

The NHS Long Term Plan¹

The Plan includes a pledge to redesign NHS services to reduce pressure on emergency hospital services and to boost out of hospital care. By 2021, there is an aspiration to integrate primary and specialist care systems and improve emergency care so that same day discharge increases from a fifth to a third of admissions. The Plan highlights large variations in zero days inpatient stay between hospitals which provides a clear target for some centres. Because of the high numbers, this will need to include a focus on emergency COPD admissions which is welcome as there is strong evidence that many COPD exacerbations can be managed at home.

Two specific aspects of emergency respiratory care are highlighted – the fact that over the past seven years hospital admissions for lung conditions have risen three times faster than for all cause admissions plus the seasonal nature of respiratory disease with major impact on winter pressure within the NHS,⁶ see figure 1, p21.

Other areas highlighted that have particular relevance to COPD services include the recognition that a third of people admitted to hospital with a COPD exacerbation have not been diagnosed, the need for a radical overhaul of diagnostic services and the recognition that expansion of pulmonary rehabilitation could prevent 80,000 hospital admissions over the next ten years.