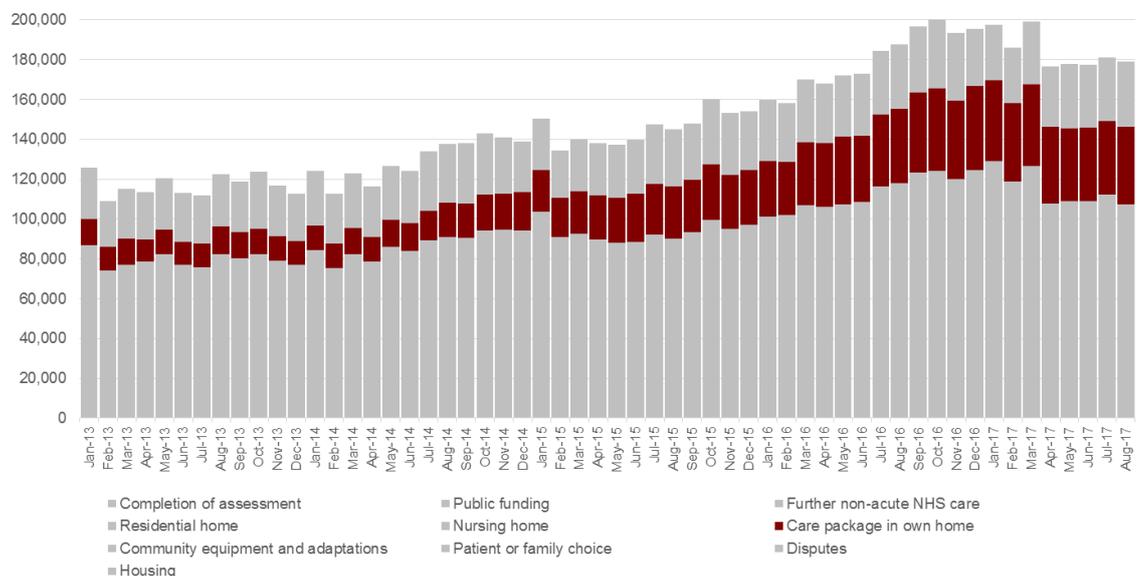


Recent NHS monthly statistics show a very welcome reduction in overall rates of DToc. We have been unpicking the numbers a little and found a couple of interesting issues. Firstly, social care’s critical role in reducing DToc may be declining and secondly, there are signs that the recent reductions in DToc may be difficult to maintain.

The role of social care

A review of monthly statistics shows that whilst the overall number of DToc’s is indeed declining, access to homecare remains an important and growing challenge.

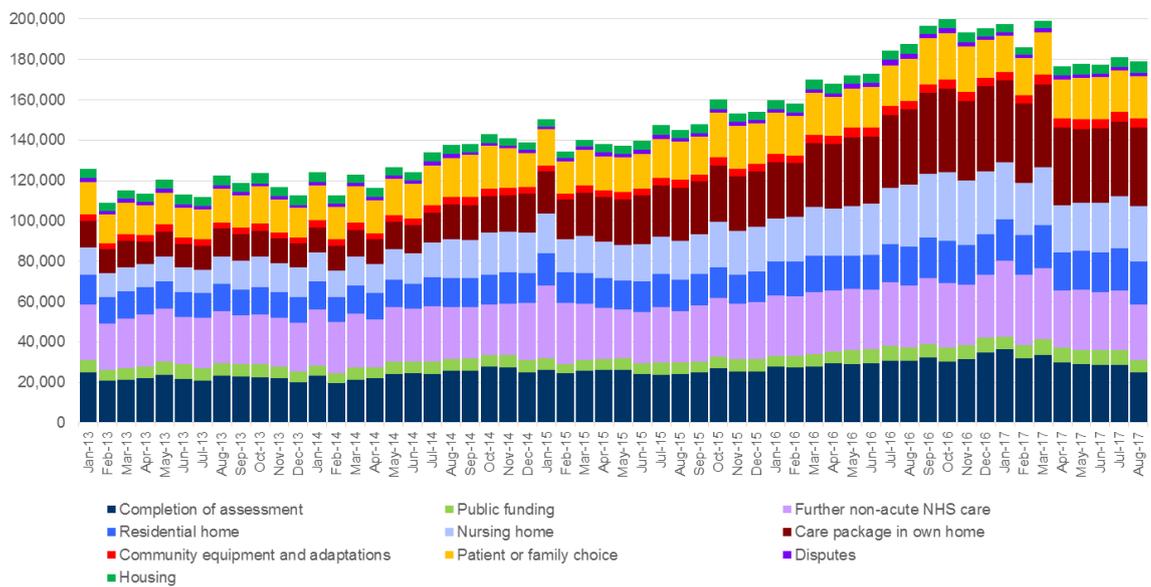
Figure 1 NHS Monthly DToc statistics – highlighting the role of homecare in delayed discharge.



