



**NHS 111**



# **NHS 111 Service Feedback**

## **October 2016**

## Introduction

Local Healthwatches have been set up across England to create a strong, independent consumer champion with the aim to:

- Strengthen the collective voice of citizens and communities in influencing local health and social care services to better meet their needs.
- Support people to find the right health and social care services for them by providing appropriate information, advice and signposting.

Healthwatch works with local people, patients, service users, carers, community groups, organisations, service providers and commissioners to get the best out of local health and social care services. This doesn't just mean improving services today but influencing and shaping services to meet the needs of the local communities tomorrow.

Each local Healthwatch is steered by a Board of volunteers, commissioned by the Local Authority and accountable to the public. Healthwatch are the only non-statutory body whose sole purpose is to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care services and to speak-out on their behalf.

Healthwatch has:

- The statutory right to be listened to; Providers and Commissioners must respond to Healthwatch within 20 days of submission of requests for information or reports.
- The statutory power to Enter & View publicly funded health and social care services.
- A statutory seat on the Health and Wellbeing Board.

## Rationale

A representative from Healthwatch Middlesbrough, Stockton-on-Tees and Redcar and Cleveland regularly attend the North East Ambulance Service Healthwatch Forum. At a previous meeting, Healthwatch attendees were informed that the next meeting would focus on the 111 service and that this would involve a discussion and opportunity for Healthwatch representatives to feedback on the views of the residents in the local areas.

Healthwatch Middlesbrough, Stockton-on-Tees and Redcar and Cleveland felt it was important to gather this feedback from the local communities in order to give a true representation of the resident's views, good and bad at this proposed meeting.

### Methodology

Healthwatch Middlesbrough, Stockton-on-Tees and Redcar and Cleveland worked together to design a questionnaire to gather the views and experiences of the local community on using the NHS 111 service. In order to gather as much feedback as possible, the online questionnaire link was promoted via the Healthwatch websites, Facebook and Twitter pages and also sent out via email to all Healthwatch's members.

### Results

A total of 51 questionnaires were completed, 76% of those completing it were female and there was an age range between 16 - 65+ years.

### Postcode Representation

Individuals completing the questionnaire were from the following areas:

TS6 TS3 TS17 TS18 TS19 TS12 TS8 TS24 TS1 TS5 DL15  
DH1 TS22 TS23 TS4 TS7 TS9 TS16 TS21 TS10 TS11

### Question Responses

#### When did you call NHS 111?

In the last 6 months	60.4%
In the last year	29.2%
Unsure	10.4%

#### How was your overall experience of using 111?

Outstanding	20.41%
Exceeded expectations	20.41%
Acceptable	14.29%
Did not meet expectations	18.37%
Unacceptable	26.53%

#### Why did you call 111?

\*All comments below are direct quotes from completed questionnaires.

- My late Mother was ill, and I was trying to contact the out-of-hours Doctor.
- Emergency dental care.
- I was advised by my doctors' surgery.

- Had pain in head initially and then neck and shoulders. Spoke to telephonist for advice, who referred me immediately to a clinical nurse advisor. Ambulance arrived within 3 minutes was taken to A and E. Was diagnosed as a ruptured brain aneurysm requiring 4 hour brain operation on 15/12/2015. Still recovering.
- My father was terminally ill with cancer, I was worried about his health and needed advice. The operator was wonderful, kept me calm as I described my father's symptoms and he sent paramedics out immediately.
- For a client who was very ill whilst attending a multi-agency meeting.
- Relative terminally ill with cancer and had cellulitis. Needed to be seen for px for admission.
- Kidney pain.
- To find out if there was a way of self-referring to the CMHT without going via GP or crisis service.
- My one year old daughter was unwell.
- Breathing problems.
- Daughter had swallowed some Anbesol liquid.
- Grandad was palliative care needed medication given by district nurse out of hours were told we wouldn't need to go through all the questions however when we called the call handler proceeded to go through all questions despite telling them my grandad was palliative.
- My wife's knee gave way and it was extremely painful and she was unable to walk.
- Broken false teeth so needed someone to fix them.
- Daughter was very ill and I was told an ambulance was on its way it didn't arrive so I rang back an hour later to be told it had not been booked I ended up taking my daughter to NTGH myself.
- Severe back pain on the day I was due to fly to Sri Lanka.
- My Dad has come in from the garden sat down and could not move. He was in a lot of pain.
- Allergic reaction.
- Asthma and dizziness.
- For advice about medication compatibility.
- Child ill.
- I had a problem with my eyes and wanted to know if I needed to see a GP or an optician.
- Unable to walk due to severe back pain.
- Vertigo and asthma.
- I called about my daughter initially for advices so she has hurt her back then I had to call about my 95 year old father in law.
- Work related, mental health concerns for another person (was unable to get through to crisis team Stockton as lines were not answered). 999 call not appropriate.
- Dental problem.
- Severe pains in neck & back of the head.

