

NHS England's winter health check

The latest position on A&E, winter pressures and influenza for the week ending Sunday 8th February January 2015 by NHS England:

Dr Sarah Pinto-Duschinsky, Director of Operations and Delivery for NHS England, said:

"A&E performance moved in the right direction week-on-week giving cause for cautious optimism, with more than nine out of ten patients being admitted, treated and discharged within four hours.

"This has been achieved in the face of increased pressure on A&E with both the number of attendances and emergency admissions having gone up this week.

"The cold can contribute to heightened levels of respiratory illness – particularly among the elderly and those with long terms conditions. The message is to stay warm, stock up with your usual medicines and make full use of your local pharmacist."

Overview

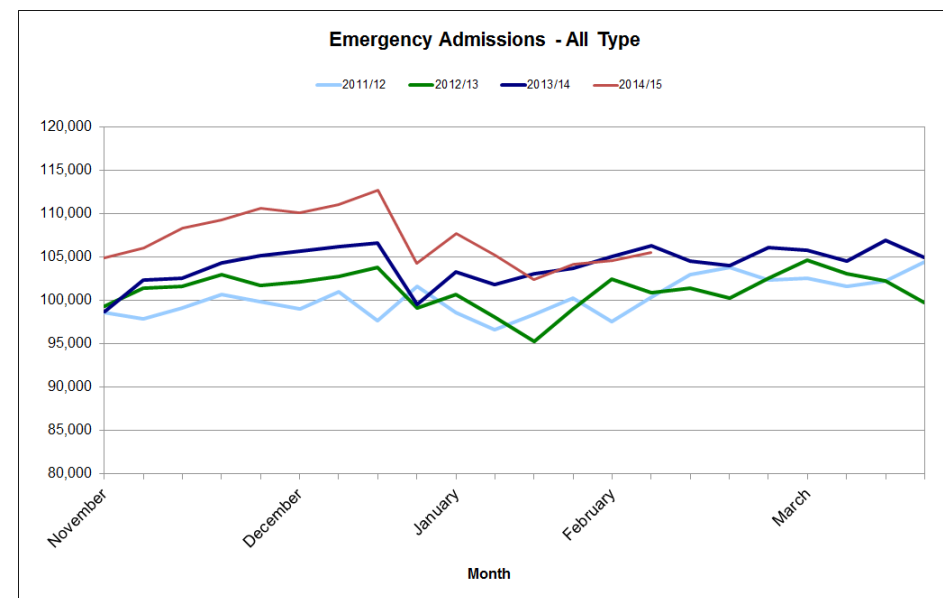
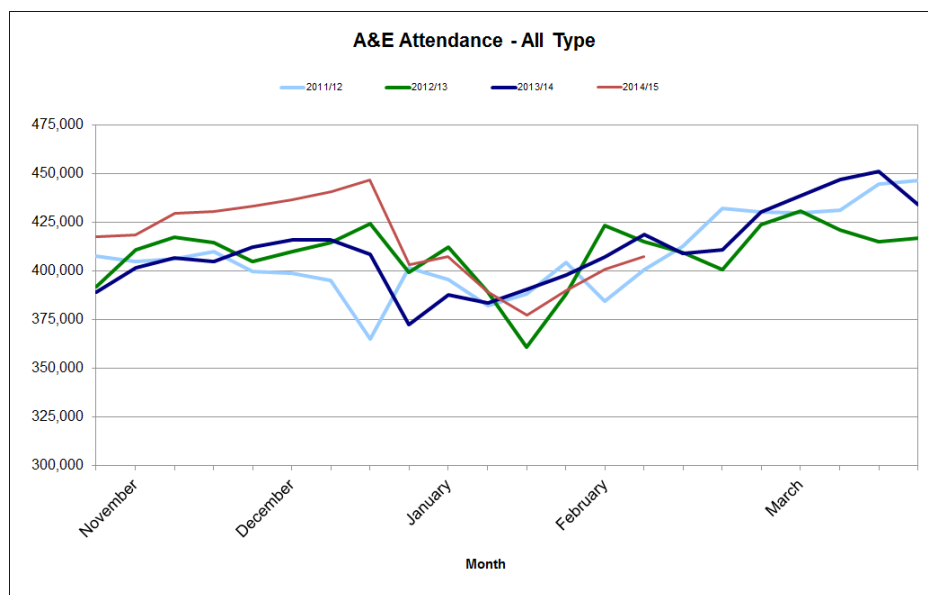
- There was increased pressure on A&E with 407,400 attendances this week - up from 401,000 in the previous week.
- The level of emergency admissions was also up to 105,500 from 104,500 last week.
- The percentage of patients waiting 4 hours or less from arrival to admission, transfer or discharge improved week-on-week to 92.9% - this compares with 92.3% in the previous week.
- Over 4 hour waits for admission were 7,300 – down from 8,400 last week.
- Level 1 cold weather alerts are in place across the country, while prior level 2 and 3 alert periods have occurred since January 12.
- The NHS111 service continues to reflect the increased demand from the public and is doing an excellent job in terms of protecting both A&E and ambulance services from unnecessary attendances and call outs.
- NHS111 had 251,000 calls for the week ending Sunday 8 February 2015, up from 248,000 in the previous week, but significantly down on the peak of 439,000 for the week ending December 28.
- The percentage of NHS111 calls answered in 60 seconds was 93.3%.
- In the past year NHS111 received more than 12 million calls and, as a result, offered treatment to over two million people who would otherwise have visited A&E, and another 600,000 who would have dialled 999 for an ambulance, reducing a significant amount of unnecessary pressure on our urgent care services.
- Delayed Transfers of Care were down last week, with the average number of beds occupied per day for delayed discharge at 4,000, down from 4,200 the previous week.
- Some £700million continues to be injected to support the NHS over this winter. The local NHS says this has helped bolster the NHS with an extra 700 doctors, 4,500 nurses and more than 3,000 extra other staff.

