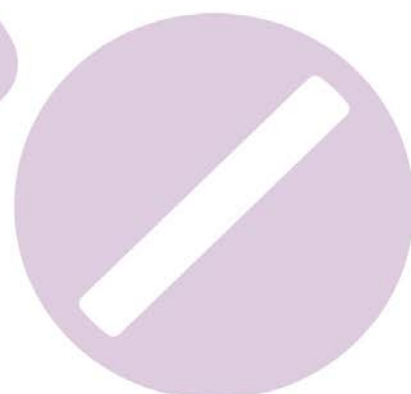
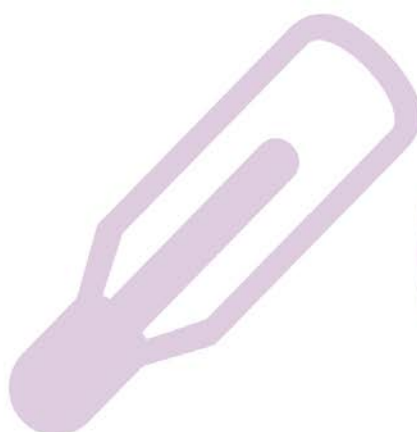


RCEM Winter Flow Project

Analysis of the data so far: 16th February 2018



Introduction

In 2015 we launched the 'Winter Flow Project' in an effort to highlight the difficulties facing an NHS struggling with unprecedented financial difficulties and insufficient resources.

The project looked at patient flow within Emergency Departments over the winter. It was a great success because of the generosity of its contributors, with over 50 NHS Trusts and Health Boards from across the UK submitting data over a six-month period. These data helped to provide a better understanding of system pressures and four-hour standard performance.

The findings enabled RCEM to broaden the debate around emergency medicine beyond the usual narrow focus on the four-hour standard, and meant that providers, commissioners, the national press, and governments in each of the nations of the UK were better informed about the challenges faced by staff working on the NHS frontline.

The project has proven invaluable and is now in its third year. As was the case in previous years, each participating Trust/Board has submitted weekly data on attendances, four-hour standard performance, delayed transfers of care and cancelled elective operations. This data together better reflects pressures, constraints and consequences for system performance. However, in an effort to reflect on-going difficulties in recruiting sufficient numbers of permanent staff, the project this year has also asked participating providers how many locum and agency staff are working in their Emergency Departments.

The data is aggregated to ensure the focus of consideration is the wider health care system rather than the performance of individual Trusts/Boards. Over 50 Trusts/Boards have submitted this data on a weekly basis since the beginning of October.

