The new NHS 111 service

GP information pack
Introduction

NHS 111 aims to make it easier for people to access urgent local healthcare services when they need medical help fast, but it is not a 999 emergency. It provides one, easy to remember and free to call number.

From 5 March (subject to Department of Health authorisation), there will only be three numbers if people in Kent and Medway need to contact the NHS for urgent care:

- 999 for life-threatening emergencies
- their GP practice
- NHS 111.

South East Health and MedOCC will no longer provide an out-of-hours telephone service. For out-of-hours GP services, patients will need to call NHS 111 and not South East Health or MedOCC. NHS Direct will also cease to offer a telephone service, as will the PCT dental helplines. NHS 111 will replace these services.

South East Health and MedOCC will continue to provide out-of-hours GP face-to-face appointments and home visits for patients referred by NHS 111.

GP practice arrangements for lunchtime or half day cover are not affected by NHS 111. Practices will continue to make their own arrangements, as now.
Action list

During **February**, GPs and practice managers are requested to:

- Read this information pack
- Ensure receptionists and staff are aware of the launch of NHS 111 and can give patients some basic information if asked (see section 1.12 in this pack)
- Ensure you have a process in place for reviewing NHS 111 electronic messages about your patients who, during the day, may be advised to contact the practice urgently. These messages will go to your practice’s nhs.net account
- Prepare for the soft launch of NHS 111 on 5 March (subject to Department of Health authorisation)
- Ensure you can change your answerphone message on the day of soft launch (you may need to contact your provider to do this)

On the day of soft launch (date to be confirmed by the Department of Health), GPs and practice managers need to:

- Change your answerphone message – see section 1.4 in pack for more info
- Review all urgent care information in your practice
- Remove all references to NHS Direct on practice websites, patient information and posters
- Prepare to display NHS 111 campaign posters, leaflets and wallet cards provided by NHS Kent and Medway for the public launch date, expected to be 19 March (subject to DH authorisation)
Background

NHS 111 is being introduced nationally to improve people’s access to urgent care. NHS 111 gives consistent assessment of callers. The service uses NHS Pathways to assess patients and advise on the next appropriate step, whether that is self care or onwards referral to a GP practice, out-of-hours or other services, such as A&E or a minor injury unit.

The Directory of Services will support NHS 111 in directing callers correctly.

The Directory of Services is a central online directory that has details of Kent and Medway’s local patient services.

South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SECAmb) will manage the NHS 111 service in Kent and Medway, Surrey and Sussex, and has subcontracted Harmoni to provide some aspects of the service, including the out-of-hours GP “speak to” service between 6.30pm and 8am.

NHS 111 will replace NHS Direct. NHS Direct’s phone number is expected to be switched off on the date of soft launch in Kent and Medway. The online NHS Direct symptom checker will continue.

NHS 111 is contracted to provide cover for planned call handling assessment and appropriate referral for GP practices to cover GP protected learning events.

If a healthcare professional needs advice about a patient or local health services, they can call NHS 111.

Call handlers will be able to access Special Patient Notes, as approved by GPs. It is our aim that when the patient details are logged, this will flag if there are specific clinical or admin notes about a patient.

- Please update Special Patient Notes as usual. We are working on how to identify clinical and administrative instructions separately.
• NHS 111 will access Special Patient Notes through Adastra. However, work is ongoing to ensure this is fully integrated with NHS 111’s systems.

If patients call 999 but do not need an ambulance, they will be directed to NHS 111 without the need for re-triage. Equally NHS 111 can dispatch an ambulance without re-triage. See section 3.4 for more information.

People who dial 111 and do not have a dentist will be given the numbers of local dentists.

People who need emergency dental care out-of-hours can still ring the usual phone number for DentaLine (01634 890300). If any patients dial 111 needing emergency dental care out-of-hours they will be given the DentaLine number.

