

Strategic Insight & Foresight Briefing

Winter risks to inform Crisis Response planning



Overview

This briefing presents **winter risks by strategic cause**, covering the whole UK.

Data draws on **internal evidence** from British Red Cross, **external historical** datasets and a mixture of internal/external **forecasting** for the coming winter. Datasets have been overlaid and analysed to provide deeper insight, where possible.

Insight is collated in this deck primarily to inform **British Red Cross Crisis/Emergency Response planning** but could also prove helpful to **other services and VCSEP partners**.

Disasters & Emergencies



Key findings and questions to consider



Predicted to be a **wetter Autumn/Winter than usual**, with the **West and North** expected to face the heaviest rain.



Most **historical flood incidents occurred in London**, although vulnerability is higher in the East Midlands, Northern Ireland and central Scotland.



Central Scotland, West regions of England, and Wales have highest red/amber weather warning, being particularly susceptible to **heavy rains and snow**.



Poor insulation = vulnerable families at increased risk of **cold home exposure** (worst in Yorkshire) and having to make **choices between food and heating**.



Cost of living crisis will cause more families to face **fuel poverty**, especially in the devolved nations. **Overlap with energy crisis hotspots and higher flood vulnerability** = greater risk.



There **may be electricity blackouts in early December**. Less is known about gas supply stability, but currently few concerns over supply.

How best to prepare for emergencies around **rain, storms and flooding** – what **specialised regional support** can be offered in high-risk areas? What **preventative measures** ease the burden?

What **support** might need to be in place for people facing flood and snow risks? **Different plans** for **urban** areas compared to **rural**, given unequal risks?

How should we tackle the risks linked to fuel poverty – may be an **increase in fires and other emergencies** as people try alternatives to gas/electricity.

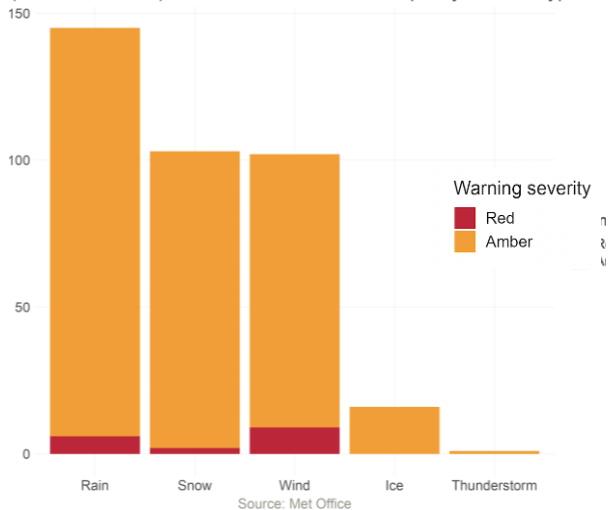
People facing multiple disadvantage – less likely to take preventative measures or have means to recover. What support can be offered to them, **especially following emergencies**?

What **emergency support** might need to be offered in the event of blackouts, and **how crisis response will prepare for potential blackouts** – how will services be run, what is/is not possible to support?



Historical warnings, by type of weather

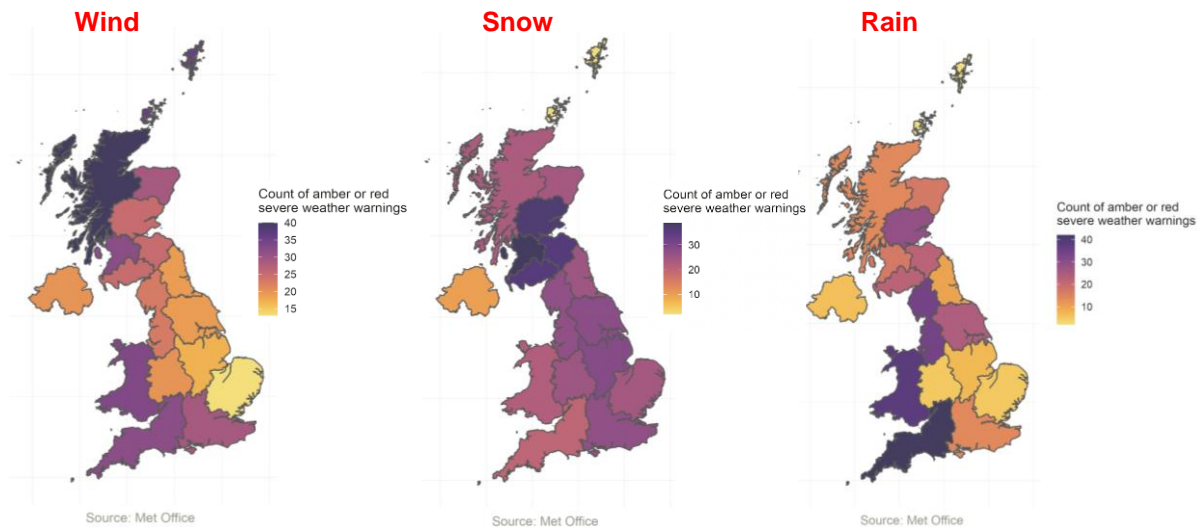
Count of amber or red weather warnings during winter periods (October - March) from 2011/12 - 2021/2022 split by weather type



Most warnings have been for **rain** and the vast majority have been **amber**. Note that a single warning can have more than one weather type (e.g. wind *and* rain).

There is no consistency in the most common weather warning across different years.

Number of Met Office **amber** or **red** severe weather warnings for different weather types during winter periods (October - March) from 2011/12 - 2021/2022



Top-ranking areas:

- > **Rain:** South West England and Wales
- > **Snow:** Central and South Scotland
- > **Wind:** Highlands of Scotland



3-month weather outlook

The Met Office's current 3-month outlook, covering September-November 2022, forecasts:

- Southern and eastern areas of the country have an **increased risk of dry weather continuing**
- For the UK overall, however, **the chance of a wet autumn is one and a half times normal**
- Heaviest and most widespread **rain** will likely be across **western and northern areas**
- A probable **decrease in storminess as compared to a typical autumn**
- Temperatures near average are most likely through the autumn

Precipitation in western and northern areas aligns with the historical picture of weather warnings (see previous slides).

