

NHS England's winter health check

The latest position on A&E, winter pressures and influenza for the week ending 21 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:

“This week, 94.3 per cent of those attending A&E were transferred, admitted or discharged within four hours during the week ending 16 February. It is of course disappointing that any patient has to wait longer than they should in A&E however, it is important to stress that overall NHS continues to deliver a good service.

“I want to thank frontline teams from across the NHS who have worked hard to keep waiting times down for patients, despite some parts of the country being affected by flooding.

“There were fewer emergency admissions this week compared to the previous week which is encouraging but the numbers are still high and in line with recent trends.

“The number of ambulance handover delays and delayed transfers of care are both down on last week but the number of cancelled operations are up by 201.

“I am disappointed that 19 patients waited 12 hours from the time of the decision to admit them to there being a bed available. I know local leaders are putting in place a range of measures to improve the A&E service and reduce waiting times for patients but I have asked them to redouble their efforts to ensure any patient needing a hospital stay does not wait for longer than four hours. We continue to monitor the situation closely.

“NHS 111 is continues to deliver a rapid and responsive across most of the country, providing a good service for those needing help or advice. This week there were 216,842 call to the NHS 111 service, 3,200 more than the previous week. 95.27 per cent of calls received answered within 60 seconds.

“I 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.

“Taking a rounded view, the NHS is in a strong position to continue to deliver for patients.

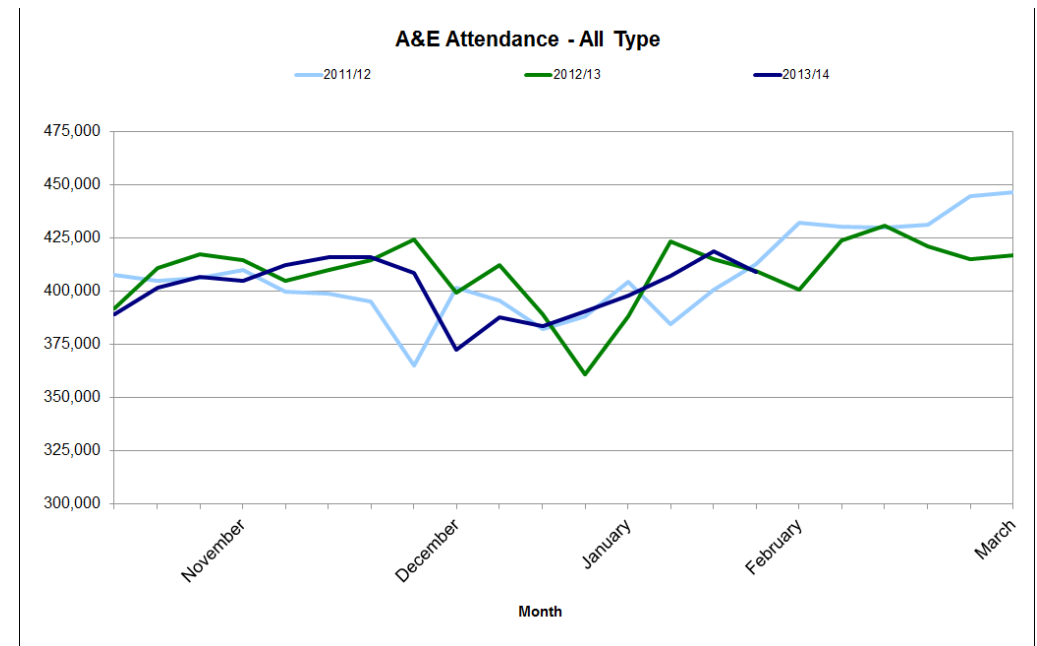
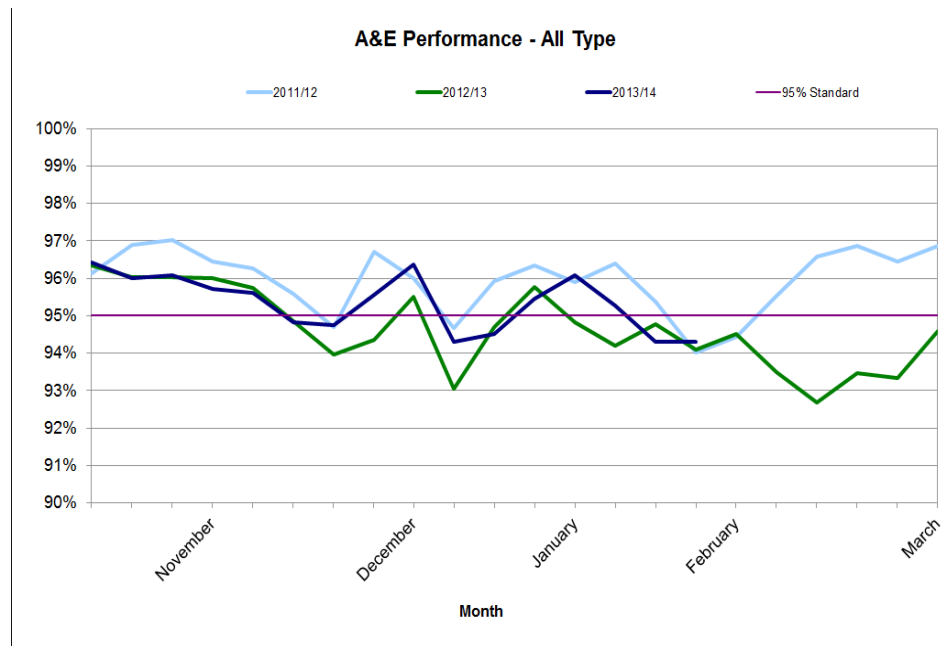
Weekly A&E standard