- This increase in staffing has allowed the NHS to open an extra 900 general beds, more than 2,700 acute and specialist beds and over 1,500 beds for those patients who need a little longer to recover. We are also funding more than 1,200 residential and nursing home beds. In the coming weeks more beds will be available.
- The money is also being used to support different initiatives around the country, decided at local level and tailored to local needs through the System Resilience Groups (SRG).
- The national tripartite (NHS England, Monitor and the TDA) is tightly monitoring what is happening so we can spot problems early and take swift action.
- We are currently undertaking a major review of the system, led by Sir Bruce Keogh, Professor Keith Willett and Professor Jonathan Benger. This will help pave the way for any proposed changes to the system as the review gathers pace.

Demand

Indicator	w/e 8 Feb 2015	Same week last year	Change on same week last year	Change on last week
Total A&E attendance	407,380	418,413	-11,033	+6,391
Emergency admissions	105,535	106,230	-695	+994
A&E 4 hour standard (from arrival to admission, transfer or discharge)	92.9%	94.3%		

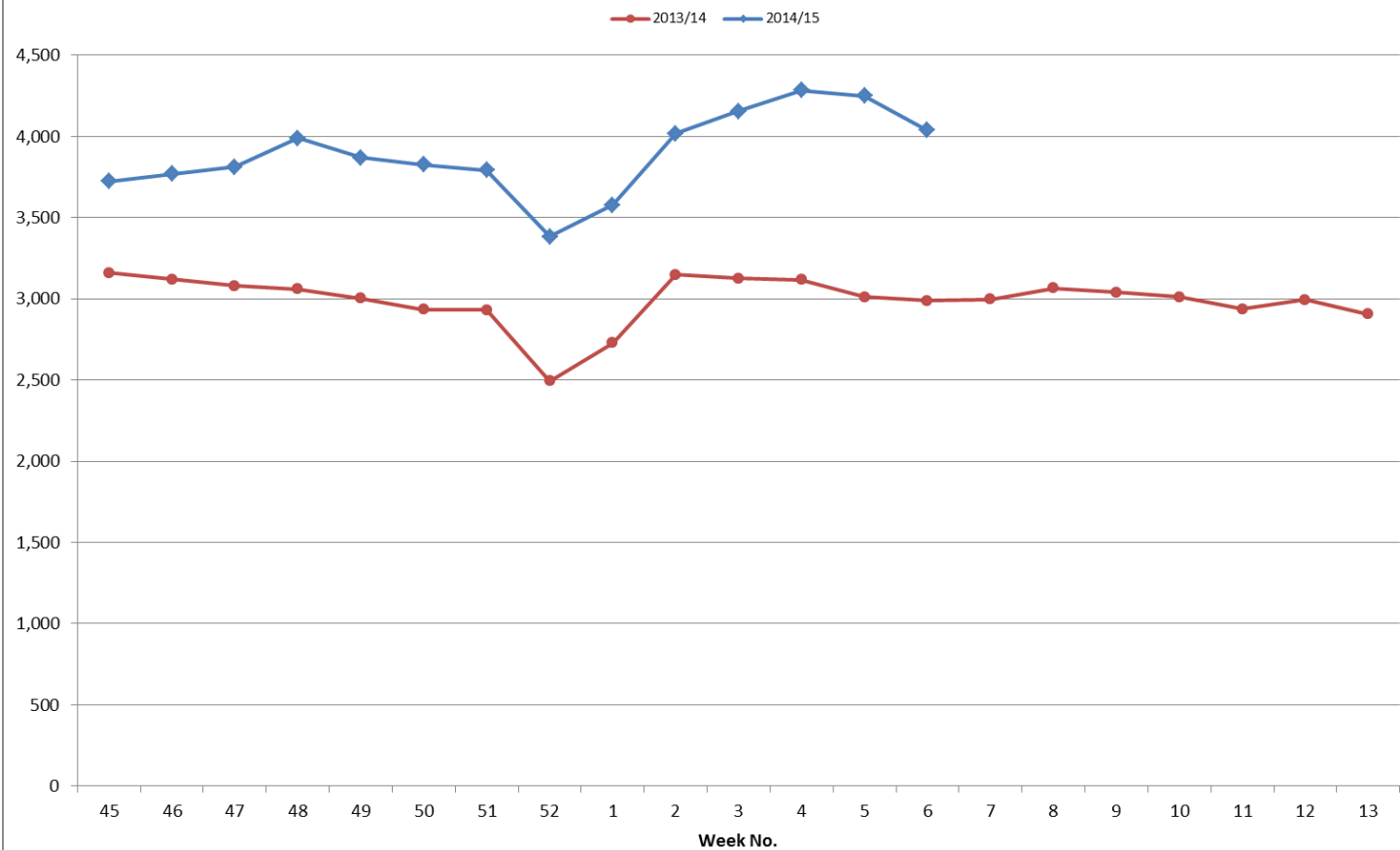
A full breakdown can be found [here](#)