A 3-month outlook covering October, November and December 2022 should be published on/around 3 October.

Temperature



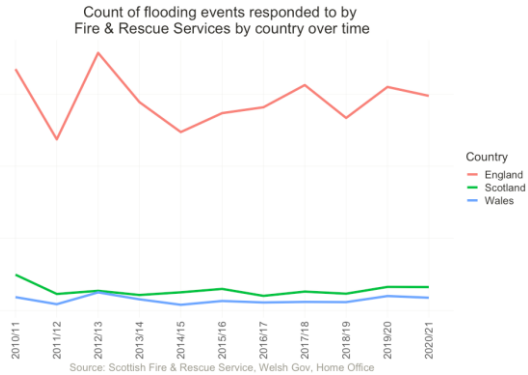
Rainfall





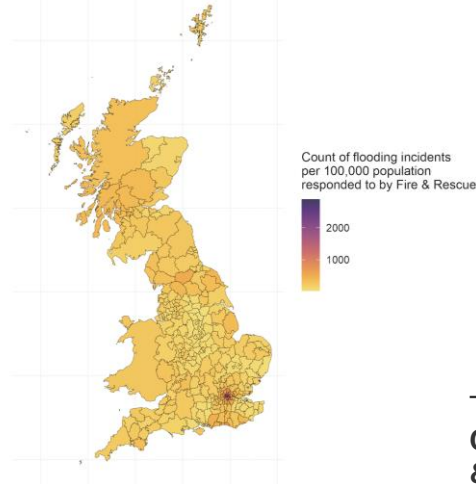
Historical flooding

The number of call-outs to floods does not vary much, year on year

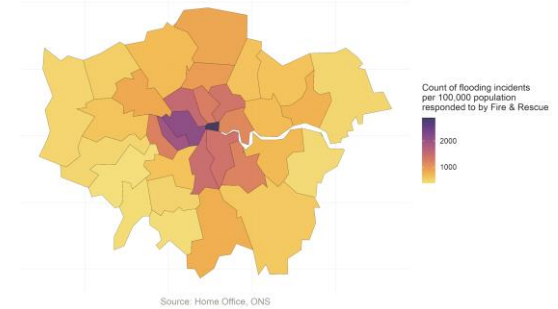


Most flood incidents between 2011 and 2021 occurred in London

Number of flooding incidents per 100,000 population responded to by Fire & Rescue between 2011 to 2021

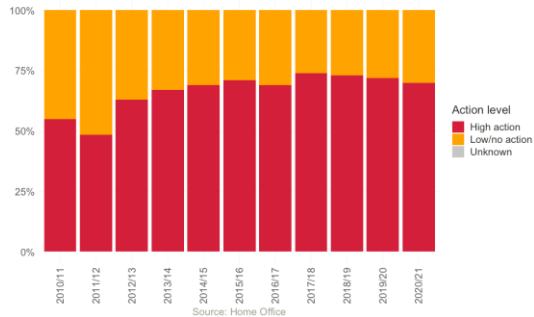


Number of flooding incidents in London per 100,000 population responded to by Fire & Rescue between 2011 to 2021



The highest rates of flood incidents were in **City of London, Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea, and Camden and Lambeth.**

Split of level of activity for flooding events responded to by England Fire & Rescue Services



70-75% of the flooding responses in England have been 'high action' (involved evacuation, pumping or making the area safe) and the remainder were 'low/no action' (advice only or stand by i.e., no action).

The data for Scotland and Wales are not split by these categories, so for comparison across nations all flooding responses by the Fire & Rescue Services are included.

Note: could not find comparable data for Northern Ireland.



Flood risks and vulnerability

The Sayers & Partners **Social Flood Risk Index (SFRI)** is a measure of 'flood disadvantage', which combines flood risk and social vulnerability to flooding.

'**Social vulnerability to flooding**' occurs when communities experience a loss in wellbeing because of to a flood, due to:

- **Susceptibility**: age and health of local populations
- **Ability to prepare**, based on income, knowledge and property tenure
- **Ability to respond**, based on income, knowledge, mobility and access to transport
- **Ability to recover**, based on income, information use, and mobility/transport
- **Community support**, given previous flood experiences, social networks, housing characteristics and availability of support

Largest numbers of people vulnerable in a flood

Top 5 Local Authorities with highest SFRI nationally



Source: Sayers & Partners

People exposed to frequent flooding

Top 5 Local Authorities with highest SFRI (individual) nationally



Source: Sayers & Partners



Cost of Living Crisis: Impacts and emerging needs

Population groups we typically support

- > Vulnerable age groups (under 5 and over 65)
- > Disabled people/people with chronic health conditions
- > Larger families with more dependent children
- > Living in deprived / 'left behind' areas (poorer infrastructure, older housing/poorer condition, greater digital exclusion/access to information and services)
- > Rural and urban areas (need/vulnerability varies by location)
- > Complex needs and chaotic lifestyles (homeless, substance abuse, unemployed/low income)

Additional needs due to rising cost of living

- > People living in 'energy crisis hotspots' are likely to be more vulnerable in the event of a flood or heatwave
- > Rising insurance costs could mean fewer people protected
- > Costs of upkeeping homes increasing, often being put to the wayside to prioritise food and energy, means greater likelihood of environmental degradation
- > Inadequate/insecure housing (mould, water damage, burst pipes)
- > Loneliness and isolation (price rises, cutbacks to public transport, less disposable income)
- > Increased mental health issues (winter is already difficult for many people; seasonal depression + lack of heating/food etc; anxiety; lack of control over life)

Potential constraints in meeting needs

- > Higher costs to serve and increased pressure on resources (transport, food, repairs, real-terms cut to cash assistance, less volunteers)
- > Council spending cuts – larger cuts in more deprived areas
- > Limited availability of emergency/short-term accommodation
- > Protective structures and resilience measures already in place in a community may aid/inhibit support and effects of disasters/emergencies
- > Already stretched community/statutory support

