

NHS 111 Report

March 2018

V1.0



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NHS 111 Report

February 2018

Healthwatch Worcestershire gathers feedback about publicly funded health and care services and uses this to make recommendations to those who run the services about how they could be improved from the patient perspective. We have been finding out about awareness and experiences of the NHS 111 service.

What is NHS 111?

NHS 111 was launched in 2013. The aim was to replace the previous NHS Direct telephone advice line and provide a single point of contact to direct people to the appropriate urgent care and out of hours care with an easy to remember number.

People can ring NHS 111 if they need urgent medical help, but it is not life threatening. The number does not replace or replicate the 999 service.

NHS 111 can:

- give self-care advice
- connect you to a nurse, emergency dentist or GP
- book you a face-to-face appointment, such as an Out of Hours GP appointment or home visit
- send an ambulance directly, if necessary
- direct you to the local service that can help you best with your concern

Although NHS 111 operates across the whole of England, calls are directed to a local provider. In November 2016 Care UK took over providing NHS 111 and Out of Hours GP care in Worcestershire.

More information about NHS 111 can be found on the NHS Choices website - www.nhs.uk

Why this issue?

Over recent years Healthwatch Worcestershire has received a variety of feedback via our engagement, surveys and people contacting us, about people's awareness and experiences of NHS 111. This included some people telling us of concerns about long waits for a call back, the scripted nature of questions asked and over cautious advice. We have also received feedback about the effectiveness of the service, in particular from those responding to our survey for parents of children under 5 in 2016.

Following on from HWW work on accessing doctors' appointments and urgent care, we wanted to find out about people's awareness and experiences of NHS 111. We decided that this was especially important given current pressures on Accident and Emergency services and Primary Care.

Our Work

We have gathered feedback from 505 people in Worcestershire about their awareness and experiences of NHS 111.

Our Survey

- Our NHS 111 survey was completed by a total of 311 people between June and December 2017.
- 258 people completed the survey as part of our engagement at a variety of meetings and community events across the Worcestershire, including: Redditch Mosque, Worcester Community Trust Community Connect sessions and Eid Party, Evesham Older People's Forum, Fortis Living family events in Worcester City and Malvern Hills, the Worcester Show, Bromsgrove Community Days, Springfield Park Community Event, Simply Limitless groups, Lickhill Park Playday, Wyre Forest Showcase of services for older people, Berrington Court Extra Care, Church Street Surgery in Kidderminster drop in session and Worcester Carers Group.
- 53 people completed the survey online

Additional Engagement and Feedback

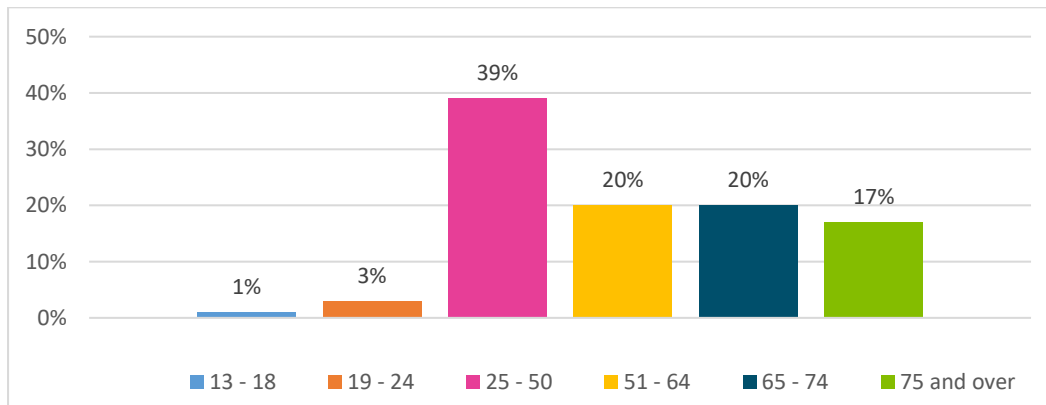
- 148 health and care students took part in workshops delivered at HOW College Redditch, Worcester Sixth Form College, Evesham College, Kidderminster College, Dyson Perrin High School and University of Worcester
- 46 people with a learning disability who took part in group discussions at SpeakEasy NOW meetings

