

NHS England's winter health check

The latest position on A&E, winter pressures and influenza for the week ending 7 March 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, Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Chief Executive for NHS England, said:

“Last week was the busiest this winter so far, with 429,998 attendances and 106,043 emergency admissions – the highest number of emergency admissions since we started collecting data in November 2010.

“The number of emergency admissions has been consistently high for the past few months, and 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.

“Despite the challenge this brings, the NHS continues to provide patients with a good service. This week 94.8 per cent of those attending A&E were transferred, admitted or discharged within four hours during the week ending 2 March. This is down to the hard work of frontline staff who deserve the credit for pulling out all the stops to deliver for patients.

“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 more patients than ever before.

“Ambulance statistics released today show the additional £14 million NHS England allocated to CCGs that commission ambulance services on behalf of their local areas has paid off for the month of January. The additional money paid for extra staff and equipment to ensure a good standard of service over the winter months shows, with the vast majority of trusts meeting the standard of responding to 75 per cent of emergency calls within eight minutes.

“The number of cancelled operations remains stable and the number of delayed transfers of care are down slightly by 52. The number of beds closed due to diarrhoea and vomiting or norovirus-like symptoms remain low for this time of year.

“NHS 111 continues to provide a good service for those needing help or advice. This week there were 219,577 calls to NHS 111, with 95.18 per cent of calls received answered within 60 seconds. The number of callers satisfied with the service remains high at 89 per cent and I would urge anyone who is feeling unwell to seek early help or advice by calling 111.

“I am very encouraged by how the NHS has responded over the winter months. The service is in a strong position to continue to deliver for patients and we are monitoring the situation with great care.”

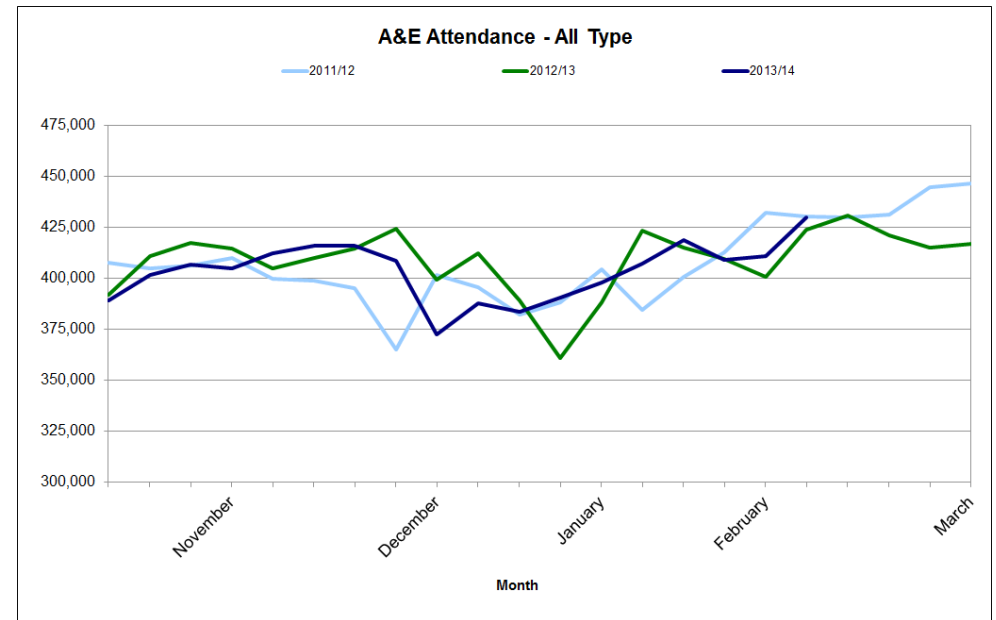
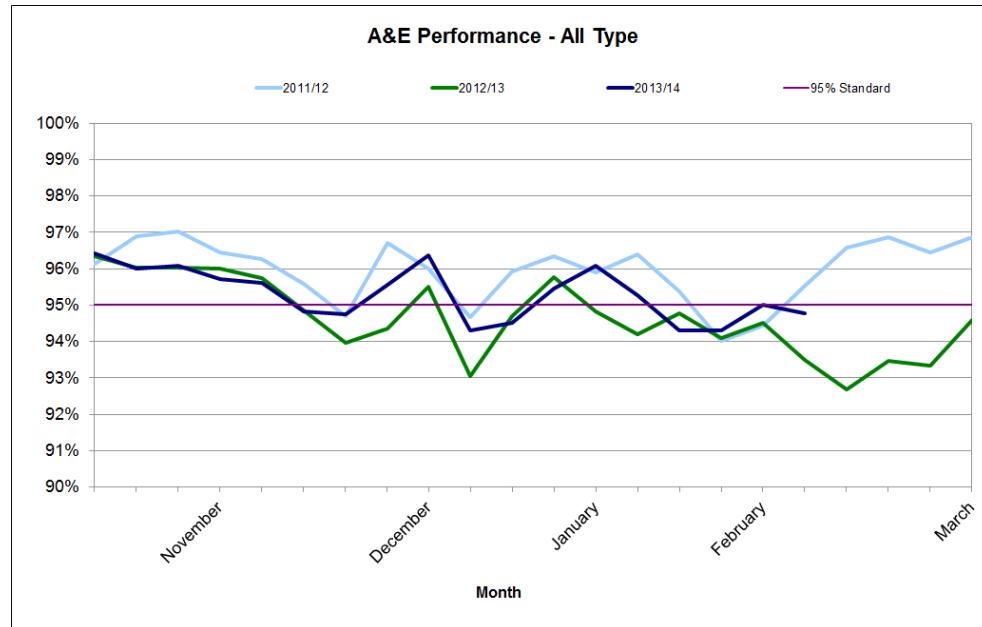
Weekly A&E standard