Unknown impacts

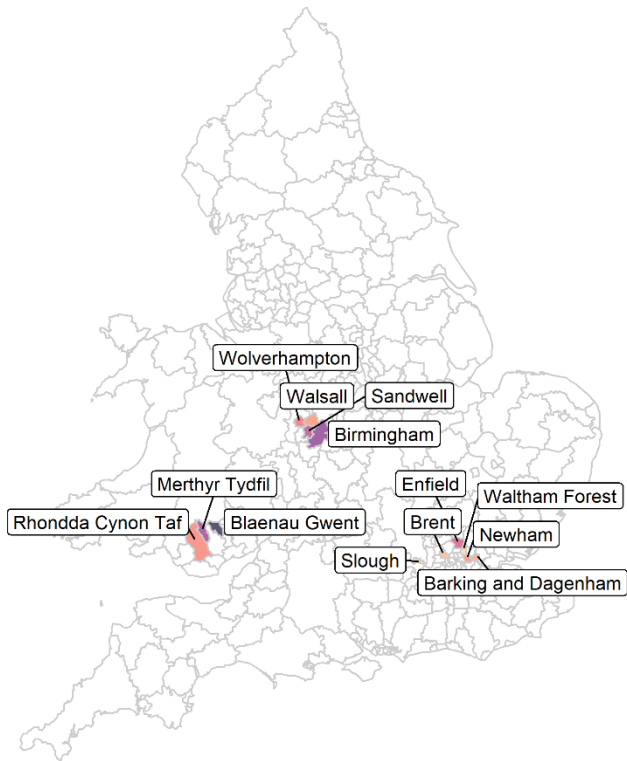
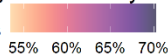
- > Weather severity (will it be a mild winter or more extreme weather – effects of climate change?)
- > How potential blackouts across the UK may impact access to support and resources
- > Potential energy rationing and how that would impact causes of and responses to disasters and emergencies
- > New PM and potential changes in winter planning/responses to cost of living crisis
- > Pressures on emergency accommodation, combined with expected increases in asylum seekers and refugees from Ukraine, Afghanistan



Places disproportionately affected by rising cost of living

Energy crisis hotspots with high vulnerability to flooding

% energy crisis hotspots



13 Local Authorities in England and Wales that are 'energy crisis hotspots' also have higher vulnerability in the event of a flood.

Energy crisis hotspots: places where energy use is high (e.g. due to poor insulation) and typical household income is below the national average.

Flood vulnerability: places at risk of flooding where community support is lacking, and more people are susceptible or unable to prepare, respond or recover.

(Equivalent data for Scotland and Northern Ireland are not available.)



Fuel poverty: England

London has the most energy-efficient houses, Yorkshire has the least

Share of Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) for domestic properties ranked C or above on the government's national EPC register (%)



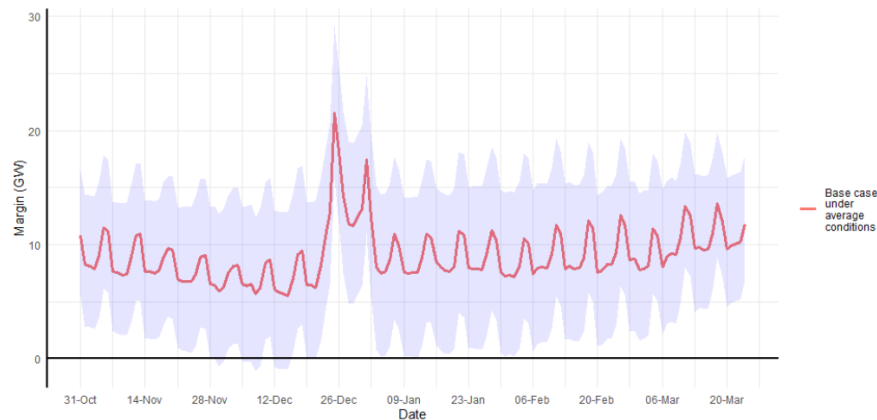
England's homes are not equally insulated for winter. More than 1 in 5 of the nation's poorest cannot afford to warm their homes. Cold homes led to [8,500 excess winter deaths](#) in 2019.

Many households already face a choice between heating and eating.



Despite the limited resources for fuel supplies, National Grid anticipates **sufficient capacity to be able to meet anticipated winter demands this year for electricity**

(Gas market stability currently under review – there are no known supply concerns as European stock levels are stable).



Tightest forecast demand for **electricity** is anticipated to be **early December** = when teams should be on **standby** for greatest likelihood of blackouts.



Fuel poverty: Devolved nations

Table 2: Estimated percentages and numbers of households living in fuel poverty by region, January 2023

| Region | % of households in fuel poverty | Number of households living in fuel poverty | Number of people in fuel poverty |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| North East | 58.6% | 695,000 | 1,628,000 |
| North West & Merseyside | 59.4% | 1,889,000 | 4,590,000 |
| Yorkshire & the Humber | 58.5% | 1,377,000 | 3,398,000 |
| East Midlands | 57.1% | 1,140,000 | 2,927,000 |
| West Midlands | 57.9% | 1,387,000 | 3,587,000 |
| Eastern | 51.3% | 1,300,000 | 3,449,000 |
| London | 47.5% | 1,512,000 | 4,593,000 |
| South East | 49.2% | 1,792,000 | 4,957,000 |
| South West | 55.5% | 1,308,000 | 3,230,000 |
| ★ Wales | 60.8% | 830,000 | 2,046,000 |
| ★ Scotland | 61.5% | 1,469,000 | 3,655,000 |
| ★ Northern Ireland | 71.7% | 551,000 | 1,419,000 |

Source: LCFS 2019-20 weighted data.

Northern Ireland has the highest proportion of households expected to be in fuel poverty by January 2023 (71.7% / 551,000). This is followed by Scotland (61.5% / 1,469,000) and Wales (60.8% / 830,000).

