

4 August 2011

Gateway Reference: 16376

Dear Colleague

Subject: Rolling out the NHS 111 Service

Following Miles Ayling's letter of the 16 December 2010 (Gateway Reference: 15310), inviting expressions of interest to pilot NHS 111, we are now writing to SHAs to seek confirmation of plans for full roll-out of the NHS 111 service in their regions, including go-live dates, details of geography covered, and preferred operating models. You will be aware that the Secretary of State for Health has committed to rolling out NHS 111 nationally by April 2013. It is essential that we now start to finalise arrangements to meet that deadline.

As you will know, NHS 111 is already live in four pilot areas - County Durham and Darlington, Nottingham City, Lincolnshire and Luton. These pilots launched in 2010 and are being independently evaluated by University of Sheffield over the course of a year of live operation. They are all performing well, with County Durham & Darlington showing a significant decrease in A&E attendances. Just as importantly, patient satisfaction with the service is high in all areas.

A further ten pilot sites are launching this year, expanding the range of operational models and call handling providers used to deliver the service. In addition a further five areas are due to launch full procurements this year. All of the pilots are contributing to a 'minimum dataset', which provides detailed information on performance and system impact for the new service. That data is now available publicly and can be used by commissioners to help shape the service in their local area. In time, this dataset will also include information on cost and patient experience.

We would now like to invite those areas that have not yet committed to go-live or procurement dates for NHS 111, to confirm their plans. In doing so, we would like SHAs to oversee planning and implementation, ensuring that full coverage of their region is planned in line with the national specification, and with full support of local Clinical Commissioning Groups and PCTs. The NHS Operations Board have agreed that any area not able to confirm a go-live date for either piloting or procurement will be automatically opted-in to a service

provided by NHS Direct, in partnership with local ambulance trusts and out of hours organisations, until such a time that they are able to make alternative arrangements.

The NHS Operations Board also re-stated the need for commissioners, led by local clinicians, to take the lead in planning for the roll out of NHS 111, and developing a comprehensive directory of services, and associated referral protocols to underpin the service. We should remind you that the Department will not mandate specific content or software for NHS 111. This will be for local commissioners to determine, with appropriate clinical advice and support. Local commissioning groups and clinicians should also take the lead in ensuring that effective clinical governance arrangements are in place, and can ensure the safety of the whole patient pathway, not just the NHS 111 call handling service. We have asked Professor Matthew Cooke, the National Clinical Director for Urgent & Emergency Care, to work with local commissioning groups to provide support, help and advice in developing these arrangements.

NHS Direct will continue to be commissioned under current arrangements until the NHS 111 service is available nationally in April 2013, when the 0845 4647 number will be decommissioned. The Department is working with NHS Direct and its commissioners, East of England SHA, to agree transition arrangements, which will ensure continuity of service leading up to April 2013, while at the same time releasing funding to NHS 111 services in a planned and managed way.

We would be grateful if you could work with local Clinical Commissioning Groups and PCTs to confirm plans for the roll-out of NHS 111 in your area – it will be essential that you have Clinical Commissioning Group endorsement to your plans in order to proceed. The NHS 111 Programme team at the Department is already working with local NHS 111 teams across the country to support the roll-out and development of local plans, and it will be available to you locally over the summer as you consider your plans.

Confirmed go-live or procurement dates, along with details of the geography covered, and preferred operating model should be sent to David Howarth (david.howarth@dh.gsi.gov.uk) by **23rd September 2011**, copied to your usual Performance Delivery Team contact in the Department. If you would like further information or wish to discuss please do not hesitate to get in touch with David in the NHS 111 Programme Team.

Yours Sincerely

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Deputy NHS Chief Executive

Jim Easton
National Director for Improvement
and Efficiency