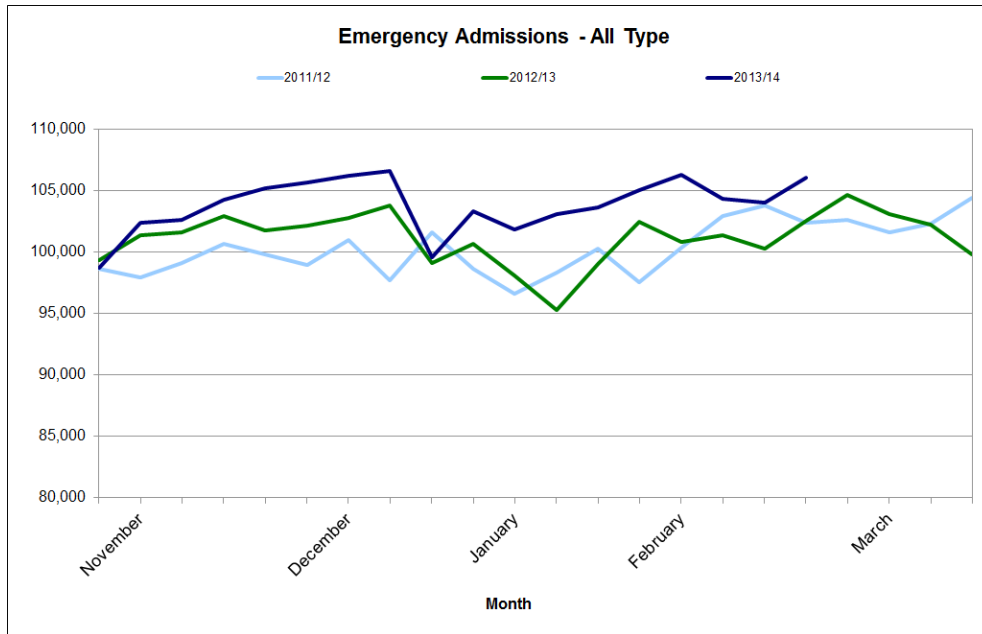
Summary

The percentage of patients spending under 4 hours in A&E last week was 94.8%, down from 95.0% in the previous week, but higher than the same period last year when performance fell sharply. Attendances at A&E have increased sharply on the previous week, and the figure represents the highest weekly attendances of the winter, but this is consistent with weekly figures in early March in the last two winters. Emergency admissions also increased, and remain at a higher level than last year. The number of longer waits for admission increased in line with admissions, indicating continuing pressure across the system, although these are lower than the same week last year.

