	0	4
Number of 4 hour waits for admission	5,386	3,976	4,378

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





Situation reports (SITREPs)

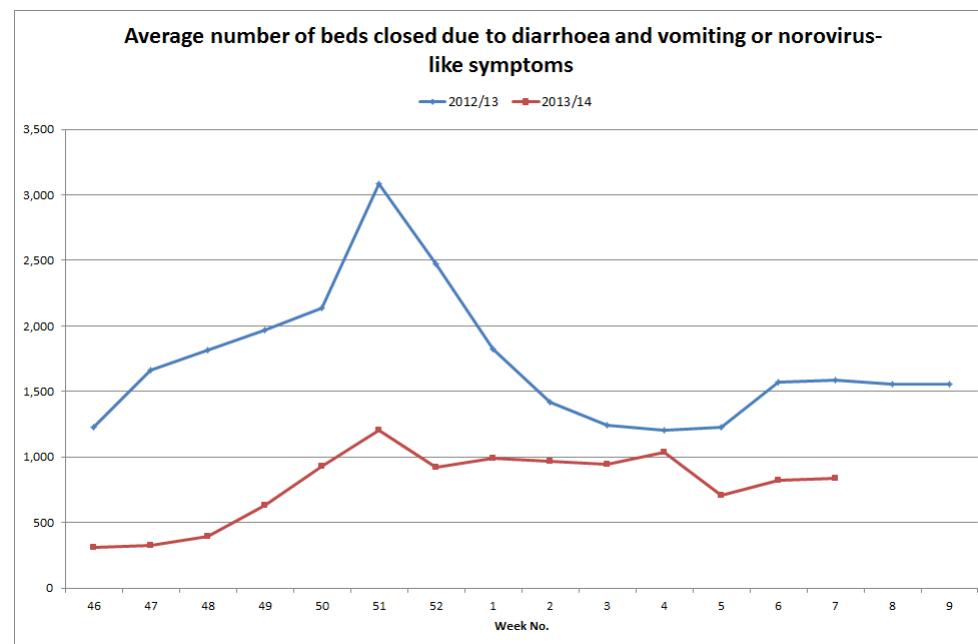
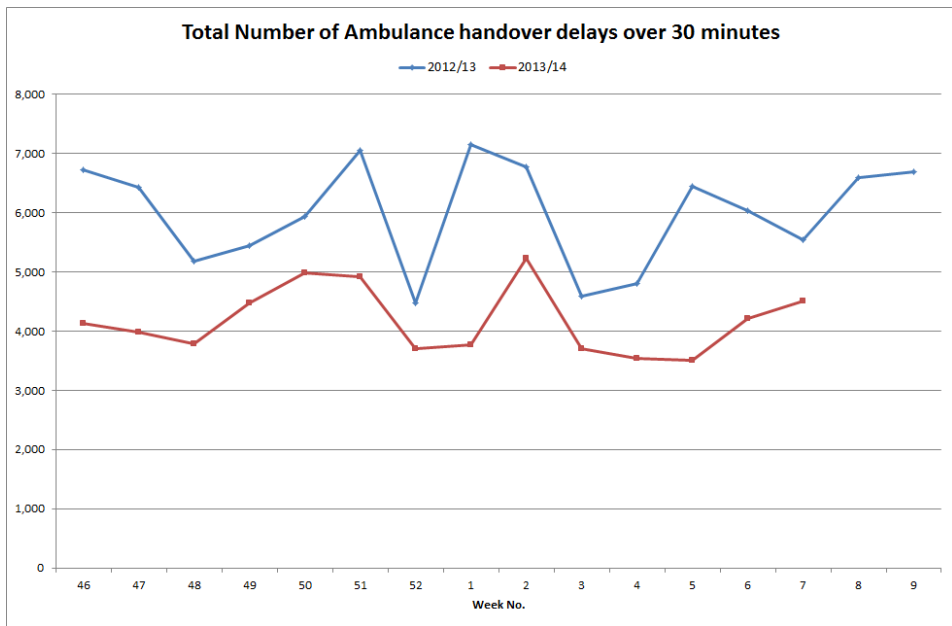
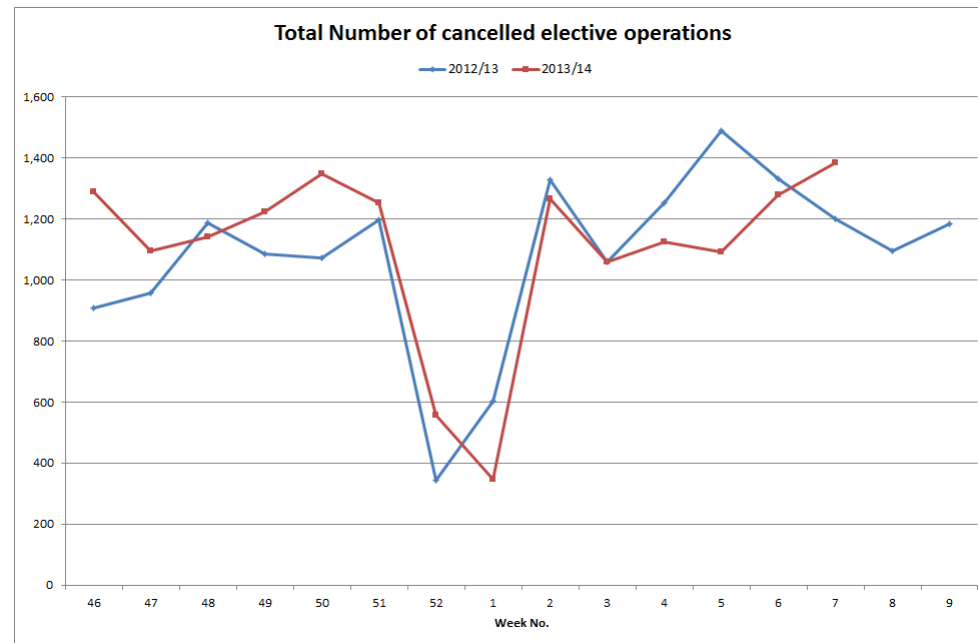
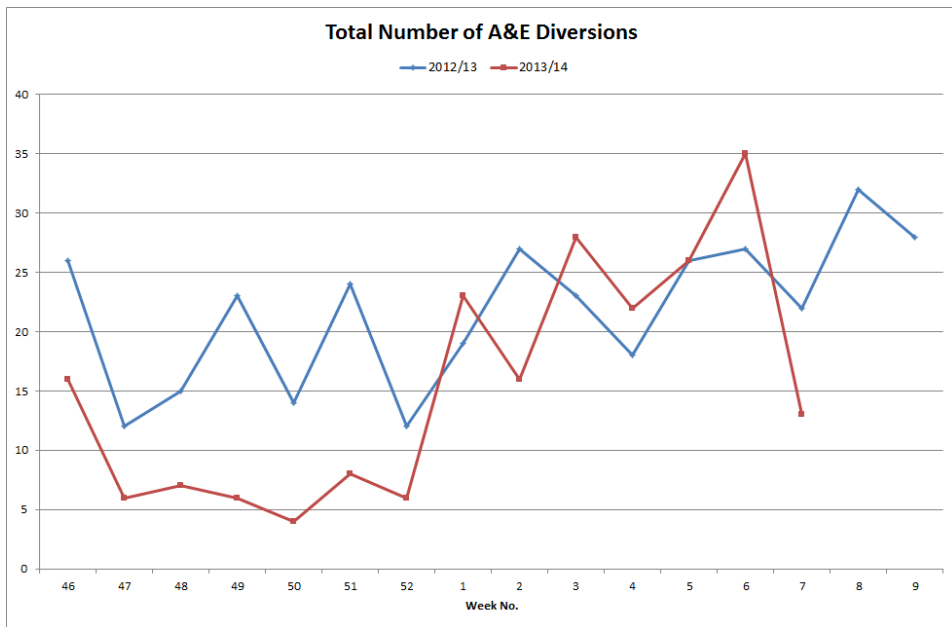
Daily situation reports, or SITREPs, are collected from all hospitals during winter and indicate where there are any winter pressure on the service, such as A&E closures, cancelled operations, bed pressures or ambulance delays. Collection for this year started on 4 November and the reporting requirement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

