



An estimated

75%

of all hospital admissions for  
asthma are preventable



## Asthma UK asks ‘Wish you were here?’ as alarming variations in emergency hospital admissions for asthma are revealed

From April 2006 to March 2007<sup>1</sup> there were 80,593 hospital admissions for people experiencing an asthma attack in the UK, costing the NHS an estimated £61 million. More than 40% of these admissions, 33,285, were for children aged under 15.

Reducing hospital admissions for people with asthma is a key aim for Asthma UK. We estimate that as many as 75% of all hospital admissions for asthma are avoidable through good asthma management and routine care. Despite this large number of preventable admissions, asthma remains a low priority for many healthcare decision-makers. Asthma UK has published a *Good Asthma Service Checklist* for healthcare decision-makers to help improve asthma management. By acting on these recommendations, services can help people with asthma stay in control of their condition and reduce its impact on them and their families' lives.

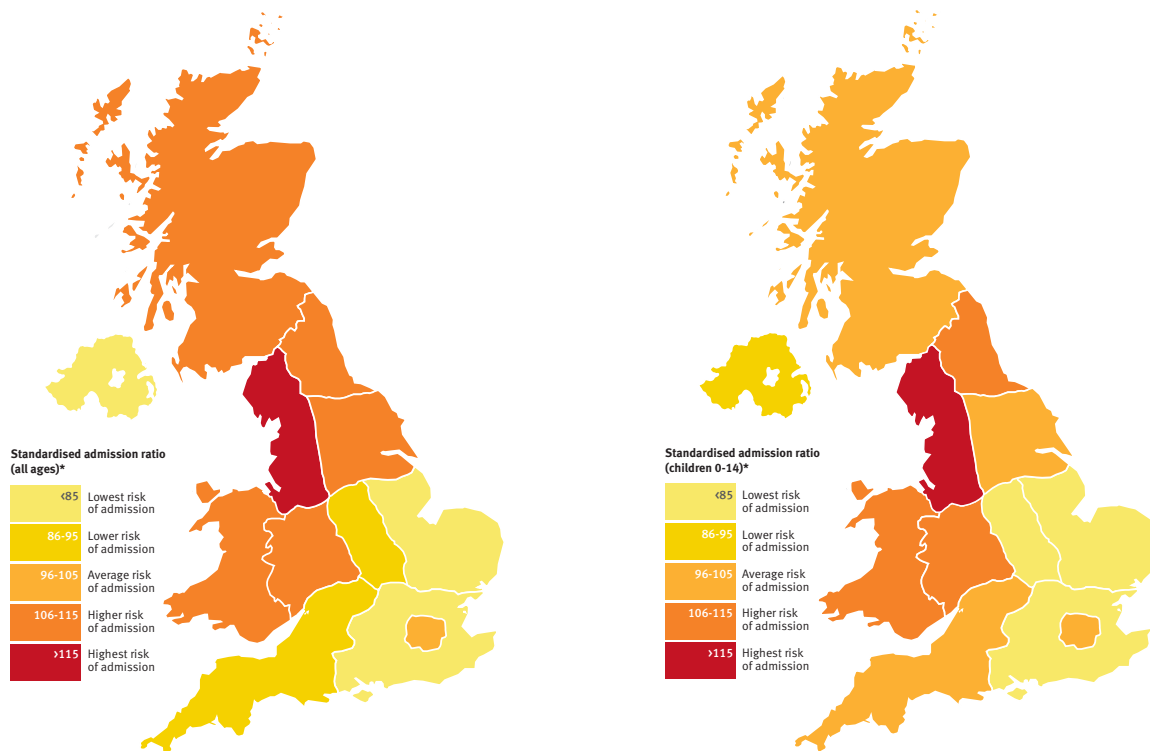
In 2007, Asthma UK published *The Asthma Divide*, which showed the stark variations in emergency admissions between Primary Care Trusts. This year, we are continuing to highlight this divide by widening the scope of our research to produce a set of reports for the whole of the UK. These outline the latest available data on asthma admissions. They continue to show an unacceptable disparity, with regional differences widening across England and new figures highlighting the situation across Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Even more worryingly admissions for children show an even wider range.