Indicator	w/e 2 Mar 2014	w/e 23 Feb 2014	w/e 3 Mar 2013
Total A&E attendance	429,998	410,881	423,610
A&E 4 hour standard (from arrival to admission, transfer or discharge)	94.8%	95.0%	93.5%
Emergency admissions	106,043	103,999	102,532
Number of 12 hour waits for admission	4	22	8
Number of 4 hour waits for admission	4,720	3,942	5,983

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





Situation reports (SITREPs)

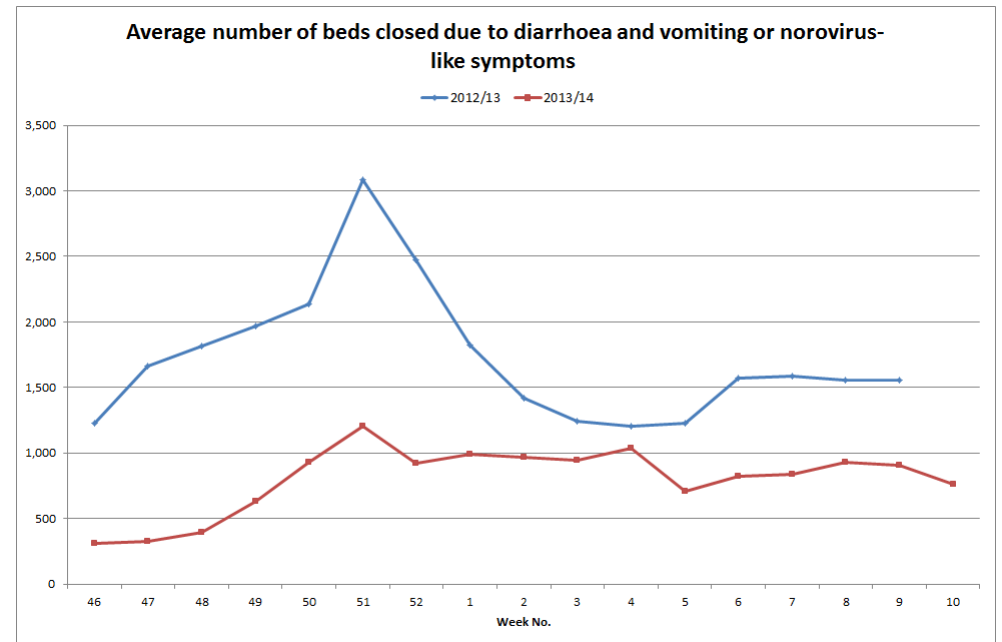