Survey Demographic Data

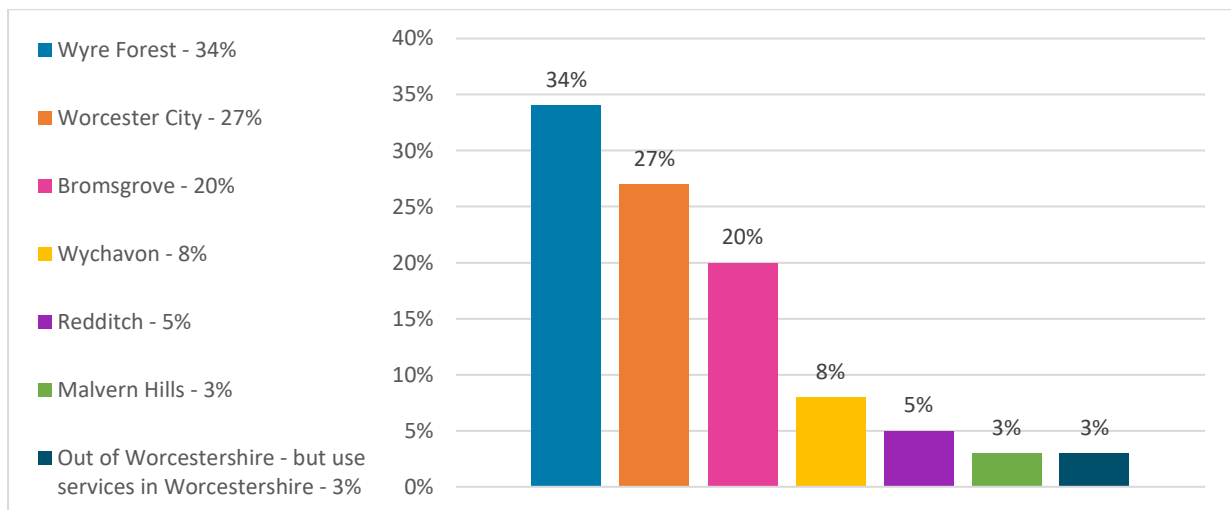
Gender of respondents

- 73% Female
- 26% Male
- 1% - Other e.g. Transgender

Age of respondents



Where do respondents live?



Ethnicity of respondents - 88% of respondents who answered this question identified as White British. The remaining 12% identified as either: Asian / Asian British Pakistani; Asian / Asian British Indian; Mixed ethnic Asian and White; Asian other; Black / Black British Caribbean; White Irish and White Other.