Asthma UK's ‘Wish You Were Here?’ campaign reveals which parts of the country have the highest hospital admissions for people with asthma. Launched on World Asthma Day 2008, the campaign:

- is a call to action for governments and health services across the UK to deliver high quality services for the 5.2 million people – including 1.1 million children – with asthma, regardless of where they live in the UK
- demands that the current lottery of service provision and inequalities for people with asthma is abolished
- will be ongoing and updated as Asthma UK develops its model of effective asthma services which reflect the needs of all people with asthma and their carers.



More than  
**40%**  
of all hospital admissions for  
asthma were for children under 15



**Regional and national differences in risk of emergency hospital admission for asthma in the UK (all ages and children under 15)**

The standardised admission ratios used for these reports have been calculated using admissions figures and national, local and regional population profiles to generate expected admission numbers for each area. By comparing these with the actual number of people

with asthma admitted to hospital during the NHS operating year 2006 to 2007, we can see how wide the gap really is in asthma hospital admissions between different parts of the UK.

Standardised admission ratio (all ages)		Standardised admission ratio (children 0-14)	
ENGLAND: NORTH WEST	132	ENGLAND: NORTH WEST	151
ENGLAND: NORTH EAST	115	ENGLAND: NORTH EAST	115
WALES	110	ENGLAND: WEST MIDLANDS	107
ENGLAND: YORKSHIRE & HUMBER	109	WALES	106
ENGLAND: WEST MIDLANDS	108	ENGLAND: YORKSHIRE & HUMBER	102
SCOTLAND	106	SCOTLAND	100
ENGLAND: LONDON	101	ENGLAND: SOUTH WEST	97
ENGLAND: SOUTH WEST	95	ENGLAND: LONDON	96
ENGLAND: EAST MIDLANDS	87	NORTHERN IRELAND	89
NORTHERN IRELAND	83	ENGLAND: SOUTH EAST	83
ENGLAND: SOUTH EAST	80	ENGLAND: EAST MIDLANDS	79
ENGLAND: EAST OF ENGLAND	75	ENGLAND: EAST OF ENGLAND	72

**UK emergency hospital admissions for asthma**

\* Comparative emergency hospital admissions figures accounting for regional population differences, with the average for the UK assigned a figure of 100



Children in North-West England were more than twice as likely to need emergency hospitalisation for their asthma than those in the East of England



## Regional/national differences

North-West England remains the region with the highest asthma emergency admission ratio in the country. The chances of emergency hospitalisation for asthma were 76% higher for people who live in North-West England than for those who live in East of England. Since the publication of *The Asthma Divide* this gap has widened<sup>2</sup>. Other areas with higher than average admissions include North-East England, 15% above the national average, and Wales, with admissions 10% above the national average.

The differences are even more striking for children. The chances of emergency hospitalisation for asthma among children were more than twice as high (110%) for children living in North-West England than for those in the East of England. Other areas with higher than average admissions for children include North-East England, 15% above the national average and the West Midlands, 7% above the national average.

Areas with relatively low admission figures were Northern Ireland, 17% below the UK average, and South-East England, 20% below average.

As well as the East of England, areas with lower than average admissions figures for children include the East Midlands, where the rate was 21% below average and South-East England, where the rate was 17% below average.

A wide range of factors can influence people's chances of needing emergency hospital treatment for asthma. Where they live should not be one of these.

Asthma UK calls on health decision-makers across the UK to ensure that the *Good Asthma Service Checklist* is implemented in their area, and on governments to give asthma care the priority that the 5.2 million people with asthma deserve.

Detailed reports for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have also been published. These show the emergency hospital admission ratios for asthma across the primary care organisations for each nation. They also contain specific calls to action for each government. To download a copy of these four reports visit [asthma.org.uk/wad](http://asthma.org.uk/wad).

### References

- <sup>1</sup> The data used for this report cover the NHS operating year April 2006 to March 2007
- <sup>2</sup> This is not a year-on-year comparison. Data used for *The Asthma Divide* were based on hospital episode statistics for the calendar year 2004

### Data sources

England: Hospital Episode Statistics, Department of Health  
Scotland: Information Services Division (ISD), NHS Scotland  
Wales: Health Services Wales  
Northern Ireland: DHSSPS NI  
Population estimates: Office for National Statistics

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