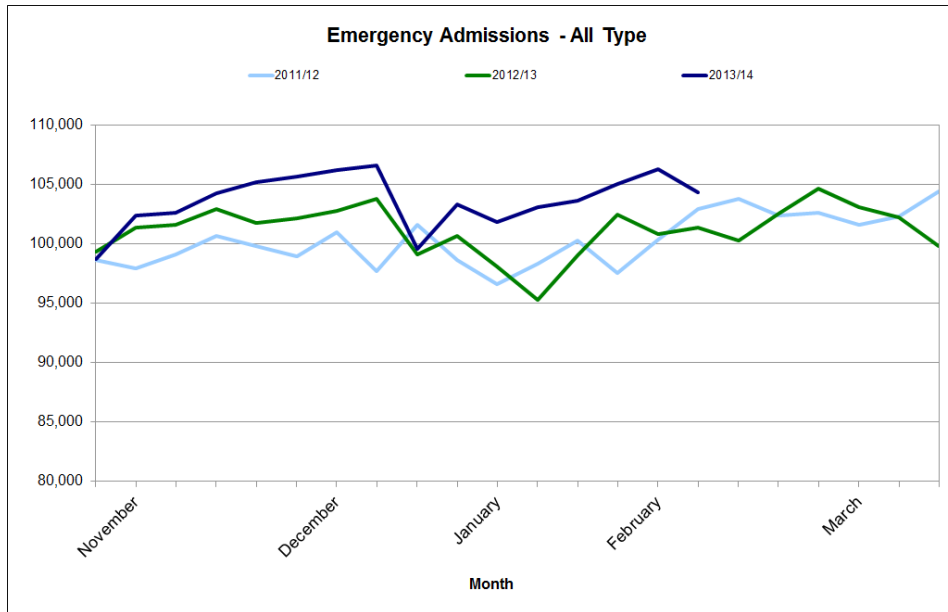
Summary

The percentage of patients spending under 4 hours in A&E last week was 94.3%, which is the same as the previous week and slightly higher than the same period last year. Attendances at A&E were lower last week, and remain at levels broadly consistent with the same time in the last two winters. Emergency admissions also fell slightly on the previous week, but remain at a higher level than previous years. The number of longer waits for admission is also at a high level, with around 5,400 over 4 hours and 19 twelve hour waits across five trusts.