The proportion of households in fuel poverty in the devolved nations is expected to be greater than every region in England.

Health Inequalities



Key findings and questions to consider



Anticipated **sharp rises in Covid-19 cases** and complications from **long Covid** this winter. Excess deaths were already high going into winter.



New and multiple **Covid-19 variants** are expected to form with **unknown vaccine resistance**.



Multiple infectious diseases may hit all at once, with immunity lower than in typical winters.



Large backlogs of patients no longer meeting criteria to reside in hospital, especially in Trusts that had high Covid-19 bed occupancy.



Waiting lists, emergency department waits and ambulance response times are worse than pre-pandemic levels. Patients struggling to make and access appointments.



Cost of living crisis will widen health inequalities, especially around mental health, infections, and heart/respiratory diseases.

Could we help **increase vaccination uptake** for Covid-19 boosters and flu vaccines, especially for vulnerable populations (including new migrants)?

Should we **encourage safe practises for vulnerable groups**, such as wearing masks in busy and crowded areas, hand-washing and carrying hand sanitiser, and avoiding peak-time public transport?

Can/should we provide further support to improve patient flow, beyond our Seasonal Surge work and other contracted services?

Is there a role for Crisis Response – e.g. cash assistance for travelling to appointments?

Do we need to adjust our services because of the cost of living (and operating) crisis?



Covid-19

Autumn/winter Covid-19 wave is underway, driven by waning immunity, multiple new variants, less testing, more indoor mixing, and a new school year.



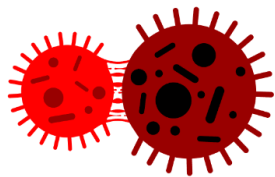
Only ~8% of people aged 50+ have received the **Autumn booster vaccine***.



Hospital admissions testing positive for Covid-19 have **risen in every English region** and are currently above the level seen this time last year*. Admissions are also rising in Wales, but not yet in Scotland or NI.



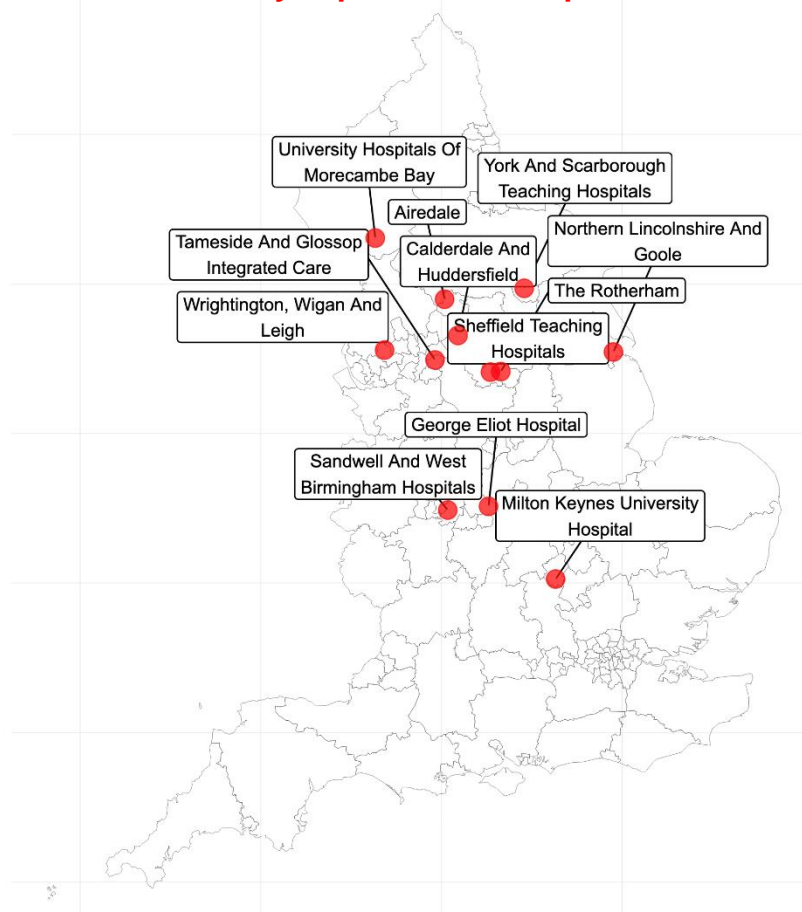
Waves of Covid-19 hospitalisations are associated with **longer waits for ambulances** – putting further pressure on an already-strained NHS.



New variants of concern may evolve over winter, where **rapid responses** and **variant-specific vaccines** would need to be developed and administered.

Trusts with a high % patients that do not meet criteria to reside and that had a high % of covid occupied beds in the previous winter period

These Trusts may experience more pressure this winter



* As of 21 September 2022



'Triple threat' of respiratory diseases

The NHS is hoping to mitigate Covid-19 transmission and severity with an **Autumn Covid-19 booster programme**, prioritising people aged 65+, people who are immunosuppressed, health and care workers, and/or carers. But there are **growing fears** that a **'triple threat'** may hit the NHS.

Over the past two winters, strict Covid-19 regulations **decreased flu outbreaks** and other viral infections. **This winter will be the first since the pandemic began where there are no government enforced restrictions.**

 **Covid-19**

 **Flu**

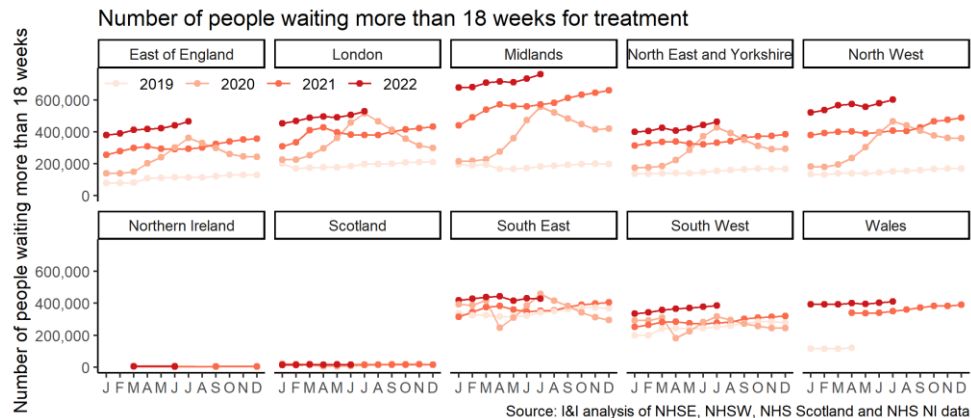
 **Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)**

Fewer people will have their usual immunity to these viral infections, and it will be **harder to predict** when these infections will widely circulate. There is a danger that **more people will be susceptible to harsher strains of these infections.**

If all three, or other, infections hit at once, the NHS is not expected to cope with the pressure.