People who dial 111 needing emergency or urgent dental care during normal surgery hours will be passed to the Kent Dental Helpline who will contact the patient with an appointment or details of practices that will be able to see them.
How it works

Calls to NHS 111 from landlines and mobile phones are free and the service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, for people who:

- Need medical help fast, but it’s not a 999 emergency
- Don’t know who to call for medical help or don’t have a GP
- Think they need to go to A&E or another NHS urgent care service
- Need health information or reassurance about what to do next.

Will NHS 111 book appointments with GPs?

If a caller is assessed as needing to see an out-of-hours GP, NHS 111 will be able to book appointments for patients where appropriate and systems are in place and agreed with the practice. When NHS 111 goes live in Kent and Medway, this agreement will be in place with MedOCC and we are working on arrangements with South East Health.

If a caller requires in-hours GP services, they will be advised to contact their GP practice directly. NHS 111 will automatically email a summary of the call (Pre-Event Message) to ensure the details are available to the practice. The practice will then be able to review the patient’s care and decide the appropriate clinical treatment.

The number of patients being transferred to GP practices is not anticipated to be high: there are many alternative services (minor injury units, community teams, etc) that can be offered.

What if NHS 111 wants a GP to see a patient urgently and there aren’t any appointments left?

The robust assessment that takes place within NHS 111 means that patients identified as needing to see a GP urgently should be assessed by their own practice as needing urgent treatment.
The patient will call the practice and tell the receptionist what NHS 111 has advised. The practice will use its normal operational processes to manage the patient’s needs.

**How will GP practices receive patient reports if they use NHS 111?**

NHS 111 will email PDF reports of patient referrals to the practice’s dedicated NHS email address. This should be within a couple of minutes of the patient being assessed.

Please make sure your practice has a robust system in place to check this mailbox for patient reports and that it has been tested.

GP practices will also receive Post-Event Messages (PEM) for their own registered patients advising that the patient has contacted NHS 111 and been subsequently signposted to an appropriate service or given self-care information.

**What do I do if I receive Post-Event Messages about a patient who is not registered with my practice?**

Please email hcpfeedback.sec111@nhs.net. The information will then be sent to the correct practice.

**What happens to patients who are not registered with a GP practice or who are out of area?**

Patients who are not registered are directed to their nearest GP practice to register. Patients who are away from home are registered as visitors if they are staying with someone. They are directed to the GP of the person they are staying with.
Does NHS 111 have a direct line/contact for local administrative enquiries?

All questions or issues should be sent via the professional feedback form and emailed to the dedicated email account hcpfeedback.sec111@nhs.net. Issues can also be raised through your local CCG clinical lead/commissioner to feed into the local governance group.

What services are on the Directory of Services?

The Directory of Services is an online tool that contains details of Kent and Medway’s GP practices, dentists, pharmacists, opticians and urgent care networks (such as emergency departments), as well as signposting to other commissioned NHS services.

The directory gives results based on the address given by the caller. If you need to make unexpected/emergency changes to your DoS entry, please ring 01233 363020, – a number manned by SECAmb 24/7. Please email details of routine changes to SECDoS@nhs.net.

NHS 111 aims

These are the fundamental requirements that underpin the NHS 111 service:

- Completion of a clinical assessment on the first call without the need for a call back
- Ability to refer callers to other providers without the caller being re-triaged
- Ability to transfer clinical assessment data to other providers and book appointments where appropriate
- Ability to dispatch an ambulance as quickly as if the caller had dialled 999.
Benefits of NHS 111

The introduction of NHS 111 is expected to benefit the public and the NHS by:

**Improving the public’s access to urgent healthcare services**
- A simple, free to call, easily remembered, three-digit number, available 24 hours a day, and 365 days a year
- Direct people to the most appropriate service, taking into account their location, the time of day, and capacity of local services.

**Increasing efficiency of the NHS**
- Provide consistent clinical assessment to make sure people access the right service, first time
- Direct people to the most appropriate service
- Rationalise call handling.

**Increasing public satisfaction and confidence in the NHS**
- Improve the public’s access to urgent healthcare services
- Provide an entry point to the NHS that is focused on patient need
- Help people access the right service, first time
- Increase efficiency of the NHS by directing people to the service that is best able to meet their needs.
Enabling the commissioning of more effective and productive healthcare services that are tuned to meet people’s needs

- Identify the services, which are currently over or under used
- Provide information on people’s needs and the services they are directed to
- Increase understanding of the shape of demand for each service.