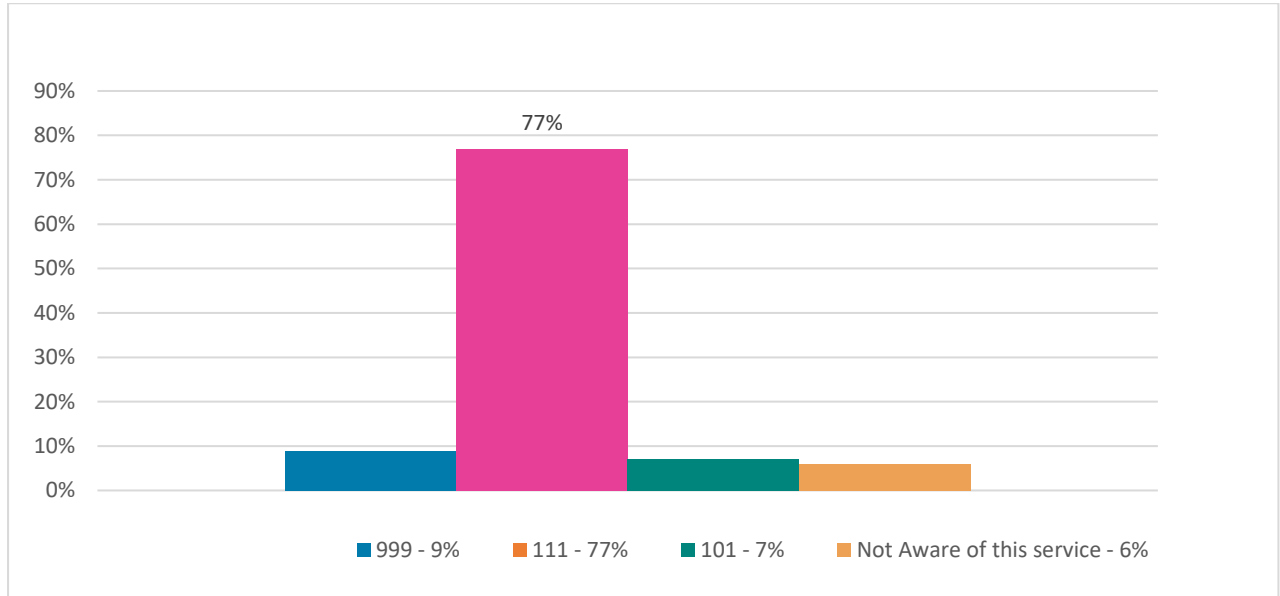
Disability and long term health conditions - 36% of those who answered this question reported a disability or long term health condition.

Parents / Carers - 37% told us they had a child or children under 18.