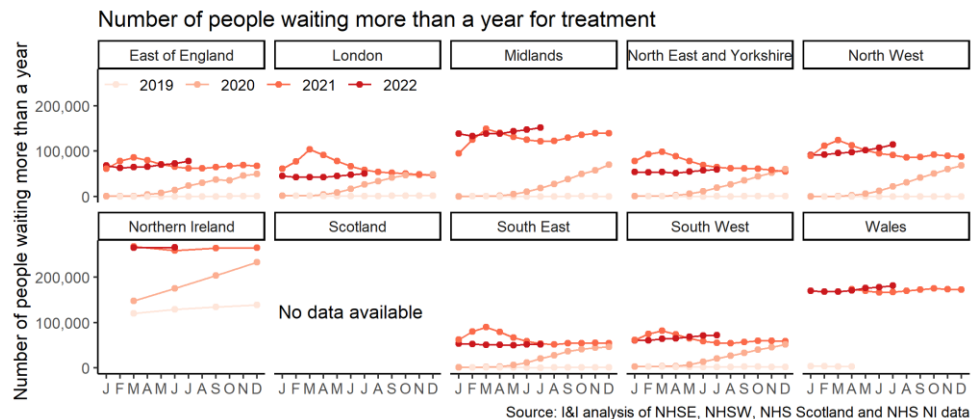


NHS Pressures: Elective care backlog



One in every eight people in Wales, and one in 17 people in England, have been waiting more than 18 weeks for treatment.

Waiting lists are particularly long—and continuing to lengthen—in the **Midlands**, **North West**, **London**, and **East of England**.



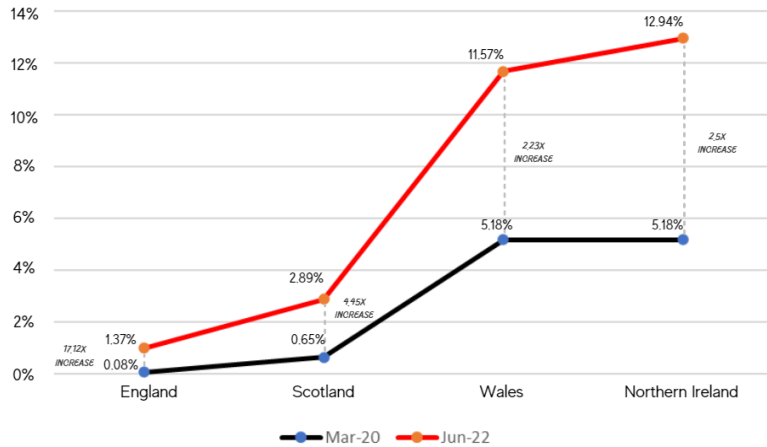
Reports of increasing numbers of people **struggling to afford travel to hospital appointments**.



NHS Pressures: Emergency care

Pressures on **emergency departments** across the UK have **increased** since the pandemic and **grown worse throughout 2022**.

% of Patients Waiting 12+ Hours in Emergency Departments: March 2020 vs June 2022



what could this mean for Winter risks?

These pressures are expected to create what some are calling a **'tsunami of demand'**.

The NHS is pre-emptively attempting to combat winter pressures, for example, by rolling out **early campaigns to only seek the NHS in an emergency**, and large **international recruitment drives** to plug staff gaps.

will this be enough combined with the cost-of-living crisis?

There are expected to be **substantial increased pressures** due to the cost-of-living crisis, particularly to:

These backlogs have taken their toll on the NHS workforce, with vacancies now reaching **110,000**. This has also been exacerbated by **abuse** from the public and **stagnant wages**.



mental health



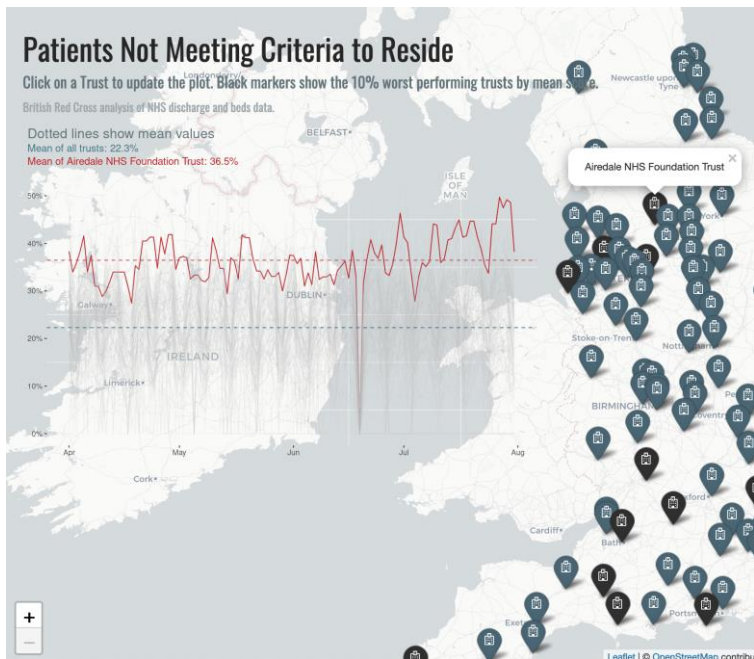
infections



heart / respiratory diseases



Further information on NHS winter pressures



Winter pressures result in large backlogs of patients no longer meeting criteria to reside in hospital. Our [interactive web app](#) examines Trust-level performance in delayed discharges.