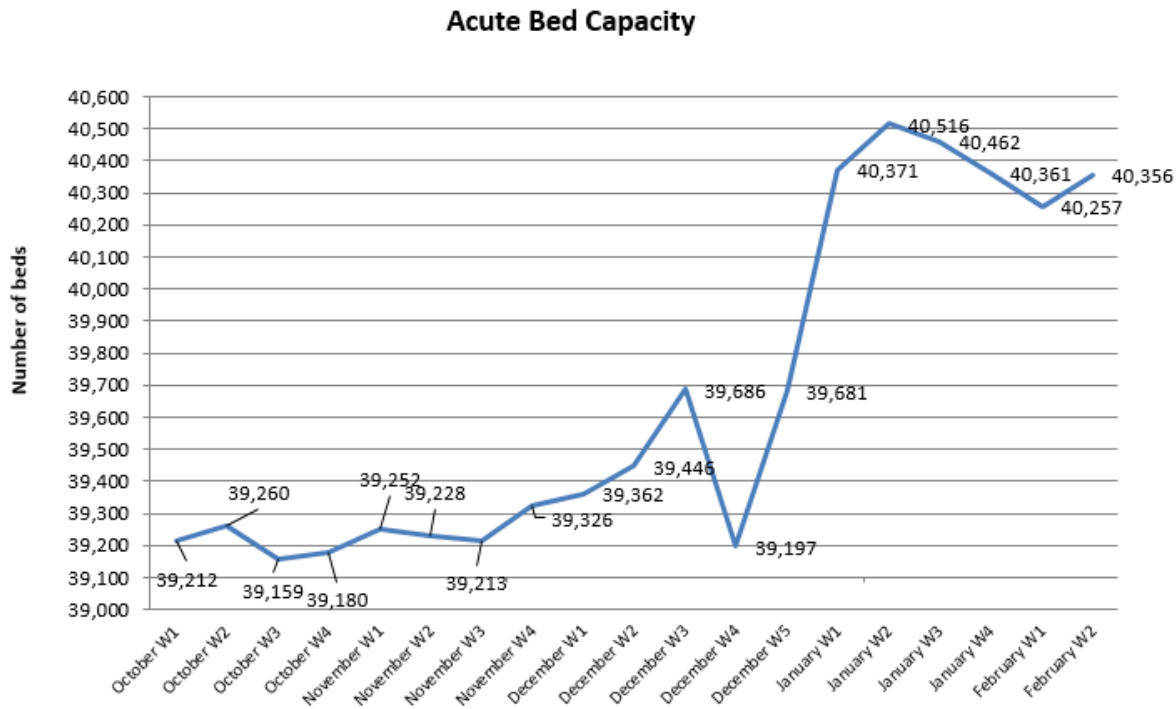
Published on a Friday of the week following data collection, the summary data provide a current overview of 'winter pressures'. The College is grateful to the participants who represent Trusts/Boards of all sizes and geographical locations.

Unlike NHS England datasets there is no suggestion that our project represents a complete or permanent scrutiny of the healthcare system. Our data includes all four countries of the UK though the majority of participating sites lie within England. It is a just sample of Trusts/Boards, albeit a large and representative one.

The data has already been of immense value to the College and allows informed comment and analysis rather than speculation.

The weekly data and trend data are presented in the following tables.

Graph of acute beds in service



Active Bed Management

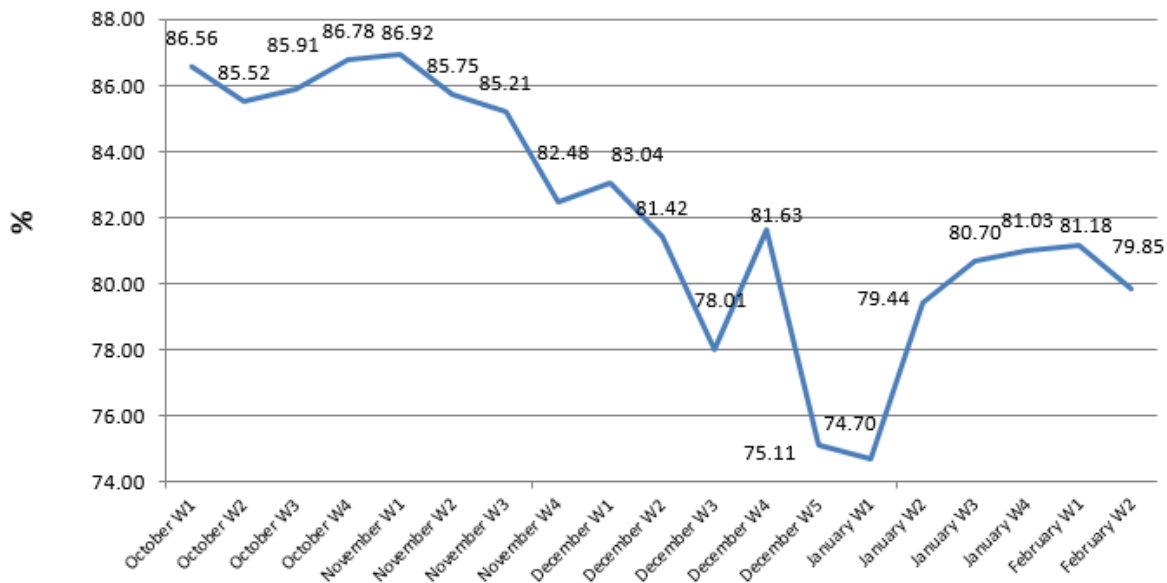
In the second week of February the number of beds within the project group increased to 40,356 up from 40,257 the previous week. In total, there has been a 5.1% increase in the aggregate bed stock from the project starting point.

