

BRIEFING FOR INFORMATION:

TITLE: NHS 111

TO: York Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee

MEETING DATE: 8 May 2011

Background

NHS 111 is a new telephone based service for patients that will be available throughout the country no later than 1st April 2013.

The service is being introduced to support access to urgent and emergency healthcare and ensure patients are seen by a service most appropriate for their needs.

It will replace the existing NHS Direct telephone number.

The service will be accessed by calling a three digit number, 111, which will be staffed by a team of fully trained call handlers who will be supported by experienced clinicians.

Call handlers will carry out an initial assessment which will be directed by the use of a specific assessment tool. Depending on the answers given by the patient, appropriate services will be identified on the system, thus enabling the call handler to direct the patient accordingly.

Services may include, for example, Out of Hours GP Service, Walk in Centre, Urgent Care Centre, In Hours GP, Community Nursing Team, Emergency Dental service or Late Opening Pharmacy.

In the vast majority of cases, calls to 111 will be dealt with without the need for call backs.

If the call is an emergency and the patient requires an ambulance, the call handler has the facility to dispatch an ambulance without delay.

NHS 111 will be available 365 days a year, 7 days a week and calls will be free to the caller.

When should you call NHS 111?

Patients should dial 111 if they urgently need medical help or advice but it's not a life-threatening situation.

Patients should call 111 if it's not a 999 emergency, but they:

- think they may need to go to A&E or another NHS urgent care service
- don't think it can wait for an appointment with their GP
- don't know who to call for medical help.

For less urgent health needs patients should still contact their GP in the usual way.

For immediate, life-threatening emergencies, they should continue to call 999.

Establishing the service

A number of pilot sites for NHS 111 are already in place. Early pilots include:

- Luton
- County Durham and Darlington
- Lincolnshire
- Nottingham City

Locally, NHS North Yorkshire and York, along with all other Yorkshire & Humber NHS Clusters, is part of an ongoing regional procurement for NHS 111.

Launch Date

Plans are in place to ensure that NHS 111 will be available in North Yorkshire and York, along with other areas of the country, no later than 1 April 2013.

Raising awareness of NHS 111

A regional communication campaign will be planned and implemented prior to the launch of the new service.

This will comprise a range of advertising including radio, newspaper and potentially TV.

The project team has already embarked upon a programme of engagement with the voluntary sector, who will be play a key role in disseminating information to their members as we get nearer to the launch of the service.

A national public consultation was conducted with OFCOM as part of the process of having the three digit number allocated. This showed that there was very strong public support for the service.

There have also been a number of research projects with the public and these have consistently found strong public support for NHS 111.

For more information visit www.nhs.uk/111