Increasing the efficiency of the 999 emergency ambulance service

- Reduce the number of non-emergency calls received by 999
- Reduce the number of avoidable ambulance journeys.
FAQs

1. Key information – Kent and Medway

1.1 What are the key dates for NHS 111 in Kent and Medway?

5 March (subject to Department of Health authorisation) - Soft launch via GP out-of-hours messaging

19 March (subject to authorisation) - Public launch

February and March - NHS 111 communications materials delivered to all GP surgeries, pharmacies, libraries, children’s centres, South East Health bases, MedOCC bases, community hospitals, minor injury units, social care teams, community mental health teams, A&E, hospital clinics including maternity and sexual health clinics, etc. Please do not display until after the public launch (date to be confirmed by the Department of Health). Stakeholders informed. Media campaign – press releases.
1.2 Who are the key NHS 111 Kent and Medway contacts?

**Helen Belcher**
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**Anouska Adamson-Parks**
*NHS 111 Service Director*
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1.3 Will NHS 111 replace existing out-of-hours telephone number for Kent and Medway out-of-hours providers?

Yes. From 5 March (subject to Department of Health authorisation), calls to the out-of-hours number in Kent and Medway will be diverted to the new NHS 111 number. People calling their GP practice out-of-hours will be asked to hang up and dial 111. This is in accordance with national guidance about redirection and aims to help the public learn the new number. It also means that patients call a free number, rather than having their call diverted at a cost to them.

The soft launch period is important as it allows call volumes to build up gradually, providing an opportunity for local processes to embed before the service is launched to the public.

People in Kent and Medway will be notified about NHS 111 during the wider public launch from 19 March (to be confirmed by the Department of Health).
1.4 Will practices have to change out-of-hours answerphone messages?

Yes. To coincide with the soft launch on 5 March (subject to Department of Health authorisation), it is important that out-of-hours messages on GP surgery answerphones are updated to direct callers to the NHS 111 service, as this helps to quickly establish the new service. You may have to contact your telephone provider for advice on how to do this.

Here is the suggested script for your answerphone message:

The surgery is now closed. The opening hours are X:XX to X:XX Monday to Friday.

If you have an urgent medical problem, which cannot wait until the surgery re-opens, please hang up and dial 1-1-1. I repeat, if you have an urgent medical problem, which cannot wait until the surgery re-opens, please hang up and dial 1-1-1 to access the out-of-hours service. NHS 111 is free to call from both landlines and mobiles.

1.5 What will happen to out-of-hours lunchtime cover?

Normal local GP practice arrangements for lunchtime or half day cover should continue as these are not part of the NHS 111 provision with the exception of GP protected learning time.

If you wish South East Health, MedOCC or SECAmb/Harmoni to provide half day or lunchtime cover, this must be negotiated and agreed with the provider directly.
1.6 Is there anything else we need to think about in answerphone messages?

- Please take out any reference to NHS Direct.
- Practices using GP marginal cover services during in-hours periods will need to consider an alternative message that enables patients to reach the chosen cover provider when the practice is closed.
- If your current answerphone message includes additional details unrelated to out-of-hours care, please use the suggested message where it is most appropriate.

1.7 Is the service available to people with a hearing impairment or communication difficulties?

People with communication difficulties or impaired hearing can use NHS 111 via a textphone by calling 18001 NHS 111.

Calls are connected to the TextDirect system and the textphone will display messages to tell the user what is happening. A Typetalk relay assistant will automatically join the call and they will speak the user’s typed conversation to the NHS 111 health advisor and will type back the advisor’s conversation, so that this can be read on the caller’s textphone display (or computer).

1.8 Is the service accessible to non-English speakers?

NHS 111 uses a translation service called Language Line for people who do not speak English. Callers who do not speak English should state the language they want to conduct the conversation in to use the interpreting service.