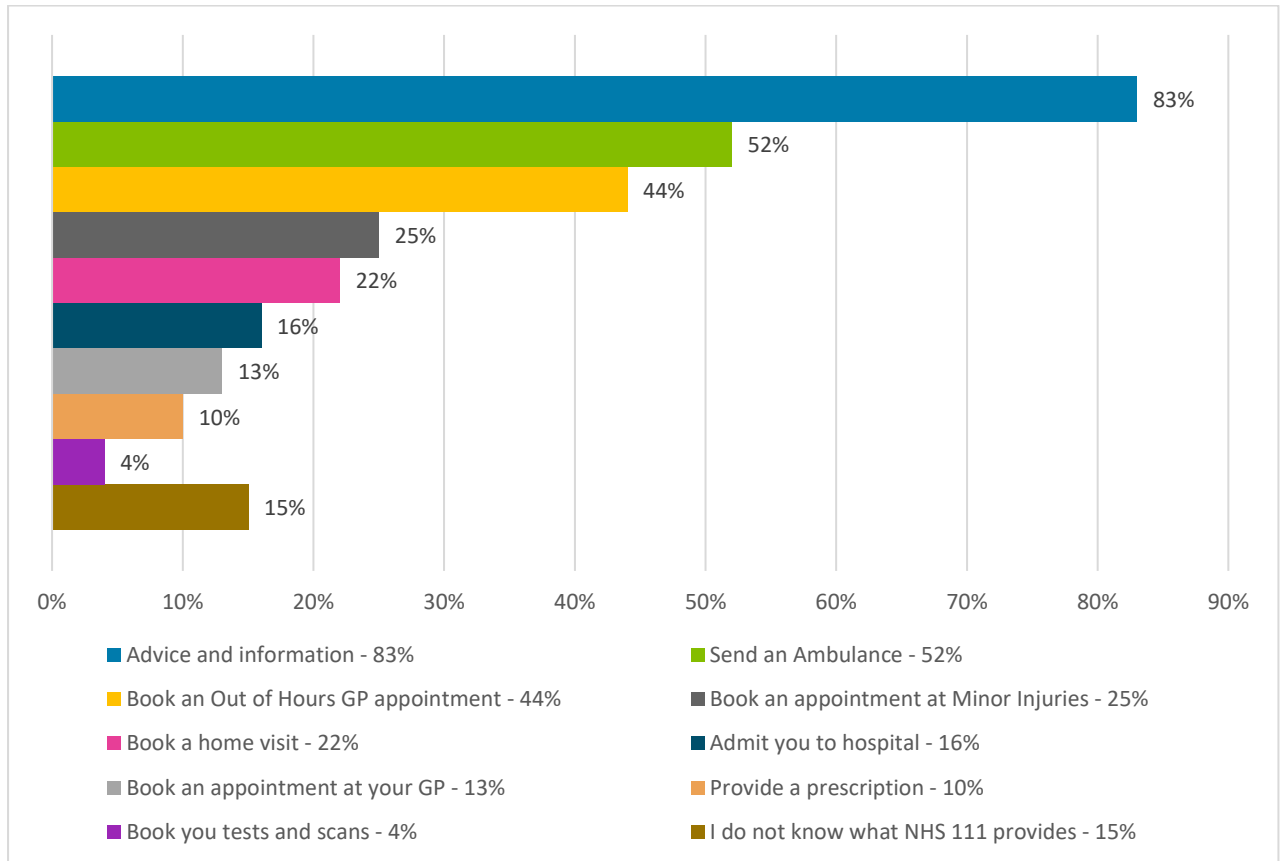
Survey Results

1. Awareness of NHS 111

1.1 Which number would you use if you needed urgent health care or advice, but it was not an emergency?



1.2 Which of the following do you think NHS 111 can provide?



The findings suggest that although there was generally a good awareness of NHS 111 phone number, there was not such a good awareness of the range of services it can provide.

Services provided by NHS 111 - 83% of respondents were aware that NHS 111 provides advice and information. However, there was less awareness of other services: 52% thought they could send an ambulance, 44% thought they could book an Out of Hours doctor's appointment and only 22% thought they could book a home visit with a medical professional. 10% of respondents thought that NHS 111 could provide a prescription, which can be provided in some circumstances as part of the Out of Hours service.

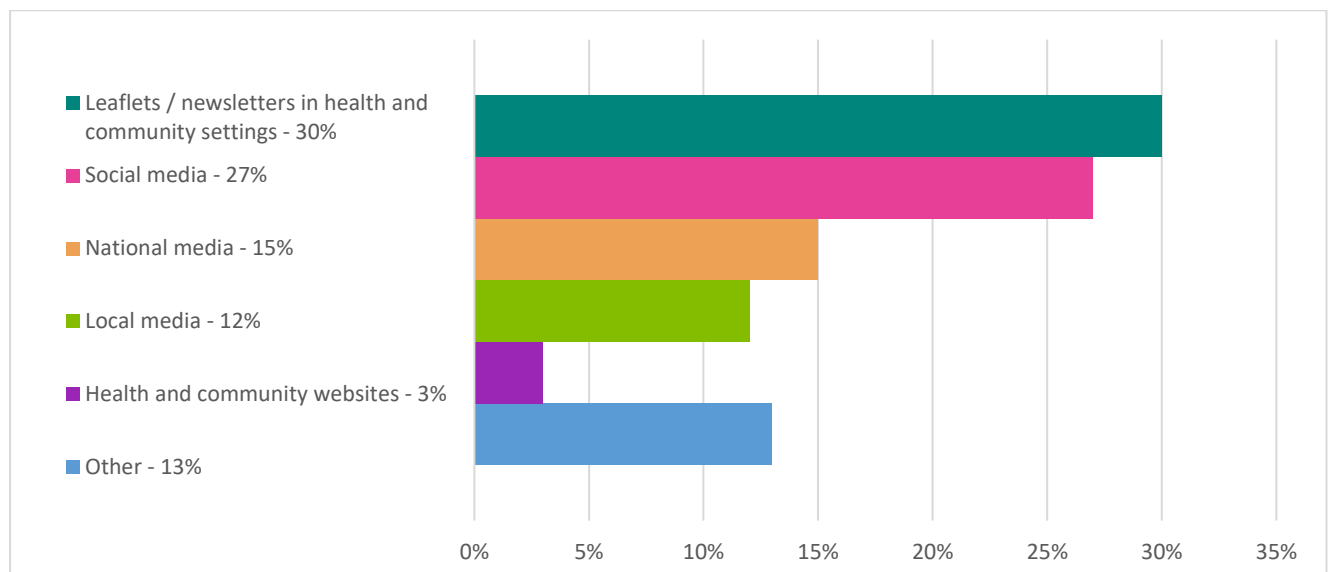
Services not provided by NHS 111 - Some people also thought that they could provide services such as an appointment at a Minor Injuries Unit (25%), admit you to hospital (16%), book an appointment at your GP (13%) or book tests and scans (4%), which are not provided.