The extent to which the participating Trusts/Boards are adjusting their bed stock to meet demand is shown in the table below.

	No flexing	0 – 5%	5 – 10%	10 – 15%	15 – 20%
Number of sites	9	9	20	9	9

Graph of four hour performance by week since October

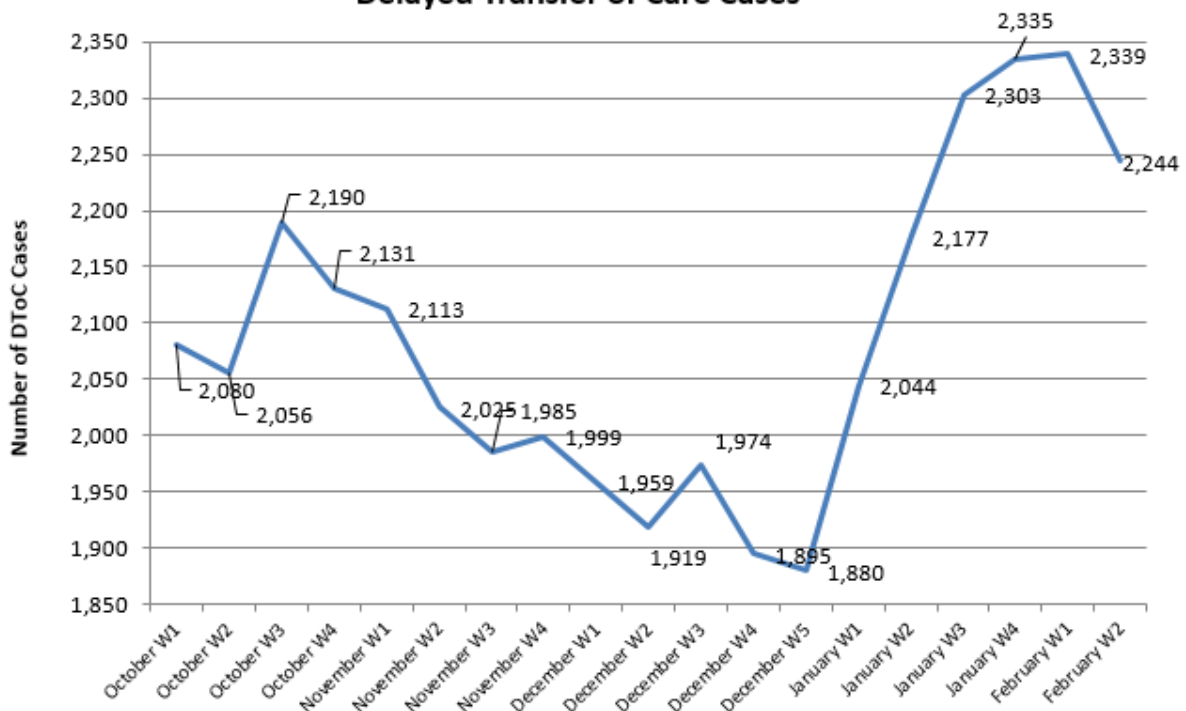
4 Hour Standard Performance - Simple Average Basis



In the second week of February four-hour standard performance stood at 79.85%, down from 81.18% the previous week. The underlying picture shows 18 increases and 36 decreases across the project group.