Indicator	w/e 16 Feb 2014	w/e 9 Feb 2014	w/e 17 Feb 2013
Total A&E attendance	409,001	418,838	409,586
A&E 4 hour standard (from arrival to admission, transfer or discharge)	94.3%	94.3%	94.1%
Emergency admissions	104,340	106,230	101,344
Number of 12 hour waits for admission	19	33	2
Number of 4 hour waits for admission	5,409	5,386	4,563

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





Situation reports (SITREPs)

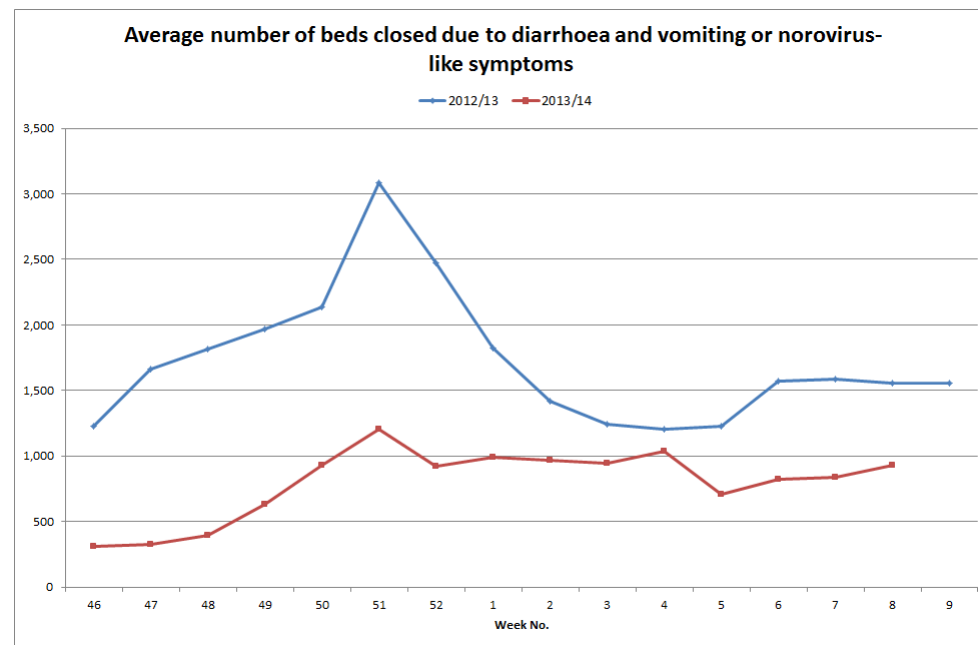