15% of respondents who had not heard of NHS 111 or did not know any of the services it provides.

Respondents with a child under 18 showed a better awareness of NHS 111 when compared with overall results. Only 1% said they were not aware of NHS 111 and 60% knew that they could book an Out of Hours GP appointment.

However, respondents who were 65 and over reported a lower awareness of NHS 111 and what is provided when compared with overall results. 13% said that they were not aware of NHS 111 and only 34% were aware that NHS 111 could book an Out of Hours GP appointment.

1.3 What do you feel would be the most useful way to promote the NHS 111 service?



Additional comments and suggestions about promotion of NHS 111

There were 40 comments made by respondents who selected 'Other'. The most common comment was that 15 people felt all of the suggested methods should be used. 7 comments expressed the view that NHS 111 should not be promoted because it was not an effective service or that promotion should only happen once improvements had been made. Some of the comments reflected a need to use different methods of promotion with different groups, especially in relation to age groups, suggesting that sending information to people at home or national television campaigns would be more useful for the elderly in particular if they are housebound.

Other suggestions included: *visiting groups, voluntary sector organisations especially carers organisations, on screens in GP practices, on GP practice answer machines, through support workers, organisations such as Healthwatch who provide signposting, leaflets through doors, leaflets with free newspapers, letters and in work environments.*

Variations in responses

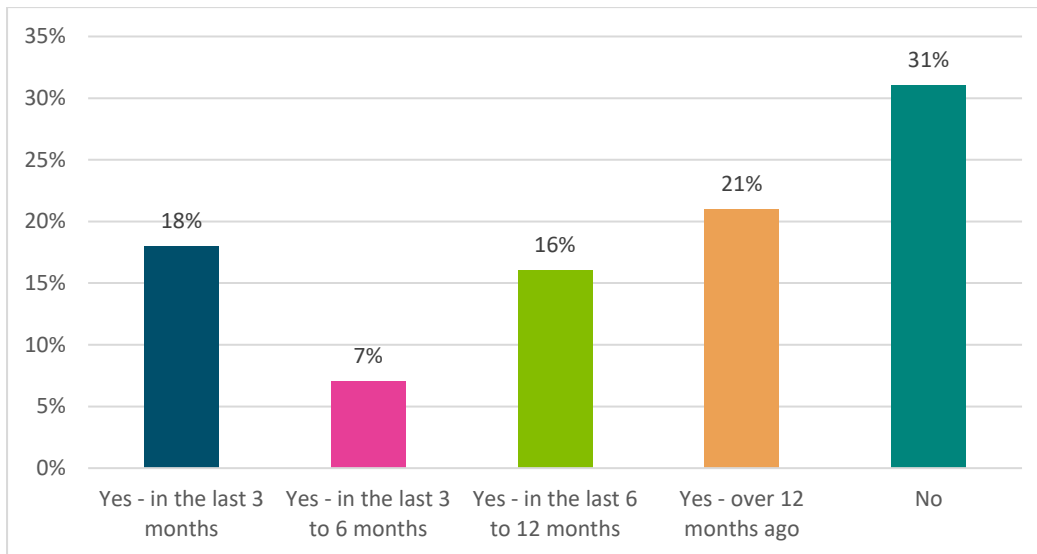
The responses suggested 50% of respondents with a child under 18 felt that social media would be the most useful. While only 19% of respondents over 65 thought it would be useful. Findings suggested they would find leaflets and newsletters in health and community settings and local media as the most effective ways of promotion.