- I woke up feeling quite ill with a numb arm and knew there was something amiss.
- Felt very ill post-surgical ....temperature, pain, vomiting.
- Pain in left knee, difficult in movement. Seeking advice.
- I was in extreme pain from a knee joint that had bent and would not straighten.
- Needed help and advice on a bank holiday.
- Dental Problem.
- Mother aged 85 years very unwell.
- ICD worked, unsure what to do!
- Burn, left wrist.
- Abdominal pain, turned out to be appendicitis. I was referred correctly by them, I think they did a great job.
- Chronic illness, unsure of whether I should go to hospital on account of worsening symptoms.
- To find an emergency dentist in the area and was given several numbers that did not do emergency treatment - wasting my time.
- Very bad pain.
- For advice as to which medical professional was most appropriate for the problem.
- For details of out-of-hours dentist.
- Father had chest pains.
- Could not stop being sick. Looked online and it said to call 111.
- For advice which led to parents admission 2. For advice which led to child's admission.

**What did you think about the way your issue was assessed?**

\*All comments below are direct quotes from completed questionnaires.

- I needed the Doctor urgently, but was advised to call 111. I explained what was wrong with Mam, it turned out she was dying, but the operator cut through every explanation I tried to give. I would NEVER dial 111 again. It is not the first time I have had issues with this so-called 'service'.
- Found it annoying to be honest would have rather spoken to a clinical advisor first off.
- Ok.
- Poor and ineffective service.
- Excellent.
- Excellent.
- Unsatisfactory, was pressured to state which part of the body was worse with rash when both the same.
- Very well handled.
- Satisfied.
- Fine.
- Was obvious an untrained person.

- Satisfactory.
- Diabolical.
- Appallingly.
- Fine.
- Ok at first but she didn't follow through.
- Efficient and fast.
- Very well.
- They were very good but sent me to A & E when a doc could have prescribed steroids.
- Very good.
- He did not listen to what was being asked. It took more than half an hour to make him understand our request.
- Poor.
- Bit confusing, they asked lots of questions which weren't relevant.
- Call not answered after 10 minutes.
- Excellent.
- Very professional, calm and polite.
- Quick, prompt, some questions not applicable but understand why they were asked.
- Not good.
- Very well.
- I was advised that it would be prudent to speak to a medically trained person or doctor.
- Long winded and unnecessary.
- Routine questions which they need to assess fair.
- Very professional.
- Ok.
- It took 3/4 of an hour unacceptable.
- Very good if not a bit repetitive as and when passed on to next practitioner to carry out assessment wondered why they had not added details to the computer.
- Good.
- After 45 minutes of being told all lines were busy, my husband hung up and phoned the hospital cardiology dept. for advice, who promptly despatched and ambulance.
- Brilliant.
- Fine.
- Terrible.
- It was ok.
- Did very well.
- Too long, too scripted and no empathy, robotic.
- Prompt swift action.
- Clearly using a question flowchart.
- I wasn't expecting a clinical advisor to have to call me back.

**Please tell us some more details about your experience of using the 111 service**

	Yes	No	Unsure
Did the advisor give you information on any appropriate services that may have helped you?	39.58%	50%	10.42%
At the time of your call, did the advisor make any appointments for you?	21.28%	74.47%	4.26%
Was your call transferred to a clinical nurse advisor?	46.81%	40.43%	12.77%
Did your call require an emergency ambulance response?	38.78%	51.02%	10.20%

**Do you feel your issue was resolved?**

Yes	55.10%
No	44.90%

**Additional Comments:**

\*All comments below are direct quotes from completed questionnaires.

- No - I was referred back to my doctors. They made me an appointment. The very thing I wanted in the first place.
- He recommended paramedics and they came immediately.
- It took too long to get to speak to someone and it too long for an ambulance to arrive.
- Had to attend a clinic at 1.50am in another town when GP said it should have been emergency visit.
- They put me in touch with my Dr who told me to call an ambulance.
- The nurse agreed with me that access to services was inadequate. The mental health foundation trust PALs team were more useful in this case. 111 is not very responsive to individual needs and is limited in its knowledge of local workarounds.
- Had to wait an hour to speak to a clinical advisor.
- Too long to wait for further action if needed.
- We were advised to attend A&E.
- All I got from the operator was has she got pains in her chest, and me repeatedly replying it's not her chest it's her knee.
- No answer to a simple question.
- Ambulance had not been booked and I took my daughter to hospital myself.