Graph of Delayed Transfers of Care (DTOCs) by week since October

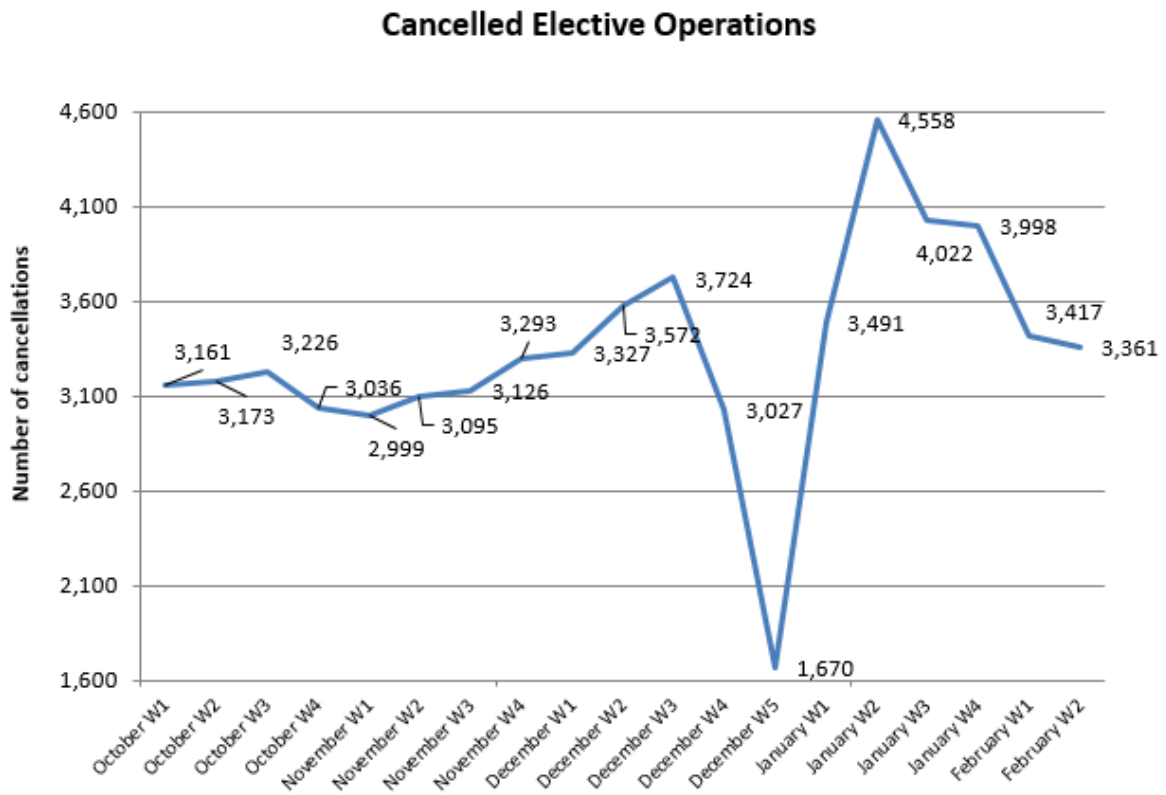
Delayed Transfer of Care Cases



The number of patients subject to DTOC in the second week of February was 2,244, down from 2,339 the previous week. This translates to 5.6% of acute bed stock, down from 5.8% the