Recommendations

- **Consider how to raise awareness of NHS 111 service and the range of services it provides. In particular booking of Out of Hours GP appointments and home visits.**
- **Consider the promotion of NHS 111 and the range of services it provides using leaflets and posters in community and health settings across Worcestershire and using social media.**
- **Consider how to raise awareness of NHS 111 and the range of services it provides to older people.**

2. Use of NHS 111

2.1 Have you ever contacted NHS 111?

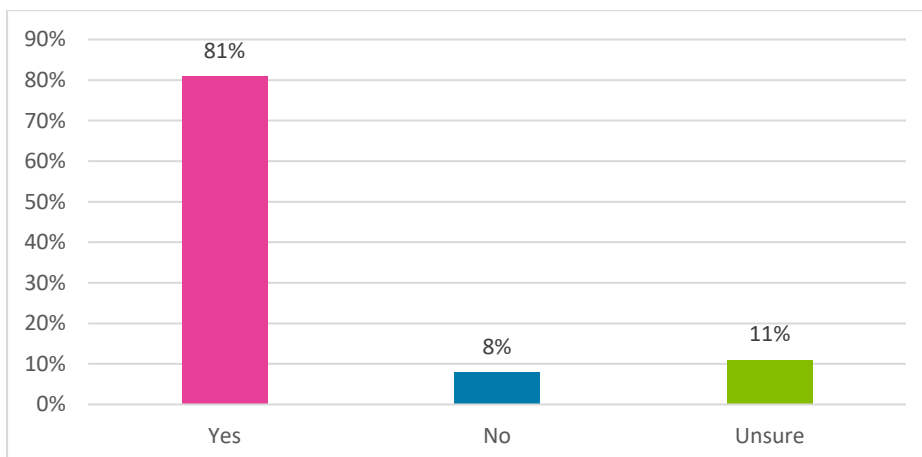


This shows that although 62% of respondents had contacted NHS 111 previously, less than half had done so in the last year (41%).

Variations showed a similar pattern to those of awareness. 78% of those with a child or children under 18 had previously contacted NHS 111, whereas only 53% of those over 65 had.

Respondents who had previously used NHS 111

2.2 Would you contact NHS 111 again?



Most people (81%) told us that they would contact NHS 111 again.

Reasons that were given for answering no or unsure included: 'poor training' 'did not understand medical needs' 'not happy with response' 'reluctant because of all the questions' 'due to previous experience' 'not sure I would receive the service I need'

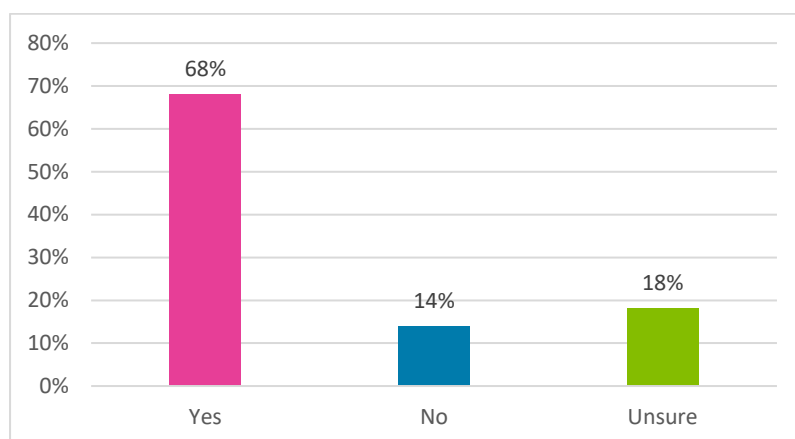
2.3 What would you do instead?