Leaflets explaining how NHS 111 works are available in a number of different languages via www.nhs.uk/NHS111.
1.9 What local public communications are you planning?

There is a NHS 111 communications and engagement plan which is being managed by Helen Belcher, NHS 111 Programme Manager, and Emma Burns from the KMCS Media and Communications team.

There will be press releases issued to media for the public launch. Posters and flyers will be distributed to all GP practices, hospitals, pharmacists, libraries and other community outlets. We will also work with NHS service providers to communicate the change within their organisations, and inform stakeholder groups, such as MPs, voluntary organisations, councillors.

1.10 What can we give patients and the general public for information?

You will be sent posters, leaflets including easy read leaflets, and wallet cards, with holders, around the time of the public launch. Examples are at the end of this pack.

Leaflets are also available in many different languages and in easy read formats online at www.nhs.uk/NHS111.

The Department of Health will run a campaign with media and outdoor advertising, and a leaflet door-drop in Kent and Medway during June/July.

Once all areas have gone live around the country, the Department of Health will run a national public health awareness campaign for NHS 111.
1.11 Can we publicise NHS 111 on our own website or waiting room TVs?

You will be sent information in the appropriate format if you have a plasma screen.

If you have an electronic messageboard, we suggest you use:

What is the NHS 111 service?

- The new NHS 111 service is a simple, free to call, easily remembered number available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to help you get urgent care when you need it.
- Call 111 if you need medical help fast, but it is not a 999 emergency.

1.12 What can I tell the public?

We will provide you with leaflets. In the meantime, you can use the information below:

NHS 111 is a new, free, NHS service to help people access urgent local health services when they need them. Once it launches in March, if you live in Kent and Medway and need to contact the NHS for urgent care, there will only be three numbers: 999 for life-threatening emergencies, your GP practice and NHS 111.

Calls are free and answered by fully trained advisers who assess symptoms, give advice, arrange for patients to speak directly to a health professional if they need to, or send an ambulance if needed.

NHS 111 is for patients who:

- Need medical help fast but it’s not a 999 emergency
- Think they need to go to A&E or need another NHS urgent care service
- Don’t know who to call or don’t have a GP.
For less urgent health needs, patients should contact their GP or local pharmacist in the usual way. For immediate, life-threatening emergencies, call 999. For more information, visit www.nhs.uk/NHS111

1.13 How can clinical providers leave feedback on NHS 111?

We value feedback from our stakeholders and have developed a form for professional feedback through our clinical governance group. The forms will be collated by SECAmb and results fed into the local Kent and Medway governance group for possible service improvements.

We encourage you to complete the form electronically and email to hcpfeedback.sec111@nhs.net. If you have specific patient issues, please use your complaints/incidents process.

1.14 How can patients leave feedback about NHS 111?

For NHS 111 Kent and Medway, SECAmb (and Harmoni) will conduct patient surveys which will be mailed out to five per cent of patients who contacted NHS 111. Where Harmoni provides NHS 111 services elsewhere in the country, it received a response rate of more than 15 per cent to surveys sent out - with 90 per cent of respondents saying they were happy with the service.

Patients can also give feedback about the service by calling the NHS 111 Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01737 363866 or submitting the feedback online www.secamb.nhs.uk/contact_us/patient_advice.aspx
2. Background

2.1 Why is the NHS introducing NHS 111?

The government is introducing NHS 111 to simplify access to urgent care. It gives a free, easy-to-remember number to help patients who do not know where to go for care.

This follows public feedback that people sometimes feel unsure about what to do or where to go for help, particularly for unexpected or urgent healthcare needs.

It also means that NHS Pathways will be consistently used across the country to assess patient needs and to direct them to the most appropriate service.

This can help to take the pressure off the 999 emergency service and local A&E departments by helping people go to the right place for treatment.

2.2 Is NHS Direct being replaced?

Yes. NHS Direct is not free to call and the number 0845 46 47 was not easy to remember. Research in 2006 showed people were confused about which service to contact and needed a memorable telephone number.