- Saw nurse who carried out tests and judged my injury not to be connected to more serious problems. Left me to decide whether or not to fly and prescribed painkillers, specifying their possible side effects. I did fly, and stopped needing the painkillers four days later.
- Eventually a doctor called us back and answered the question in seconds.
- Did not trust it.
- I was booked in for an emergency GP appointment which I wouldn't have been able to get on my own.
- No response to telephone call!
- Have had very good service from all 111.
- Gave me phone numbers of dentists that could not help.
- It took 12hrs to inform me at 3.30am to see my G.P.
- When I was eventually taken to N Tees (around 6 hour wait in a lot of pain) I had to wait hours there too, and then say an overworked team who had no records of my operation.
- It took 2 and a half hours for someone to ring back.
- Got an appointment.
- I received advice to go to emergency doctor.
- Symptoms still progressively worsening.
- I had to call dentists myself.
- Sent emergency ambulance when it was not necessary.
- The advisor gave me a contact number for another contact to ring for booking an appointment with an out-of-hours dentist. I rang this second contact number to be told by the lady on the line, all she was going to do was give me details of any available out-of-hours dentist which the NHS 111 Advisor provided.
- I was told to see GP as an emergency. When I saw the GP she said it was not an emergency.

### What parts of the 111 service do you think work well?

\*All comments below are direct quotes from completed questionnaires.

- None.
- The nurses are good at giving appropriate advice.
- Answered call quickly gave accurate information.
- Good in theory but it doesn't always work in practice. It also costs more in telephone charges.
- Both telephonist and Clinical nurse asked the right questions and listened.
- It's the only time I have used it and it was an excellent service. I would change nothing.
- None of it!
- Appointment when finally allocated.
- All of it.

- They were polite, helpful as far as they could be and respectful. I had a nice chat with the nurse about how the system could be improved and hopefully made her understand why a GP visit was not always a possible solution.
- Great for out of hours and non-emergency situations.
- None.
- None the service is horrendous.
- None.
- None of it.
- None of it that day.
- Speed - I was given an appointment at a nearby clinic within the hour.
- When A & E isn't too busy when they are busy 111 are sending needless people to A & E when an out of hours doc would suffice.
- All parts.
- You eventually get through to the appropriate person.
- None - too remote.
- Speaking to a clinical nurse was helpful.
- None.
- Very helpful.
- All.
- Information, advice, quick, clear.
- Very few.
- Good listening and "of Service", when G.P. was unavailable.
- Initially a paramedic arrived on a motor bike I think. He was very calm and reassuring. An ambulance then arrived for my transfer to hospital. I am not sure if the para medic organised this or the 111 service.
- Don't really like the service as they are untrained and long winded when they first answer but I did get my ambulance so....
- Services was professional, but difficult in been ask the same question by three different people unnecessary.
- Everything worked well, had no problems.
- When the ambulance did arrive the team were wonderful, efficient, and did their best to move me into the ambulance without pain. On the way one took detailed notes, I'd have liked to thank them.
- None on this occasion.
- Professional advice.
- Immediate initial response.
- None, even family GP and hospital staff say it's a complete failure.
- Quick health advice. To know whether or not I needed medical attention.
- Not having to travel for advice.
- None.
- General information.
- Always found them very quick.
- None I have found so far.
- All that I had experience of were excellent.

- Being able to speak to a nurse/ doctor.
- I had confidence in the service, the person who answered the phone on both occasions was professional and extracted the information she needed quickly to triage.

**Do you have any suggestions as to how this service could be improved?**

\*All comments below are direct quotes from completed questionnaires.