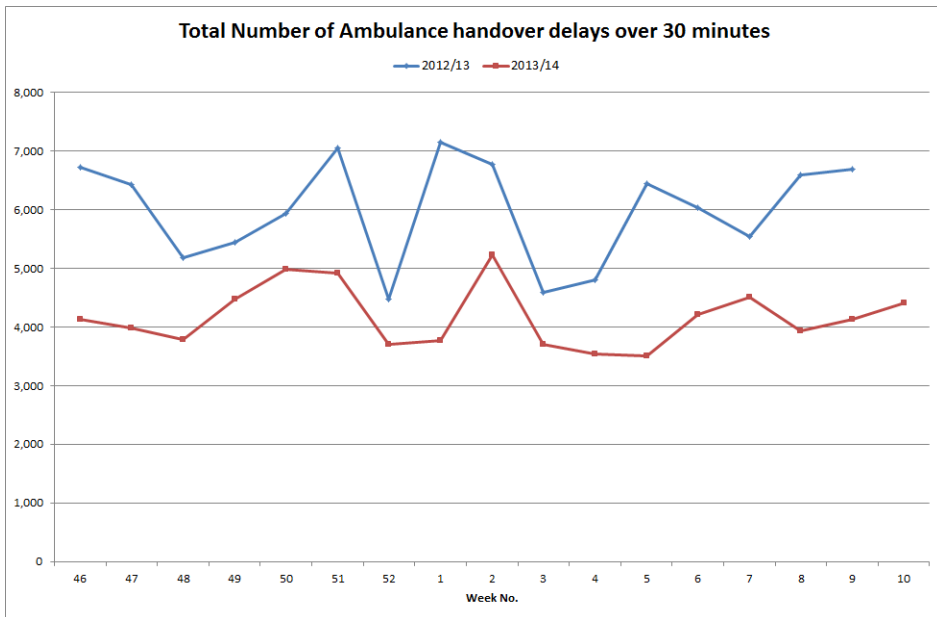
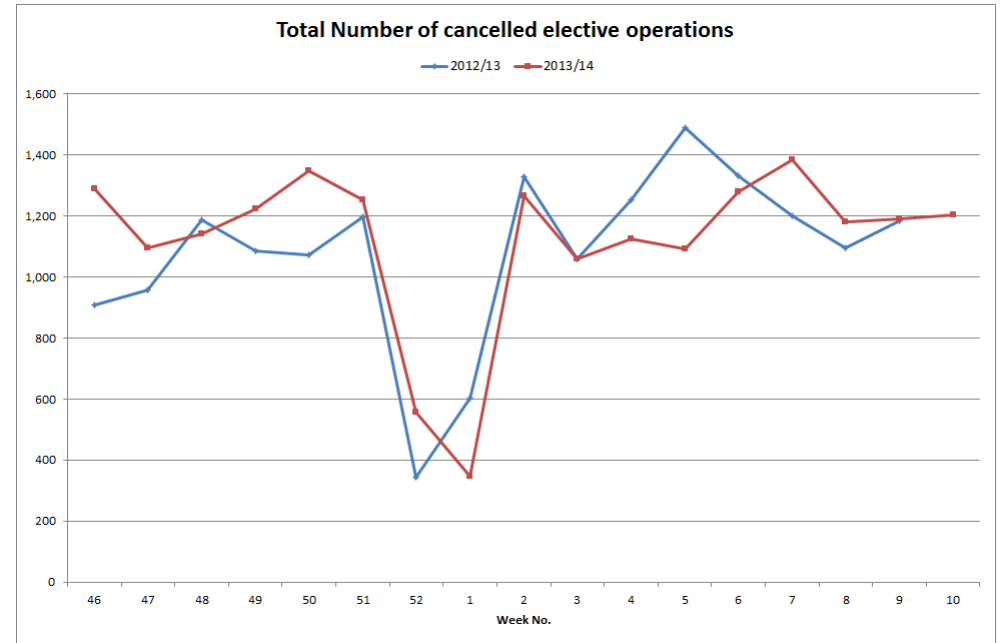
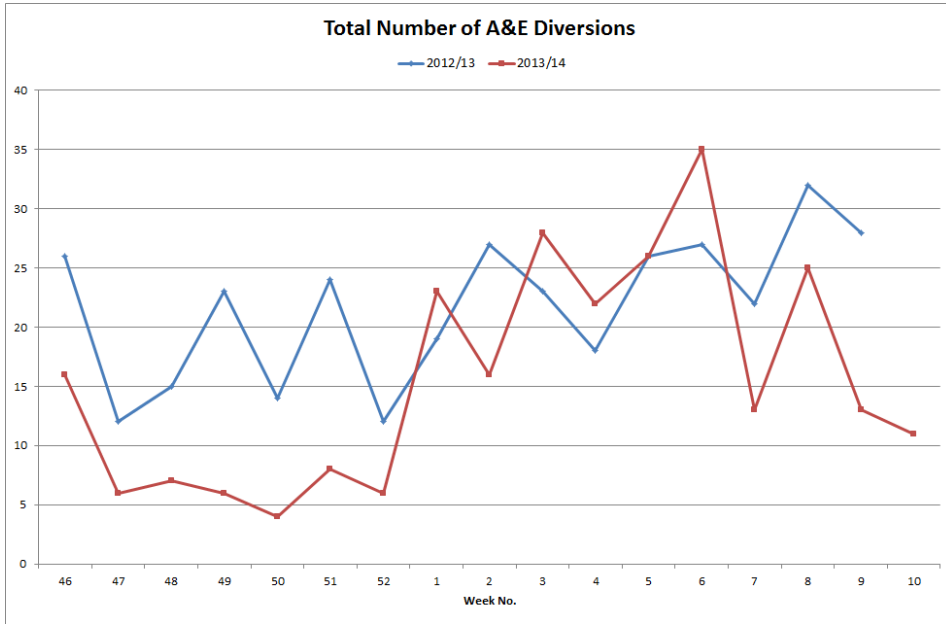
Daily situation reports, or SITREPs, are collected from all hospitals during winter and indicate where there are any winter pressure on the service, such as A&E closures, cancelled operations, bed pressures or ambulance delays. Collection for this year started on 4 November and this year will continue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