Confusion about which service to contact means patients may go to the wrong place for treatment. For instance, 33.8 per cent of calls to the ambulance service nationally each year (2.73 million of 8.08 million) are urgent rather than emergency. Similarly, 37 per cent of A&E attendances are classified as minor problems.
2.3 Why are you replacing out-of-hours call handling and telephone advice?

This is part of making it easier for the patients to access the right service by calling one simple number.

2.4 When will NHS 111 roll out nationally?

NHS 111 will be fully operational across England by October 2013.

2.5 Is NHS 111 the number for all NHS healthcare services?

No. NHS 111 is not intended to be the only number for access to NHS healthcare services. It’s for when people need help fast, but it’s not a life-threatening 999 emergency. For less urgent healthcare needs, people should still contact their GP or local pharmacist in the usual way.

If a health professional provides a specific telephone number to call when someone is concerned about their health condition, people should also continue to use these numbers.

2.6 What is urgent care?

Urgent care is defined by the patient’s perception of urgency. If a patient thinks their healthcare need is urgent, then it is urgent, and they should call NHS 111.
2.7 Is the introduction of NHS 111 a cost cutting exercise?
No. NHS 111 is to give patients a better service and make it easier for people to access urgent healthcare services. We expect NHS 111 will also drive improvements in the way that urgent healthcare services are delivered and help to make them more effective and efficient.

2.8 Will social services be included?
During the roll out, NHS 111 will be primarily for urgent healthcare, but callers with social care needs will be directed to the right services to meet their needs. In time, the service will grow and could become the single telephone access point for all urgent healthcare and social care services.

3. Operational

3.1 Who answers NHS 111 calls?
Calls to NHS 111 are answered by fully trained NHS 111 health advisors, supported by experienced clinical advisors, who are either nurses or paramedics. GPs are available to give advice for specific calls out-of-hours. In-hours, patients will be referred to their own GP practice. The call handlers use the NHS Pathways clinical assessment system to assess and direct callers to the right NHS service.

NHS Pathways was developed by a team of NHS doctors, nurses and IT specialists to provide a safe, consistent clinical assessment of symptoms and identify the most appropriate service. The system has the approval of the royal colleges and has been designed to assess calls about any symptom – from life-threatening to very minor. It has been extensively tested, piloted and academically reviewed to confirm its effectiveness.
3.2 NHS 111 calls are answered by non-clinicians, is it safe?

Just like 999 operators, NHS 111 health advisors are fully trained. Clinical and health advisors have to pass an intensive 20-day training period before they are able to take patient calls.

Part of this training involves specific education about anatomy, physiology and clinical features of injury and illness to enable them to provide a high quality assessment of symptoms.

This is in addition to training provided by the organisation on use of telephony, call control and local processes and procedures for call referral under different circumstances, such as child protection, vulnerable adult, frequent caller or patient with special notes.

Using the clinical assessment system means a smaller proportion of calls need to be referred to a clinical advisor. This means that NHS 111 clinical advisors can focus on cases where their clinical skills are most needed rather than dealing with calls that don’t need their expertise. However, if a patient is assessed as needing to speak to a clinical advisor, they will be put straight through to a clinical advisor.

3.3 How will NHS 111 health advisors’ performance be monitored?

NHS 111 uses a monitoring programme to make sure there is:

- Detailed and comprehensive training and competence sign off before NHS 111 advisors can take calls
- Clinical supervision on all shifts to provide support and identify issues immediately
- Active audit of a percentage of calls taken by each NHS 111 advisor every month.

Daily and weekly data give individual advisor performance in key areas so immediate support can be given to maintain very high service levels.
3.4 Will health advisors make diagnoses over the phone?

No. NHS 111 health advisors will assess symptoms using NHS Pathways to determine the possible seriousness of their condition, identify what service they need and how quickly they need it (e.g. ambulance, A&E, urgent GP, or a range of other services such as pharmacy or minor injury unit). The advisors will give patients advice on the most appropriate treatment for their urgent need. This could be onwards referral or for the patient to talk to a NHS 111 service GP on the phone.