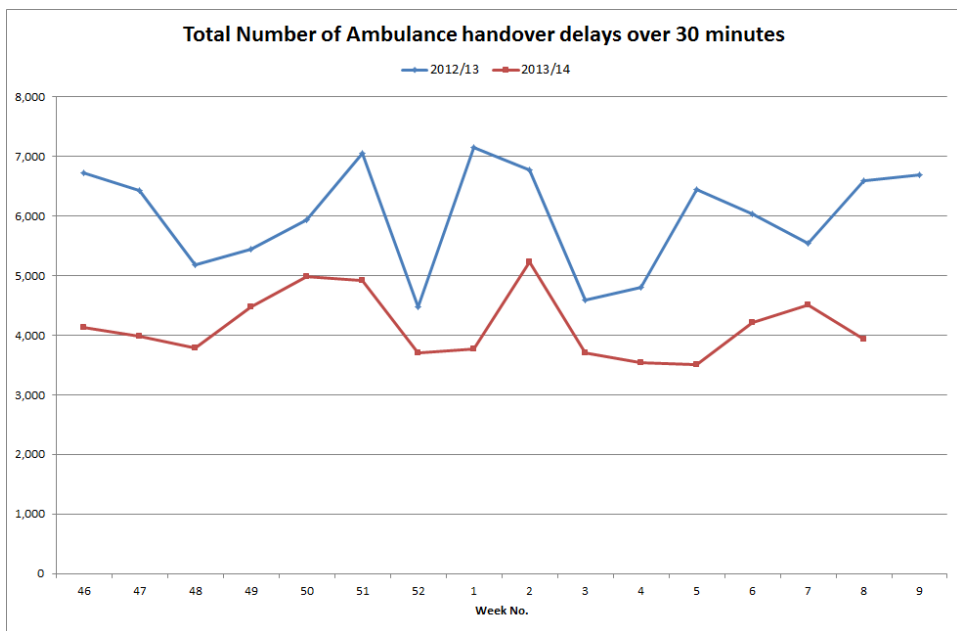
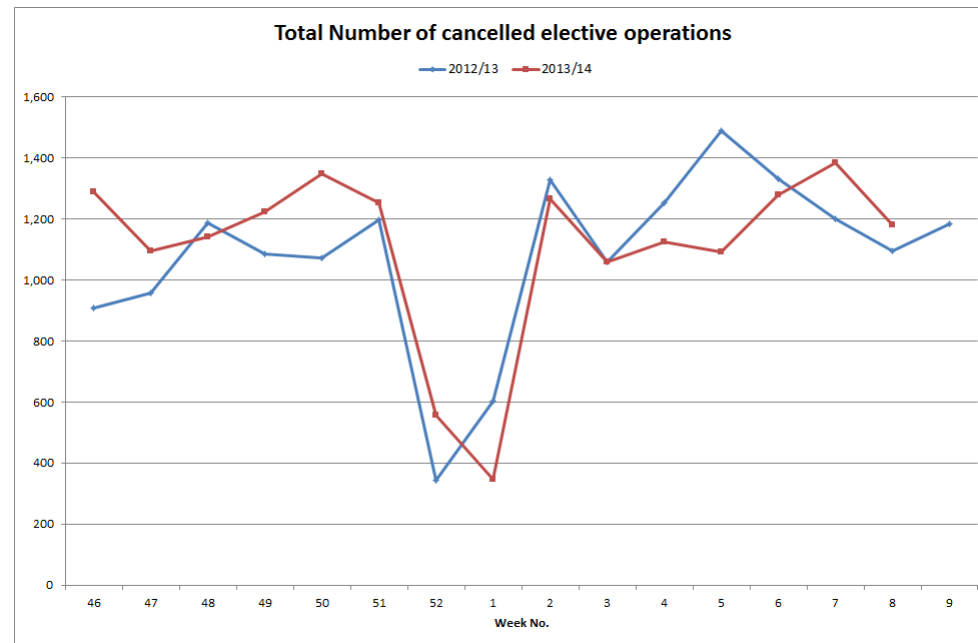
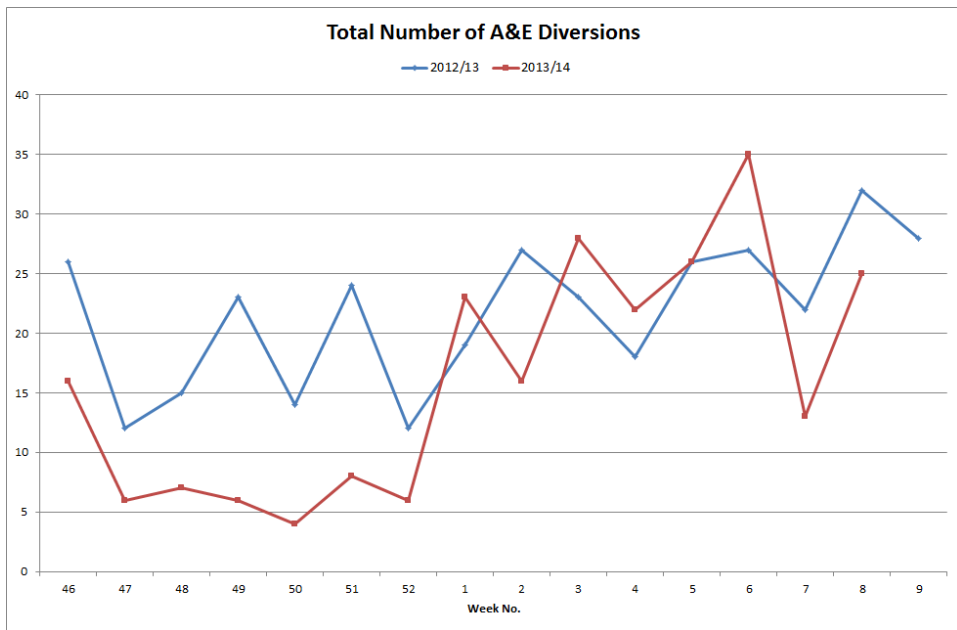
Daily situation reports, or SITREPs, are collected from all hospitals during winter and indicate where there are any winter pressure on the service, such as A&E closures, cancelled operations, bed pressures or ambulance delays. Collection for this year started on 4 November and the reporting requirement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