Capacity

Indicator	Measure	Week 6 2014/15 (w/e 08/02/2014)	Average for week 6 (2010/11 - 2013/14)
Number of beds closed due to diarrhoea and vomiting or norovirus-like symptoms	Average number of beds closed per day	975	1,638
Number of beds unavailable due to delayed transfers of care from hospital	Average number of beds unavailable per day	4,039	2,787
General and acute beds occupancy rate	Percentage of beds occupied	94.9	94.7

Average number of beds unavailable due to delayed transfers of care from hospital



Public Health Surveillance

Summary

Public Health England's [annual mid-season flu vaccine effectiveness report](#) has been published showing the vaccine has provided low protection this winter because of a mismatch between the A(H3N2) vaccine strain and the main A(H3N2) strain circulating in the UK.

The findings mean that the early use of antivirals to treat and help prevent serious cases of flu in vulnerable patients is even more important this season.

The current vaccine is still expected to protect against flu A(H1N1)pdm09 and flu B, which may yet circulate this season, so patients in at-risk groups should still be vaccinated. Effective hand and respiratory hygiene also remains important in reducing the spread of the virus.

Further information can be found on [Gov.uk](#)

The figures from Public Health England show levels of influenza for the week lower than the previous week - particularly in the elderly.

There has been significant excess mortality this week among 65+ years. This coincides with circulating influenza and the recent cold snaps.

In week 6 2015 (ending February 8), indicators of influenza activity decreased compared with the previous week in England. The Department of Health alert issued on the prescription of antiviral medicines by GPs is still active.

Levels of norovirus in the current season are eight percent lower overall compared with the five year seasonal average (from season 2009 and 2010 to season 2013 and 2014). Reports of outbreaks of diarrhoea and vomiting in hospitals continue to be reported at similar levels to previous years.

Rotavirus activity is low with laboratory reports 45 per cent less than the ten season average (from season 2003 to 2013). The decreased rotavirus activity is likely to be associated with the introduction of the oral vaccine in July 2013.

More information is available from Public Health England and can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/winter-health-watch>

NHS 111

In the week ending February 8, 2015, the number of calls to NHS 111 was 251,000, more than the 248,000 in the previous week, but fewer than in each of the six weeks up to 11 January 2015.

The percentage of calls answered in 60 seconds was 93.3%, fewer than the 94.1% in the previous week, but more than in each of seven weeks up to 4 January 2015.

Of calls triaged, 10% had an ambulance dispatched which is slightly lower than the previous week (11%), and 8% were recommended to A&E - the same as the previous week.

The latest NHS 111 follow-up surveys, for the year ending September 2014, show that 30% of callers would have gone to A&E, and 17% would have contacted the 999 ambulance service, had NHS 111 not been available. Of actual NHS 111 calls over the same year, 8% were recommended to attend A&E, and 11% had an ambulance dispatch.

The differences mean that over 2 million people that year were directed away from A&E, and 600,000 were directed away from calling an ambulance.