

Briefing paper to Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee 24th October 2014

Re-procurement of NHS111 Service

1. Introduction

NHS 111 is a free-to-call single non-emergency number medical helpline operating in England and Scotland. The service is part of the National Health Service and has replaced the telephone triage and advice services provided by NHS Direct.

NHS111 services are available 24 hours every day, offering a personalised priority contact service that responds to people's healthcare needs when they:

- need medical help fast, but it's not a 999 emergency
- don't know who to contact for medical help
- think they need to go to A&E or another NHS urgent care service
- require health information or reassurance about what to do next

The NHS 111 service assesses the needs of people and determines the most appropriate course of action.

Following the failure of NHS Direct (the then appointed NHS111 provider for the West Midlands) in 2013, step-in providers were secured with contracts running from November 2013 to April 2015 with provision to extend for a further 6 months to September 2015. This service legally needs to be procured to avoid competition challenge due to the process used to secure the step-in providers.

NHS 111 is the telephone answering service for GP Out of Hours in the West Midlands with the exception of Shropshire/T&W. Following the failure of NHS Direct as described above, the decision was taken locally to revert back to having a separate number.

The current step-in service providers are:

- West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS) for 16 West Midland CCGs
- Staffordshire Doctors On-Call (SDUC) for the remaining 6 Staffordshire CCGs

2. NHS111 in the context of national and local urgent care strategy

Latest and developing national policy supports a model where NHS111 is integrated with the wider urgent care system as described below:-

“For people with more serious or life threatening emergency needs: We should ensure they are treated in centres with the very best expertise and facilities in order to maximise their chances of survival and a good recovery; Specifically, an enhanced NHS 111 service will deliver one of the key changes needed to ensure the vision of improvements to patient care can be achieved.”

The NHS 111 service is critical to help people with urgent care needs to get the right advice in the right place, first time.....To make this happen NHS 111 needs to develop service protocols and underpinning technical functionality that will enable greater integration with all other elements of the urgent and emergency care system. This includes ambulance services, primary care (in hours and out of hours), urgent care centres, emergency departments and both community and hospital based services". (Sir Bruce Keogh 2013 – national review of urgent and emergency care)

The latest local policy direction comes from Futurefit, which states:-

“6.1 Acute and episodic care

Acute and episodic care will be fully networked, co-ordinated and needs led, with clear signposting to the correct level of care to meet patient need. Gaining access to the right part of the system will be easy and comprehensible through the development of tiered, consistent and ‘branded’ services.....

A ‘Smart’ single point of telephone access (111) will intelligently triage all requests for urgent care (defined as requests for same day assessment) and signpost patients to the right point of care, including the capacity to make appointments at their GP practice if less urgent, or at one of the urgent care centres.” (Futurefit Clinical Design Workstream June 2014)

3. Regional Commissioning Collaborative

NHS111 services in the West Midlands are commissioned through a regional collaborative approach with Sandwell & West Birmingham CCG acting as the lead collaborative commissioner. Sandwell & West Birmingham CCG are leading the re-procurement process on behalf of all 22 local CCGs. CCGs are engaged in the re-procurement of the service through membership of a Programme Board and Design and Delivery Group.

In June 2014, NHS England published new NHS111 Commissioning Standards. The standards describe the core requirements and quality metrics for NHS 111 services. These standards do not constitute a detailed specification, they describe the core requirements. The intent is not to prescribe nationally how commissioners deliver these requirements but to ensure that patients can depend upon receiving the same high quality service wherever they live or access NHS 111 services in England. Commissioners can enhance and add to these requirements to ensure that local specifications for NHS 111 are comprehensive and appropriate for their local area.

4. Procurement Timeline

- Formal procurement process commenced 8th October 2014
- Contract award Spring 2015
- Contract start date 1st September 2015

5. Patient and Clinical Engagement

Sandwell and West Birmingham CCG, as Lead CCG for NHS111 in the West Midlands, is committed to patient engagement activity to support the development of the NHS111 service in the West Midlands. This work is described below and will inform all levels of the procurement process to achieve the following outcomes:-

- Inform the service specification with qualitative data and research outputs
- Assurance that local initiatives are supported by the patient population
- Ensure that patient opinion is included from service design to delivery

- Patient Focus Groups

A series of independent Focus Groups across the West Midlands will aim to produce qualitative data on the future service design of the service. There are 3 proposed in November.

Participants will be recruited through Press Release in local press, participants will have a range of knowledge of the NHS 111 service. To ensure a level piece of research all participants will be invited to telephone the 111 service (test line) and carry out a scenario to experience the service.

- Patient and Public Involvement Groups

The West Midlands 111 Team are offering to attend all local groups to update on the developments in the service delivery and receive feedback. The Team are proactively contacting all groups and activity will take place Nov/Dec.

- Participation in Bidder Evaluation

A Patient Panel will be established, sourcing members from patient groups and Clinical Governance groups across the region. This professional panel will support the ongoing development of the service specification, the PQQ, ITT and potentially the evaluation of bidders.

The regional commissioner will ensure robust clinical engagement in the development of the service specification through a clinical leads group made up of members nominated from each of the 22 CCGs. Shropshire's clinical lead is Dr Peter Clowes.

Locally, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin CCGs have a joint local NHS111 Project Board which includes clinical and patient representation from both CCGs to lead and co-ordinate the procurement process including the development of the local requirements.

6. Recommendation

The Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee are recommended to note the contents of this briefing paper.

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