For **health system performance**, our [NHS Capacity App](#) explores system-level indicators, such as emergency care, bed occupancy, diagnostic and elective care waits, and access to mental health services.

Historical information on **other aspects of winter pressures**—including bed availability and occupancy, long-stay patients, and handover delays—is available in our [winter situation report explorer](#) (which will be updated in December as new weekly sitreps are published).

Our [summer Health and Local Crisis Response packs](#) contain more information on BRC service reach into places with high health inequalities, levels of social care provision, and more besides.

Migration & Displacement



Key findings and questions to consider



More arrivals from Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Albania expected in coming months. Potential for a winter surge in Ukraine arrivals.

What **emergency/crisis support** might migrants need over winter, especially with **less temporary accommodation** available?



Highest number of asylum claims in 20 years and record number awaiting a decision = **intense backlog**.

What crisis situations may arise with these backlogs? Does Crisis Response have capacity to meet potential increased needs of vulnerable migrants? With **less access to formal pathways**, might Afghan migrants need more emergency support?



Afghan migrants are **struggling to access ARAP/ARCS** and therefore going through typical asylum claims and small boat crossings = **increasing backlog**.

What **emergency/crisis and healthcare support** might migrants need arriving from the Channel, especially with **increasing numbers**?



Channel small boat crossings are **increasing**, despite new laws and harsher sanctions around them and more dangerous conditions. **Rapid rise in Albanians and Afghans** arriving by boats.

Do we have capacity to support more migrants from **Albania**, especially those at **increased risk of exploitation**?



UK-Albania agreement puts Albanian migrants at increased risk of **deportation** and **trafficking** with **fewer protections** and **rights to asylum**. Yet, more are being **granted refugee status**.

What might the role of Crisis Response be for asylum seekers who are likely to face **extreme deprivation** over winter?



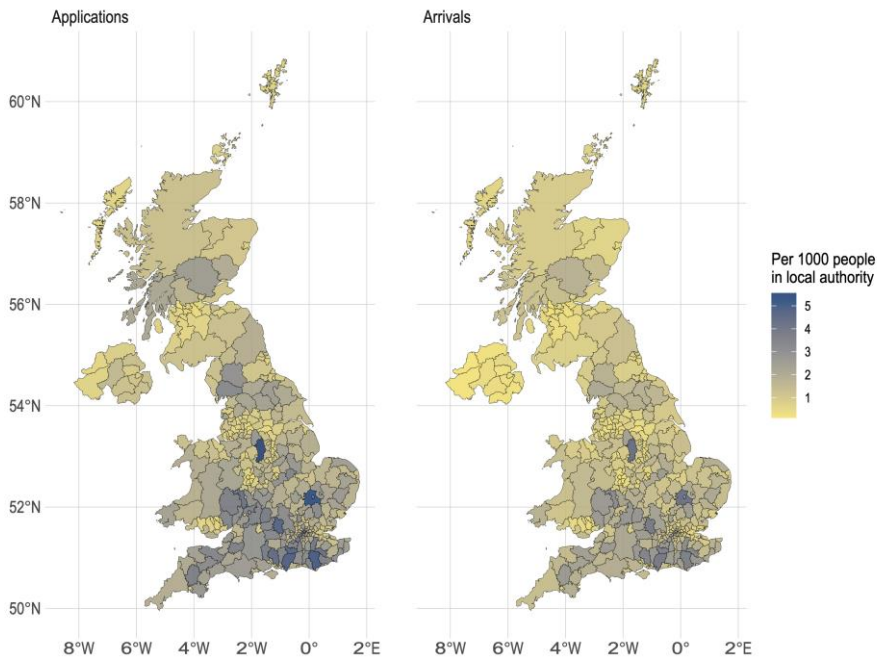
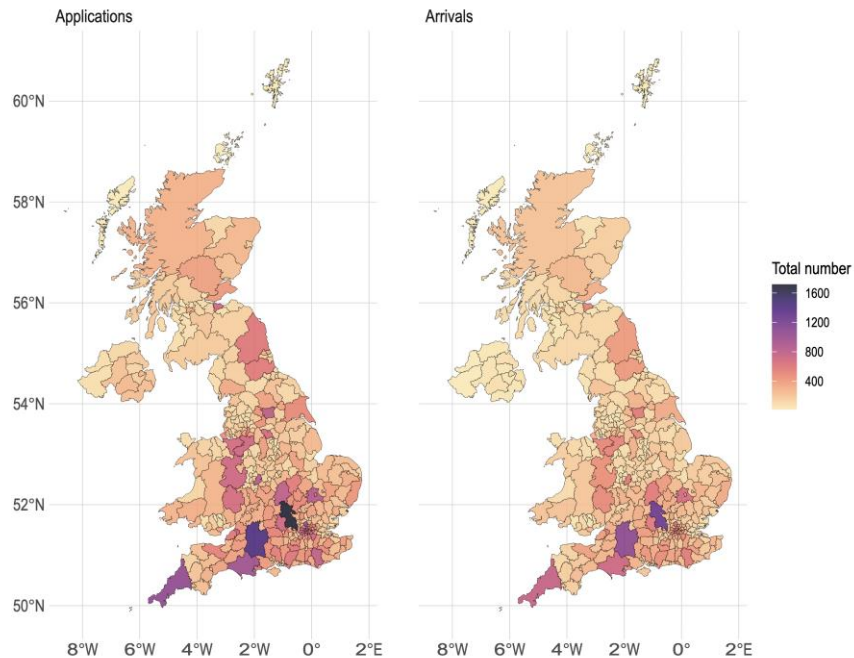
The uplift in **asylum support payments** has been more than wiped out by the rising cost of living. More migrants likely to face deprivation and destitution.



Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme: Where do arrivals go?

Cornwall, Wiltshire, and Dorset received the most visa applications and arrivals (see maps on left).