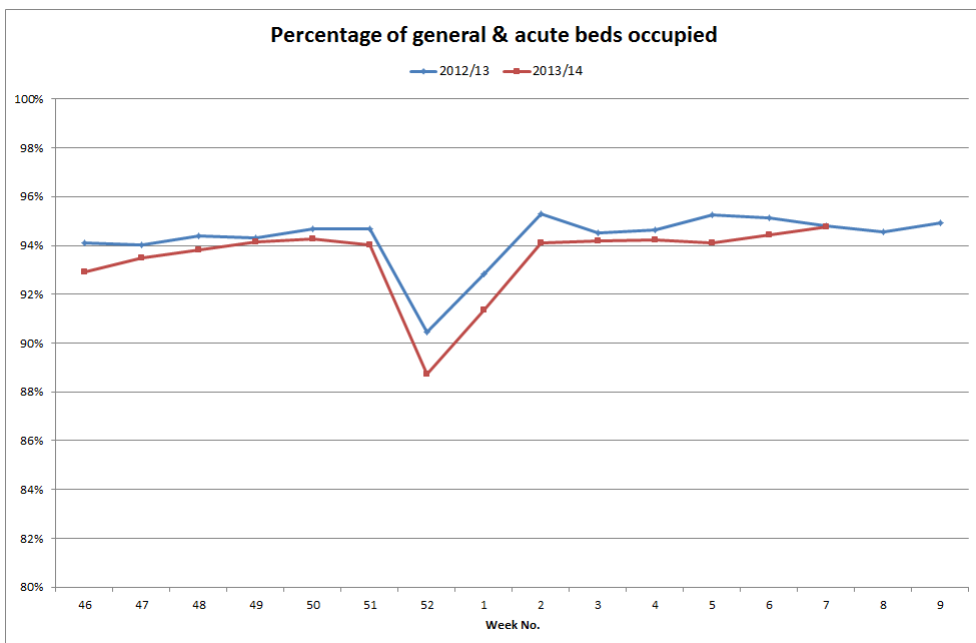
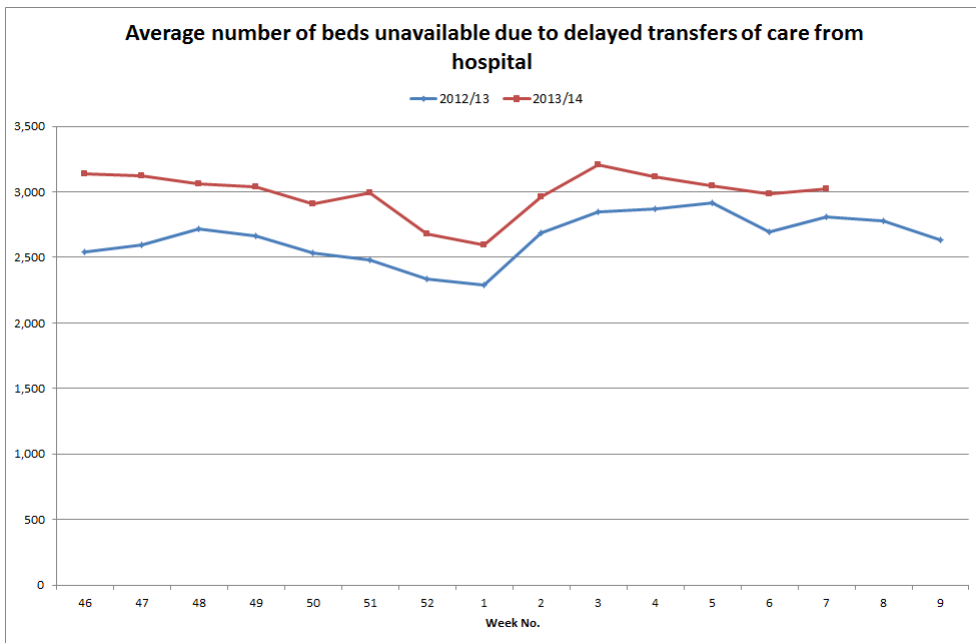
The NHS never shuts but it does sometimes have to alter the way it delivers services. Hospitals sometimes close their accident and emergency departments for short periods of time to walk-in patients but remain open to those people who need its services. This can happen for many different reasons which 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 last week show that winter pressures remain high, although the situation is still favourable when compared to last year. Last week saw an increase in the number of cancelled operations, which was the highest week of the winter so far and higher than the equivalent week last year. Delayed ambulance handovers increased, although remains at a significantly lower level than last year. The number of beds closed due to Norovirus like symptoms continues to be stable at a relatively low level, but beds unavailable due to delayed transfers increased, and remain higher than last winter.