- Get rid of it and go back to direct access to an off-duty service.
- Remove non clinical advisor stage as they can be very over dramatic and go off on a tangent not paying attention to you and only to a general script.
- Provide a better service in your own doctors. Better audit/policing of doctors' surgeries provided service. An effective complaints procedure.
- No an excellent service which saved my life.
- 1. Tell your staff that on no account do they put the phone down on a caller who is asking for help! 2. Ask what the problem is and make a decision from there regarding prioritisation.
- Quicker response, called 6.30 and not seen until 1.50am the following morning in another town for an 82 year old terminally ill lady with diagnosed cellulitis.
- No, in my experience it has always been exemplary.
- Not so much for 111 but mental health services would be improved if there were better and more routes into secondary care or better relapse plans for people with ongoing/recurring conditions.
- More / better access to clinical advisors.
- Have better experienced staff on phone.
- I didn't know it was a chargeable service.
- Close it down.
- Scrap it. It is not fit for purpose.
- Find solutions, easy, sensible solutions to simple problems and don't tell me it's not an emergency. That's why I've called 111 not 999!
- Follow up on ambulance calls.
- Sending needless people to A & E when an out of hour's doc would suffice.
- No was pleased with the service.
- If it is advice about medication it could be streamlined further.
- More staff required to initially answer telephones.
- For my father in law I couldn't fault any part of the service to be improved. It would of been good to have my daughter see a doctor especially with her very rarely being ill or complain of any pain.
- More trained professionals.
- Perhaps more closely LINLED to the G.P. and hospital services; and perhaps better 'liaison' with the 999 and/ or other emergency services.
- In my case it was handled very well so I am grateful to those concerned.

- It's like the whole of the NHS....over worked. Only more money and more staff will improve the whole organisation.
- Not to have so many people to speak to re issues or advice, they should be a limit on response time to get advice.
- If those who have had an operation at the Nuffield could be taken there in an NHS ambulance (if that is what Nuffield staff said was the best thing to do) it would have saved A and E having one more patient they didn't have to have, and I could have been laid on a bed whilst waiting instead of an agonising wait in A and E for hours in a wheelchair with nothing to support my leg.
- Be much quicker in responding.
- More doctors on call as it took too long to wait for someone to call back.
- Yes, start again but this time ask medics the way forward.
- Maybe to reduce time people could fill in information online for the advisor to read before being connected?
- Trained staff.
- More experienced handlers and keeping the records of available.
- Talk to real person with some medical knowledge.
- No need to inappropriately send people to A&E or GP as emergency. These services are already stretch without unnecessary referrals.
- It would be beneficial to have a clinically trained person answering the phone to assess the level of urgency which then could be triaged down, to save time.

### Additional Comments

\*All comments below are direct quotes from completed questionnaires.

- I am sorry to be so abrupt, but, 18 months later, my experience still rankles. When I lived in the country, 20 miles from the nearest out-of-hours service, I needed medical help and so rang 111. I had 24/7 Sciatica, lived alone and no access to a car, It was 3.00am, and was advised to take Paracetamol. On being told I did not have any, the operator told me to go and borrow some from a neighbour, or ask for a lift to the nearest out-of-hours service. Is it any wonder that people are losing faith in the NHS?
- My own doctors' practice has no formal complaints procedure. Raised complaints not properly/effectively dealt with.
- I was asked to call by an ex-paramedic who was also present at the meeting. He was extremely concerned about the worsening wellbeing of the client. I rang 111 and went through the choices only to have the call answered and the phone immediately put back down again. I rang again and repeated the selection process and finally got to speak to someone. By this point quite a few minutes had passed and we were concerned our client was presenting as having a stroke; hence we asked for an emergency ambulance. It took more than half an hour for an ambulance to arrive and several more phone calls to chase it up. It was more than an hour before the patient got to

hospital. Had it been more serious the 'golden' hour would have been missed for a very vulnerable client.

- Generic questions don't cover the problems.
- Whilst I have never rung the 111 service if I had a health problem I would be reluctant to put my diagnosis in the hands of an untrained person looking at a computer screen and ticking boxes. Recently the doctor on the Jeremy Vine show said that in the past the 111 phones were manned by professional health workers but more and more they are now answered by people who are not medically trained and rely on what their computer indicates to give the caller advice which is not satisfactory. You cannot arrive at a reliable diagnosis over the phone by asking a series of questions from a computer program to arrive at a diagnosis. People are individuals and I would not trust the 111 service with my health.
- The call handler could not remember my name and continued to get it wrong throughout the call despite being corrected numerous times. He also asked me if I was pregnant or taking HRT despite knowing my date of birth. I am 82!!
- I was admitted to hospital within an hour of my call. The speedy response probably saved my life.
- Just the system needs to be re assessed with response time for patient's advice.
- The doctor stated that my mother needed to be in hospital within the hour, we waited 12 hours for an ambulance.
- I had the same experience when I called as I was new to the area and needed to register with a doctor and was given several doctors, the first 4 were not taking on new patients!!!
- Too ready just to say go to A & E and ambulance on way, didn't listen to all the facts because what I had to say didn't fit the script.
- I felt I was listened to and received the very best service possible. I have rung on other occasions and have always had excellent advice and care as a result.

**Please follow the link below to view the questionnaire:**

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/VCKTXG2>