

SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES	Agenda Item No. 4
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Report of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group

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NHS 111 SERVICE

1. PURPOSE

1.1 Information requested by the Commission on NHS 111 service.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 To note the report.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Introduction

NHS 111 is a new telephone service being introduced to make it easier for the public to access local health services, when they need medical help fast, but it isn't a 999 emergency. This will replace the current NHS Direct service, nationally from 1 April 2013, and across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough from 22 October 2013.

The NHS 111 service will ultimately form part of an integrated 24/7 urgent care service, incorporating GP out-of-hours services and provide urgent medical care for people registered with a GP elsewhere.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will be piloting the NHS 111 service from 22 October 2013, with the intention of tendering the service in 2014/15.

3.2 Background

Research with the public has made clear for some time that the public find it difficult to access NHS services when they develop unplanned, unexpected healthcare needs. Changes in the way in which services are delivered, in particular the introduction of new services like NHS Walk-in Centres or Urgent Care Centres, have added to the complexity of the urgent healthcare system. The result is that many people are unclear which services are available to meet their urgent, unplanned needs and how they should be accessed, especially outside normal working hours when GP practices are closed or when they are away from home.

NHS reviews have also found that patients want better information and more help to understand how to access the best care, especially urgent care, when they need it. Consultations with the public and clinicians carried out by Strategic Health Authorities resulted in them calling for the introduction of a single number to improve access to urgent healthcare services.

The Department of Health started work in 2008 on scoping the introduction of a single number to access NHS urgent healthcare services. This included carrying out research with the public that found there was overwhelming support for such a service in particular with a '999 style' memorable number. Research was also conducted to identify which of the available three-digit numbers the public preferred, 111 was by far the most popular.

This work also identified that the introduction of a three-digit number could provide significant

benefits, not only to the public, but to the NHS as well. The data the service will collect will enable the commissioning of more effective and productive healthcare services that are better tuned to meet patient needs.

3.3 **How does it work?**

111 will get you through to a team of fully trained call advisers, who are supported by experienced nurses. They will ask you questions to assess your symptoms, and give you the healthcare advice you need or direct you to the right local service.

The NHS 111 team will where possible book you an appointment or transfer you directly to the people you need to speak to. If they think you need an ambulance, they will send on immediately – just as if you had originally dialled 999.

3.4 **When do you use it?**

You should use the NHS 111 service if you need medical help or advice urgently but it's not a life-threatening situation.

You should call 111 if:

- It's not a 999 emergency
- you think you need to go to A&E or another NHS urgent care service;
- you don't think it can wait for an appointment with your GP; or
- you don't know who to call for medical help.
- For less urgent health needs, you should still contact your GP in the usual way.
- For immediate, life-threatening emergencies, you should continue to call 999.

3.5 **Why should you use it?**

NHS 111 is a fast and easy way to get the right help – whatever your need, wherever you are, and whatever the time.

NHS 111 can help us take the pressure off the 999 service and local A&E departments, so that they can focus on emergency cases.

4 **KEY ISSUES**

4.1 Due to delays with the launch of our local 111 service, on 5 March the Governing Body of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) made the decision to appoint an alternative provider to run the local NHS 111 service.

The CCG Governing Body made this decision on the basis of patient safety. It did not believe that, even with further delay, the implementation issues could be resolved sufficiently to provide a safe service for the residents of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

This decision was communicated to UCC and unfortunately they immediately commenced legal action against the CCG, which has made it difficult to communicate openly with our members.

As a clinically led organisation, our Governing Body GPs made a clear decision that the interests of patients must come first. Experience elsewhere in the country has shown that this must be the overriding consideration when making decisions of this kind.

5 **NEXT STEPS**

5.1 The CCG have now appointed Herts Urgent Care (HUC) to provide the pilot for the NHS 111 service across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, with a planned public launch date of 22 October 2013 (soft launch with GPs late September), subject to a series of tests, both by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group as well as Department of Health, to ensure it is clinically safe before launch.

HUC are a social enterprise company that started life as a GP out of hours cooperative. They have successfully grown and provide a range of services including a very successful NHS 111

service in Hertfordshire.

Herts Urgent Care will be working closely with NHS Cambridgeshire and NHS Peterborough, local clinicians, community services and hospitals, and the current GP Out of Hours services (provided by Urgent Care Cambridgeshire in Cambridgeshire and Cambridge Community Services in Peterborough).

In the meantime, patients requiring advice and urgent healthcare services in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area will continue to be able to access the NHS Direct service

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