Indicator	Measure	Week 6, 2014 (w/e 8am 13 Feb)	Week 6, 2013 (w/e 8am 14 Feb)	Cumulative since week 45 (4 Nov)
A&E diverts	Total number of diversions during the week	13	22	225
Ambulance handover delays of over 30 minutes	Total number of delays during the week	4,512	5,542	60,274
Cancelled operations	Number of elective operations cancelled at last minute during the week	1,383	1,202	16,199
Number of beds closed due to diarrhoea and vomiting or norovirus-like symptoms	Average number of beds closed per day	840	1,584	
Number of beds unavailable due to delayed transfers of care from hospital	Average number of beds unavailable per day	3,024	2,811	
General and acute beds occupancy rate	Percentage of beds occupied	94.8%	94.8%	
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.

This week there were 213,642 calls to NHS 111, compared to the 205,387 calls received last week. The number of callers satisfied with the service remains high at 89 per cent.

Indicator	Week Ending: 12/02/2014	Cumulative since 4 Nov
Per cent of calls answered in 60 seconds	94.63%	96.04%
Per cent of calls abandoned	1.06%	0.77%
Per cent of answered calls transferred to clinical advisor	20.88%	21.97%
Per cent of calls triaged	82.49%	84.73%
Per cent of calls offered a call back	8.32%	7.16%
Per cent of calls offered a call back where call back was within 10 minutes	50.59%	55.06%
Per cent of calls triaged where an ambulance was called	11.19%	11.04%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to A&E	7.29%	7.00%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to primary care	63.02%	63.19%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to another service	3.44%	4.42%
Per cent of calls triaged not recommended to another service	15.07%	14.46%

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.