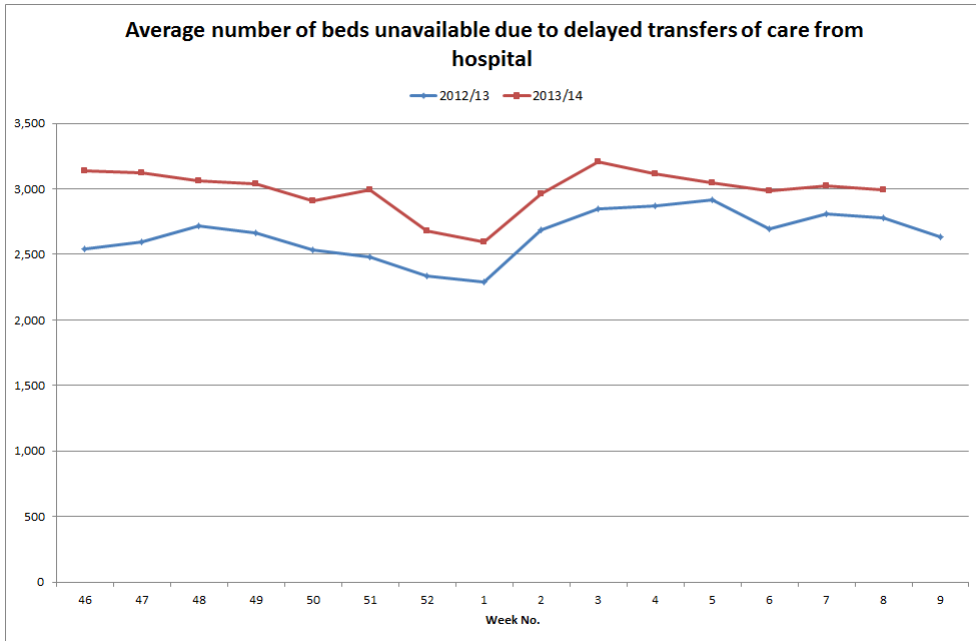
The NHS never shuts but it does sometimes have to alter the way it delivers services. Hospitals sometimes close their accident and emergency departments for short periods of time to walk-in patients but remain open to those people who need its services. This can happen for many different reasons which 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 relatively high, although the situation is still favourable when compared to last year. Last week saw a fall in delayed ambulance handovers, which remain at a significantly lower level than last year. Cancelled operations also reduced, and these continue to closely follow the pattern seen last year. The number of beds closed due to Norovirus like symptoms increased, but continue to be stable at just under a thousand beds, and beds unavailable due to delayed transfers also fell, but remain higher than last winter.

Indicator	Measure	Week 8, 2014 (w/e 8am 20 Feb)	Week 8, 2013 (w/e 8am 21 Feb)	Cumulative since week 45 (4 Nov)
A&E diverts	Total number of diversions during the week	25	32	250
Ambulance handover delays of over 30 minutes	Total number of delays during the week	3,940	6,599	64,214
Cancelled operations	Number of elective operations cancelled at last minute during the week	1,182	1,094	17,381
Number of beds closed due to diarrhoea and vomiting or norovirus-like symptoms	Average number of beds closed per day	929	1,557	
Number of beds unavailable due to delayed transfers of care from hospital	Average number of beds unavailable per day	2,992	2,776	
General and acute beds occupancy rate	Percentage of beds occupied	94.2%	94.6%	
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 216,842 calls to NHS 111, compared to the 213,642 calls received last week. The number of callers satisfied with the service remains high at 89 per cent.

Indicator	Week Ending: 19/02/2014	Cumulative since 4 Nov
Per cent of calls answered in 60 seconds	95.27%	95.99%
Per cent of calls abandoned	0.94%	0.79%
Per cent of answered calls transferred to clinical advisor	21.04%	21.90%
Per cent of calls triaged	83.56%	84.65%
Per cent of calls offered a call back	8.61%	7.26%
Per cent of calls offered a call back where call back was within 10 minutes	49.93%	54.64%
Per cent of calls triaged where an ambulance was called	10.98%	11.04%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to A&E	7.06%	7.00%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to primary care	62.93%	63.18%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to another service	3.73%	4.37%
Per cent of calls triaged not recommended to another service	15.45%	14.52%

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.