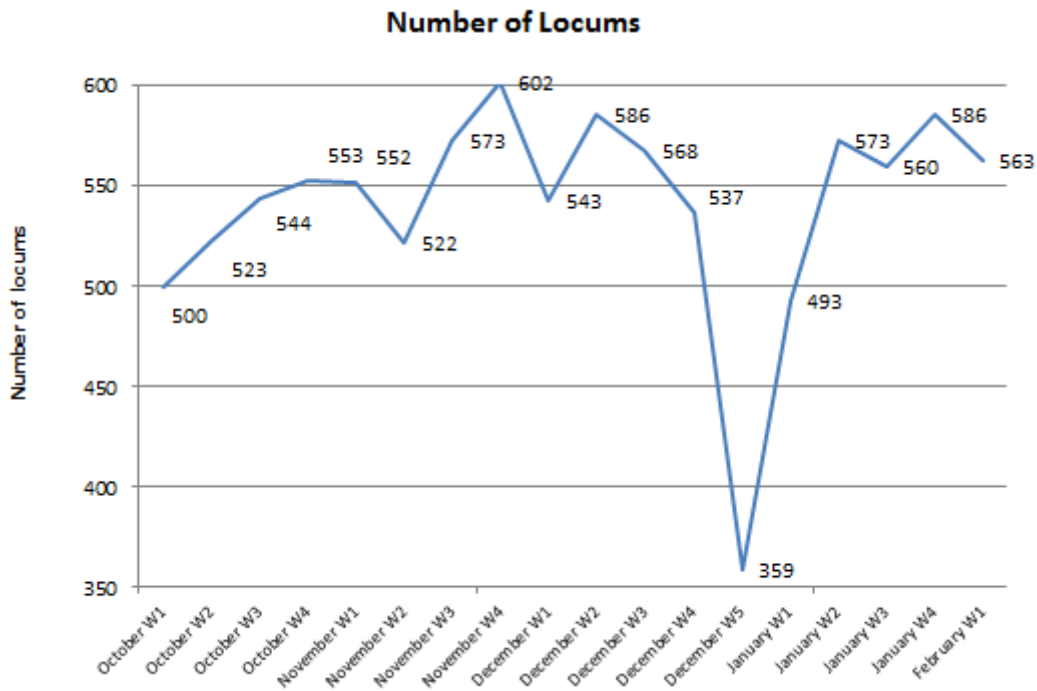
previous week. The range across all contributors for this week is a minimum 0.00% - maximum 16.4%.

Graph of cancelled elective operations since October



A total of 3,361 elective operations were cancelled this week down from 3,417 the previous week. A total of 63,276 elective operations have been cancelled over the project to date. This represents an overall average of 62 cancelled operations per site per week over the project so far.

Graph of number of locum and agency staff since October



In the first week of February the number of locum and agency doctors and nurses employed within Emergency Departments within the Winter Flow Project group stood at 563 down from 586 the previous week.

Overall

The Winter Flow Project data published this week shows that in terms of four-hour standard performance, the Providers within the project group have now lost much of the positive ground that was gained in the previous three weeks. At 79.85% this is 1.33 percentage points lower than was the case in the previous week. It is also, 2.51 percentage points lower than was the case at the same point last year and 3.9 percentage points worse than was the case in 2015-16 (83.75%).

With bed occupancy well above 90% – 94.97% for week ending 11th February¹ – hospitals are still wrestling with what is essentially a crisis situation. For Emergency Departments and the patients they serve, congested hospitals mean Exit Block and patients languishing on trolleys for a long period from decision to admit to admission to the ward.

Despite a modest improvement in acute available beds and recorded levels of Delayed Transfers of Care, NHS England Sitrep data shows that bed occupancy remains higher than at the same point last year (94.72%)². As we have pointed out repeatedly already in recent months, this is significantly higher than the 85% beyond which patients are placed at 'considerable risk.'³

¹ [NHS England Sitrep Data](#)

² [NHS England Sitrep Data](#)

³ [BMJ](#)

It should also be pointed out that this takes place within a context where there are fewer acute beds in the system than was the case at this same point last year. The NHS England Sitrep data shows that there was an average of 98,109 acute beds in service in the week ending 11th of February compared with 100,506 the previous year. This is a fall of 2,397.⁴

The number of beds occupied has also fallen, from average of 95,199 in 2016-17 to 93,175 in 2017-18, but because this is a smaller than the the beds which have been withdrawn from service (2,024)⁵ bed occupancy rates have increased.

⁴ [NHS England Sitrep Data](#)

⁵ [NHS England Sitrep Data](#)