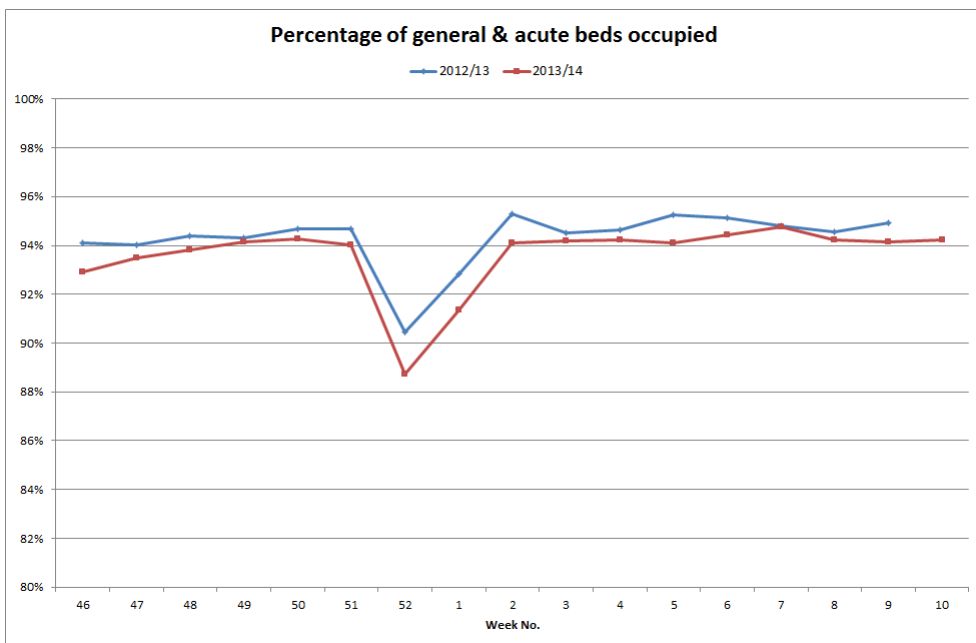
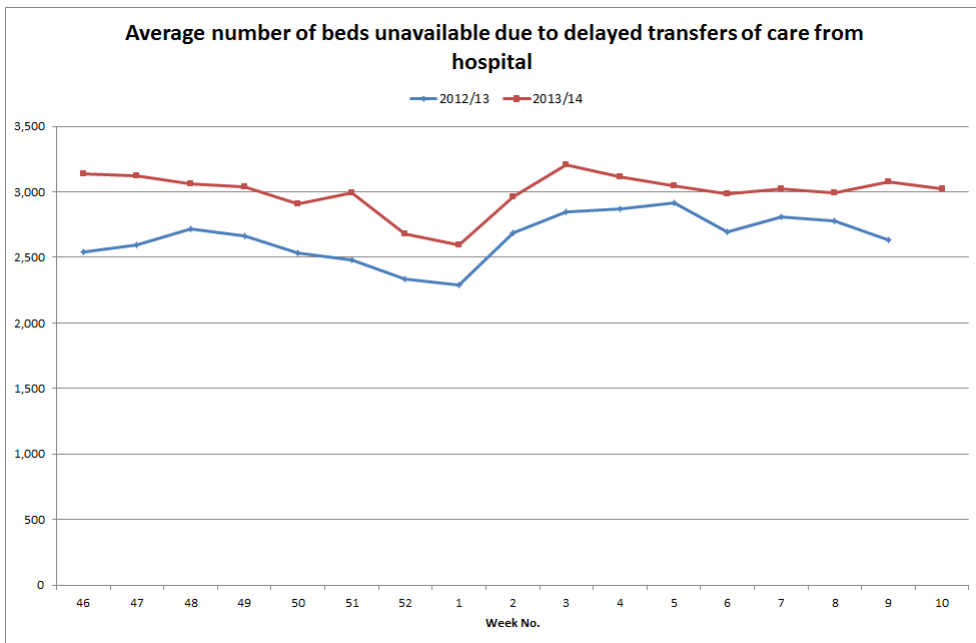
The NHS never shuts but it does sometimes have to alter the way it delivers services. Hospitals sometimes close their accident and emergency departments for short periods of time to walk-in patients but remain open to those people who need its services. This can happen for many different reasons which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

