

Consultation on a future model for NHS 111 and GP Out of Hours services for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Response from the Health Committee of Cambridgeshire County Council

The Health Committee, acting in its Health Scrutiny capacity, has identified a number of points in response to the consultation document. Page references are to that document.

General points

The Committee considers it sensible to seek a single provider for the NHS 111 and GP Out of Hours services. However, as a number of services are changing there is a need to ensure that any new provider of the 111 / Out of Hours service works collaboratively with UnitingCare Partnership's Joint Emergency Team (JET) ensuring that appropriate referrals are made to this team.

It is important that the 111 / Out of Hours service links into, and is aware of the importance of, domestic abuse, protection of children, and protection of vulnerable adults. At all stages of contact, staff should be alert to these and other broader issues, such as emerging dementia, and mindful that some patients may be using the Out of Hours service rather than approaching their own GP because they think there is less likelihood of e.g. abuse concerns being raised and acted on.

Consideration should be given to improving the accessibility of traditional GP services, for example by extending surgery opening hours into the evenings and weekends, and by making it easier to book appointments. It would be a better use of building plant to have GP premises open on Saturdays than standing empty.

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The Committee considers it sensible to adopt a common assessment process, but stresses the need for it to be carried out carefully, ensuring that the process is kept under review and always addresses the needs of the patient.

Allowance should be made for patient choice on how they wish to be assessed, for example by phone or face-to-face. There is no detail about alternatives to face-to-face consultation, and no mention of such alternatives to treatment as doing nothing or going to a pharmacy.

It is important that each stage of the assessment system is staffed by people with appropriate medical experience; a tick-box approach to assessment should be avoided.

It is important that the advice given at any stage is seen as credible, so that the patient has confidence in it and responds to the advice. It may be that some patients will be reluctant to take advice that no treatment is needed if they only receive the advice over the phone, but would accept it from a face-to-face consultation.