3.5 What happens if a business’s telephone system does not recognise NHS 111?

If NHS 111 is not recognised by a telephone system, please advise the person responsible for telephony in your organisation so it can be configured to dial NHS 111.

3.6 If the NHS 111 service is locally commissioned, won’t there be variations in the quality of services as is the case with out-of-hours services?

The NHS 111 National Service Specification applies to the NHS 111 service across all areas. This ensures everyone experiences the same high quality of service, wherever they are.

4. 999 calls

4.1 Will NHS 111 deal with emergency calls?

The public should call 999 for life-threatening emergencies that require an immediate response. If NHS 111 assesses a call as a medical emergency, they will be able to dispatch an ambulance either automatically or by calling the ambulance provider. They will provide first aid advice to the caller until the paramedics arrive without transferring the call, or the caller having to repeat information.
4.2 What happens if a caller does not know whether it’s an emergency?

It does not matter if patients are unsure if their need is urgent or an emergency because NHS 111 will direct them to the right service, first time, even if the right service is an ambulance response.

5. Service impact and outcomes

5.1 What impact is the introduction of NHS 111 having on other NHS services?

It’s too early to gain a full understanding or draw conclusions on the impact of NHS 111 on other NHS services within the live areas. When a new service is introduced, it takes time for it to ‘bed in’.

When the service first goes live, daily situation reports will review activity to ensure all services are responding appropriately. The service outcomes will also be monitored through the local Clinical Governance Group which will review calls and the patients’ experience, making recommendations for service change or improvements.

We have reviewed current NHS 111 data to take into account concerns and we have built in flexibility to deal with a rise in activity.

5.2 How will the performance of the service be measured?

Performance will be measured by CCG clinicians, KMCS and the Department of Health through:

- Daily situation reports to identify trends
- Weekly call review meetings to verify quality
- Monthly analysis of all dispositions
- Monthly minimum data set
- Monthly urgent care dashboard by CCG.
Annex

Wallet card

999 poster (A4)

A&E poster (A4)

Leaflets (A5)

Leaflet dispenser

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

For less urgent health needs, you should still contact your GP or local service that can help you best.

You should use the NHS 111 service if:

- You require health information or reassurance about what to do next.
- You don’t know who to call for medical help or you don’t have a GP.
- You need medical help fast, but it’s not a 999 emergency;

When do I use it?

You can ring the 111 number 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Calls from landlines and mobile phones are free.

Why should I use it?

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

What is 

111?

It's a new NHS telephone number being introduced to help make it easier for you to access local health services. You can now call 111 whenever you need medical help fast, but it isn't a 999 emergency, you can now call NHS 111.

If you need medical help fast, but it isn’t a 999 emergency, you can now call NHS 111.

NHS 111 will assess you, provide advice and direct you straight away to the local service that can help you best. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and calls are free, including from mobiles.

For more information visit www.nhs.uk/111

How does it work?

111 will get you through to a team of highly-trained advisers, who are supported by experienced nurses. They will ask you questions to assess your symptoms, and give you the health care 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.

It can also help us to free up 999 and local A&E departments so that they can focus on emergency cases. It can also help us to free up 999 and local A&E departments so that they can focus on emergency cases.

It's not a 999 emergency. But you need medical help fast.

There's now number to call.

Before you visit A&E, call 111. You'll be asked some questions so that we can assess your symptoms, then directed straightaway to the local service that can help you best.

You think you need A&E. But you're not sure.

There's now number to call.

Before you visit A&E, call 111. You'll be asked some questions so that we can assess your symptoms, then directed straightaway to the local service that can help you best.

You can find out more at www.nhs.uk/111

There is also an Easy Read version of this leaflet to download and maintain securely, and will only be shared with others directly involved in your care.

Calls to 111 are recorded. All calls and the records we create are maintained securely, and will only be shared with others directly involved in your care.

More information

Russian, Slovak, Somali, Spanish, and Urdu.

You can find out more at www.nhs.uk/111

To access the NHS 111 service via a textphone call 18001 111. We also have a confidential interpreter service, which is available in many languages.

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