We no longer have the comparison to last year, when daily reporting ceased at the end of February, but data from situation reports for last week show that winter pressures remain relatively high. Last week saw an increase in delayed ambulance handovers, although these remain at a significantly lower level than experienced last year. Cancelled operations also increased slightly, but are consistent with levels seen in recent weeks. The number of beds closed due to Norovirus like symptoms have reduced again to the level last seen in early December. Beds unavailable due to delayed transfers have also fallen, although these are at higher levels than last winter.

Indicator	Measure	Week 10, 2014 (w/e 8am 6 Mar)	Week 9, 2014 (w/e 8am 27 Feb)	Cumulative since week 45 (4 Nov)
A&E diverts	Total number of diversions during the week	11	13	274
Ambulance handover delays of over 30 minutes	Total number of delays during the week	4,416	4,128	72,758
Cancelled operations	Number of elective operations cancelled at last minute during the week	1,204	1,191	19,776
Number of beds closed due to diarrhoea and vomiting or norovirus-like symptoms	Average number of beds closed per day	762	910	
Number of beds unavailable due to delayed transfers of care from hospital	Average number of beds unavailable per day	3,020	3,076	
General and acute beds occupancy rate	Percentage of beds occupied	94.2%	94.2%	
A full breakdown of the data can be found 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 219,577 calls to NHS 111, compared to the 221,853 calls received last week. The number of callers satisfied with the service remains high at 89 per cent.

Indicator	Week Ending: 05/03/2014	Cumulative since 4 Nov
Per cent of calls answered in 60 seconds	95.18%	95.86%
Per cent of calls abandoned	1.04%	0.82%
Per cent of answered calls transferred to clinical advisor	21.60%	21.83%
Per cent of calls triaged	85.14%	84.69%
Per cent of calls offered a call back	8.58%	7.47%
Per cent of calls offered a call back where call back was within 10 minutes	49.79%	53.69%
Per cent of calls triaged where an ambulance was called	10.86%	11.03%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to A&E	7.49%	7.04%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to primary care	62.00%	63.06%
Per cent of calls triaged recommended to another service	4.30%	4.36%
Per cent of calls triaged not recommended to another service	15.39%	14.60%

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.