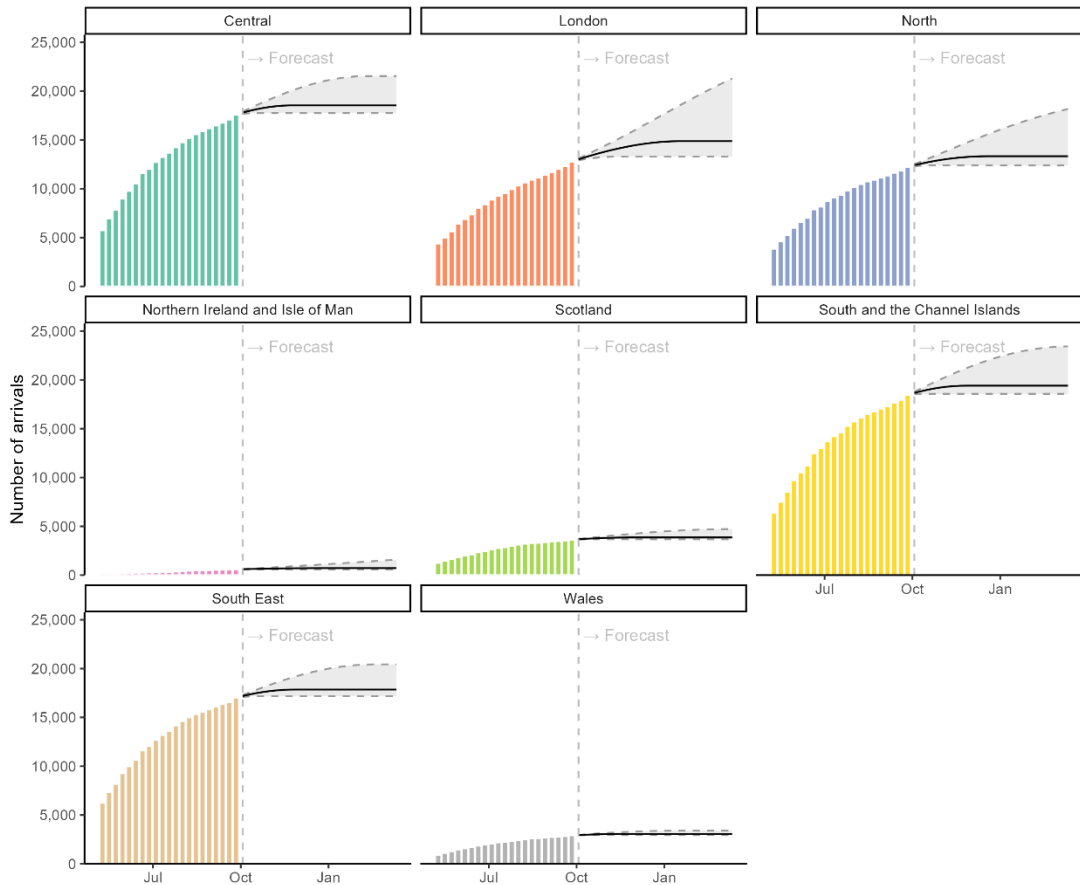
Relative to the population in each local authority, **South Cambridgeshire, Derbyshire Dales, and Chichester** received the most arrivals (right).





Ukraine: Forecasting arrivals in each region

Historical and predicted arrivals from Ukraine by British Red Cross area



Source: British Red Cross analysis and simulation of DLUHC data

- **Central, South and Channel Islands and South East** are the areas where **arrival rates** have been and will be **highest**.
- The continued increase in Ukrainian arrivals has caused **knock-on pressure to an already over-stretched system** – there are now huge backlogs in the asylum system.
- **2022** has already seen the **highest number of asylum claims in the last 20 years**.



Afghan arrivals via ARAP and ARCS

As of 25th August 2022:



9,667 people

(around half of are children)
currently living in hotel
accommodation

Statistics for England only.



84 → 66 hotels

Home Office reduced hotels in
use from 84 in October 2021 to
66 in August 2022



**7,385 moved
to homes**

or have been matched to a home
and are waiting to move in

Less information is available for devolved nations, and no information on number and location of Afghan arrivals for Northern Ireland, however:



**127 families (520
individuals)**

resettled in Scotland as of 14th June
2022, with many across 6 hotels in
Edinburgh, Fife, and Aberdeen



350 individuals

resettled in Wales as of 12th
January 2022 due to the
Afghan resettlement schemes

However, **many Afghans are struggling to access these resettlement schemes**, especially compared to those accessing the Ukrainian and Hong Kong schemes. This is causing many to **apply through the asylum process rather than through ARAP and ARCS** and coming to the UK through **small boat crossings** to do so, despite the inherent dangers.



Migrants from Albania

Albanian migrants are now one of the biggest nationalities arriving on small boats into the UK, with **2,165** arriving between **January – June 2022**, compared with just **23** detected in the same period the previous year.

They are tied with Afghan migrants at **18% of all small boat arrivals**.

UK-Albania Agreement Updates

On 25th August, the Home Office struck an agreement with the Albanian government to **expedite the removal of Albanians with no right to be in the UK, wherever possible**.



This would have **specifically targeted those making small boat crossings** across the Channel.

However...

On 26th September, **the Home Office admitted it did not have the right to fast-track the deportation of Albanian asylum seekers** after their arrival to the UK, even through small boat crossings.

Instead, **Albanians are to be considered as arriving passengers**.

Vulnerability to Trafficking

The UK Government recently described Albania as:

“a source country for the trafficking of women, men and children to other European countries, including the UK”

In the UK, as of August 2022, the **most common nationality referred to the Home Office as potential victims of trafficking was Albanian**, accounting for **27%** (1,130) of all potential victims.

Increasing numbers of Albanian asylum seekers are **going missing from hotels and temporary accommodation**.



It is thought they are being targeted for trafficking rings because they are **unprotected and vulnerable groups, especially women and girls**.



