



Frequently asked questions

1. What is NHS 111?

111 is the non-emergency number for the NHS. It is a fast, easy and free way to speak to a highly trained adviser and healthcare professional 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. At the start of your call, you will be asked a series of questions about your symptoms and will then be signposted to the most convenient treatment option for your condition, whether it is a toothache, or a more serious illness. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

2. How does it work?

Calling 111 will give you access to a team of trained advisers, supported by experienced nurses. They will assess your symptoms through a series of questions and give you the healthcare advice you need, or direct you to the most appropriate local service. The operator will schedule an appointment where possible, or transfer you directly to the people you need to speak to. They are also able to dispatch an ambulance if, and when they deem it necessary just as quickly as if you had dialled 999.

3. Why should I use NHS 111?

NHS 111 will direct you straight away to the most appropriate and convenient local service that best meet the needs of your particular symptoms.

4. When should I call NHS 111?

It is recommended you dial NHS 111 if:

- you need medical help fast, but it is not a 999 emergency
- you do not know who to call for medical help, or you are not registered with a GP
- you are caring for someone who is ill and need advice on how best to support them
- you are unsure whether to go to A&E or another NHS urgent care service; or
- you require health information or reassurance about what to do next.

5. How much do calls to NHS 111 cost?

Calls to the NHS 111 service are free from both landlines and mobile phones.

6. Is the NHS 111 service available 24/7?

Yes, NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day; 7 days a week; 365 days a year.



7. Who answers NHS 111 calls?

The South East Coast Ambulance Service currently handles NHS 111 calls for Surrey in partnership with Care UK.

Care UK works in partnership with local NHS trusts and commissioners and is the largest independent provider of NHS services in the country. Primary care teams span GP practices, GP Out-of-Hours services and NHS 111. Calls are answered by trained call advisers who are supported by experienced nurses.

8. Is the service accessible to non-English speakers?

The NHS 111 service uses a translation service to support people who do not speak English.

9. What does GP Out-of-Hours mean?

The GP Out-of-Hours service is available for people with urgent problems who need access to a GP when their regular surgery is closed at night, or over the weekend.

In North West Surrey, Guildford & Waverley and Surrey Downs areas, the GP Out-of-Hours services are provided by Care UK, and by IC24 in East Surrey.

10. How do patients currently access GP Out-of-Hours services?

GP Out-of-Hours services are accessed through the NHS 111 service. There is at least one facility in each of the four CCG areas (mentioned above) where patients are seen. If a patient is not well enough to attend an appointment or the centres have closed for the evening, Care UK and IC24 will provide a home visit if deemed clinically necessary or advice over the phone.

11. Why are changes proposed to the current NHS 111 and GP Out-of-Hours services?

NHS 111 is currently provided by South East Coast Ambulance Service (SECAMB), who sub-contracts some elements of the service to Care UK. The contract covers Kent, Medway, Surrey and Sussex (KMSS) and is due to expire on 31st March 2019.

The GP Out-of-Hours service is also provided by Care UK in Guildford and Waverley, North West Surrey and Surrey Downs CCG areas, and by IC24 in the East Surrey CCG area. These GP Out-of-Hours contracts are also due to expire on 31st March 2019.



NHS England has issued new Integrated Urgent Care Guidance that stipulates GP Out-of-Hours and NHS 111 should be integrated. For this reason, along with a commitment to provide the best possible outcome for the Surrey population, the four CCGs agreed to join and procure a combined NHS 111 and GP Out-of-Hours service across the Surrey area.

Ideas so far

The procurement team, along with colleagues across the health and social care sectors are proposing a number of enhancements to the services that will be put to industry colleagues, as well as member of the public for feedback.

We already have a good NHS 111 service, but there are real benefits in combining the two services that will ensure the best possible outcomes for our population including:

- Quality improvement: combining the GP Out-of-Hours service with NHS 111 across Surrey does not necessarily mean that a single provider will provide all parts of the integrated service. For example, there could be a lead provider who is awarded the contract who may sub-contract the out-of-hours GP service to another organisation(s) or, a group of providers may seek to work in partnership to offer this integrated service.
- Overall improvements to the common processes, procedures and information technology infrastructure will ensure a more efficient service.
- Reduce duplication: there is currently some duplication between the two services. For example, patients requiring a GP are usually assessed at least twice; once by NHS 111 and once by the GP Out-of-Hours service. This process makes it harder for patients to get the help they need quickly. By combining the two services, the quality and access to both are improved and delivered more seamlessly.
- Reduce number of assessment questions: the number of questions asked at the beginning of the call in the current NHS 111 service are lengthy and can be improved to ensure clinical advice is provided to our patients safely and more rapidly.
- Efficient triage: combining the two services will ensure a more seamless experience for patients with fewer handovers and more efficient clinical triage.



12. Why will this make things better?

One of the biggest benefits will be the integration of the clinical workforce and supporting information technology systems. This means that callers, who require it, can be referred to a clinician who will have access to their medical information straight away, reducing the need to repeat information of their symptoms at multiple stages during the call.

It will also be recommended that NHS 111 operators can schedule appointments, during the initial call, with the caller's regular GP or an out-of-hours GP depending on the caller's care needs and symptoms.

13. What will this mean for patients?

The aim is improved patient experience with easier access to their out-of-hours GP and other local services.

Patients will continue to access the GP Out-of-Hours service by calling NHS 111. Both services will share the same information technology and clinical systems, which means that patients will not have to repeat their details and symptoms twice, saving critical minutes during the assessment process.

14. When will the new service start?

The new integrated service is due to start in April 2019. This will ensure that there is enough time for a robust procurement process.

15. Will patients and members of the public be involved in decision making?

The commissioning of NHS 111 and GP Out-of-Hours does not include any plans to substantially alter access to services, consequently not requiring a formal public consultation. However, the views and feedback from colleagues and members of the public are very important. The procurement team has already started an extensive engagement process including:

- Patient and Healthwatch representatives involved in various sub-groups reporting to the programme board
- Patient representatives involved in the procurement process
- A series of public and patient events
- Involvement of local GPs on behalf of their registered population
- Feedback received through local authorities and other service providers