As we have explored in other blogs, this is a difficult challenge to tackle, and a joint approach between health and social care is key. After homecare, the next most commonly-identified reasons for delay are:

- Awaiting completion of an assessment
- Access to non-acute NHS care

Figure 2 NHS Monthly DToC statistics – showing all identified reasons for delayed discharge.

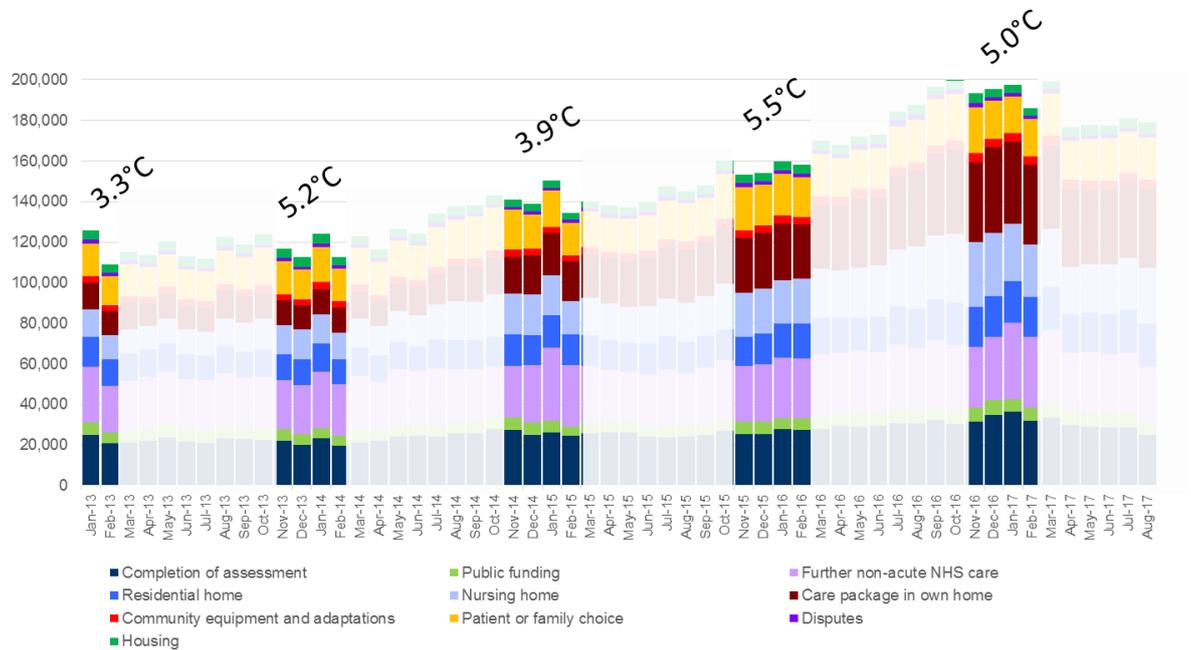


Social care’s control over these factors is relatively limited. This suggests to us that there may be an increasing number of levers directly within the control of health partners, which can have a positive influence on DToC.

Winter temperatures

When considering the welcome decline in DToC rates this year, is it interesting to undertake a comparison with average winter temperatures. This has some bearing on the level of stress which hospitals are likely to experience as lower temperatures raise the likelihood of pneumonia, flu and complicated winter illnesses which particularly affect the older population.

Figure 3 Rates of DToC and average winter temperatures



In spite of very recent good news regarding declines in DToC, the overall picture since 2013 is an upward trend. This is despite the last two winters being relatively warm. Average winter temperatures are understandably difficult to predict. However, advice to date suggests that winter 2017-2018 is likely to begin relatively warm and then become one of the coldest we've experienced for some years. If 2017-2018 brings a winter which is closer to the average of 3.3 degrees Celsius experienced back in 2013-2014, it is difficult to imagine that the very recent positive trend could be maintained.