Cost of living crisis for vulnerable migrants

People going through the asylum system receive around **£5.80 a day (£40.85 a week) to cover all living costs**, except for housing. They do not have the right to work, or the right to claim mainstream welfare and housing benefits because they have **no recourse to public funds (NRPF)**. People in **contingency accommodation** (incl. hotels and B&Bs) receive **£8.24 a week**.

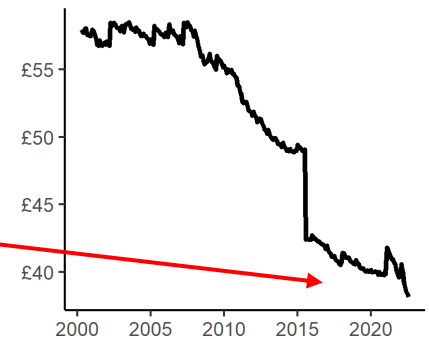
People seeking asylum are even more likely to face destitution this winter

In February 2022, the UK Government increased asylum payments (for those not in contingency accommodation) by **17p a day**, from **£39.63** to **£40.85** per week: a 3.1% uplift.

Given rapidly inflating prices, this has amounted to a real-terms cut in payments since April 2022 – wiping out the recent uplift.

Asylum payments are at an all-time low, in real terms

Asylum support payments
Adjusted for inflation; 2021 pounds



People with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)

As well as missing out on mainstream welfare and housing benefits, people with NRPF can struggle to access additional financial and social safety nets because of the **complexity** and **lack of awareness** of available support; **fear** of interacting with service providers; and **language barriers**. These individuals are also more susceptible to changes in **policy**, the **labour market**, and the **economy**. For the coming winter, **people with NRPF are at greater risk of destitution** due to rising costs of living and are at risk of reduced support from ongoing changes to UK-wide immigration laws.

Although families with NRPF can access some support through Section 17 to safeguard a child in need, there is **limited information** about how individual local authorities assess needs and how much help is supplied to families with NRPF.



Channel crossings (including small boats)

Some may have expected small boat crossings to **diminish** because of stricter laws (**Nationality and Borders Bill 2022, came into full enforcement 28th June 2022**) around the admittance of migrants through small boat crossings and potential consequences to their asylum applications and criminal prosecutions.

| | No. of Migrants | No. of Small Boat Crossing |
|------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| 22 Aug – 18 Sept | 8,396 | 186 |
| 27 June – 3 July | 3,179 | 76 |

Source: BRC analysis of [Ministry of Defence](#) data.

However, when we compare the number of migrants and number of small boat crossings from when the N&BB, 2022 came into full force with most recent data, we see **there has been an increase in the number of Channel small boat crossings since the Bill.**

This suggests that it might take a longer period than thought for crossings to diminish, or it could signal the **difficulty migrants have accessing the UK through 'legal' means**, combined with a **greater need to seek safety and security** within the UK from their original country.

During winter, migrants crossing the Channel are especially susceptible to:



hypothermia



injury and fatality

Increasingly, migrants are being forced to take **more treacherous journeys than previous years.**

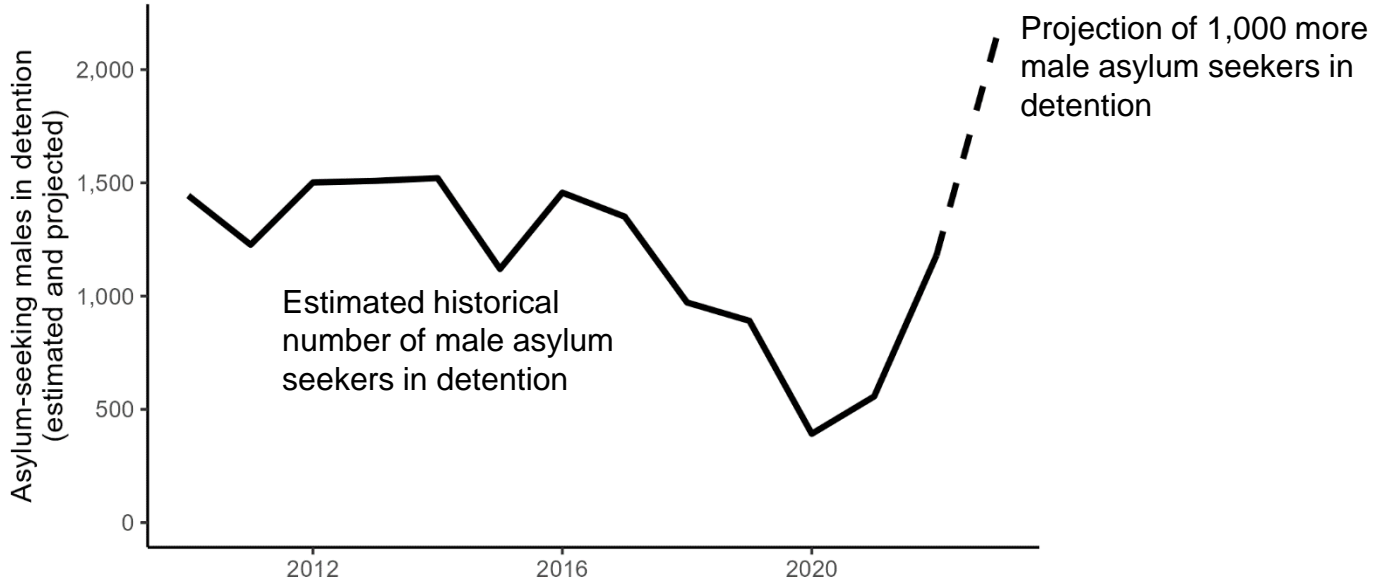
An average of **39 people** are onboard each small boat that arrives in the UK in 2022. This is up from **28 in 2021** and **13 in 2020.**



Immigration detention

Home Office plans would lead to an 85% increase in detention for males seeking asylum

Estimated historical numbers of male asylum-seekers in detention (solid line) and projections (dashed line) based on reports that the Home Office will detain an additional 1,000 male asylum seekers.



Source: British Red Cross analysis of Home Office and The Guardian data



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