We asked those who said they would not contact NHS 111 again or said they were unsure what they would do instead. Of those who told us what they would do instead:

- 11 people said they would call 999
- 8 people said they would go straight to Accident and Emergency
- 4 people said they would go to the GP
- 1 person said they would turn up at the Out of Hours service and demand to be seen
- 1 person said they would go to the Pharmacist
- 1 person suggested that instead of NHS 111 GPs should work night shifts on a rota

Respondents who had not previously contacted NHS 111

2.4 - Would you contact NHS 111 if you required medical help or an out of hours doctor's appointment?



Of those who had not previously contacted NHS 111, only 68% said they thought they would do in the future. With 32% responding either no or unsure.

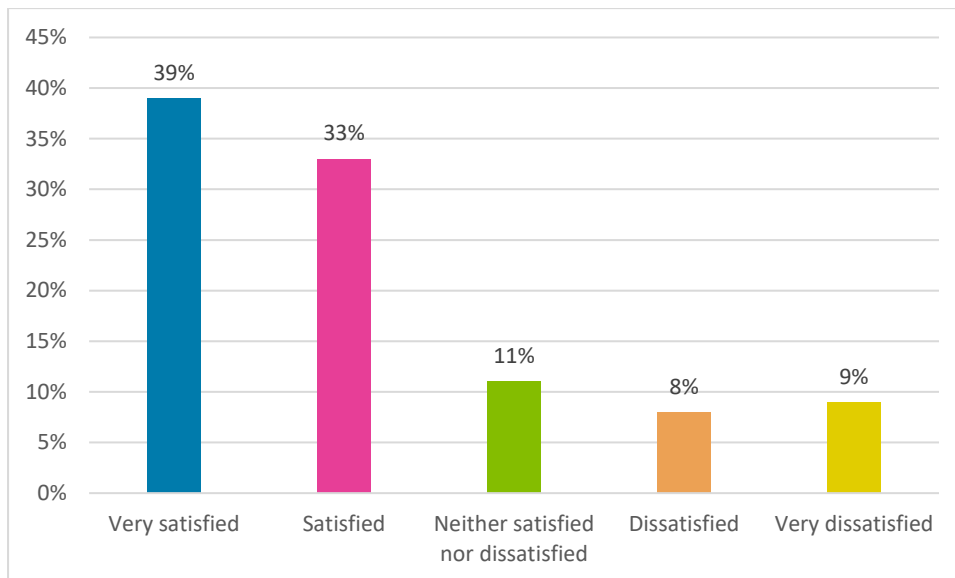
Comments from those who answered no or unsure mainly stated that they did not know about the service or needed more information. Some suggested that they would contact someone else instead, such as a friend or carer or use a care line. Others suggested that they would either ring the Doctors, 999 or go straight to hospital.

These findings suggest the importance of raising awareness of NHS 111 phone number and the range of services it provides, to help alleviate pressures on Accident and Emergency and 999.

3. Satisfaction with NHS 111

3.1 Time Taken

How satisfied were you with the time taken to provide the information, advice or service you required?



This shows that 72% of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the time taken.

This number is slightly higher - 76% when looking at those who had contacted NHS 111 within the last year.

105 people made additional comments when responding to this question.

Positive comments

63 of the comments were classed as positive

- 31 comments were made about receiving appropriate treatment or service and advice. E.g. -
 - 'info was focussed on my concerns and provided me with the necessary next steps'
 - 'nurse identified safeguarding issue and took appropriate action'
 - 'the advice was very comprehensive and reassuring'
- 19 comments were about receiving a prompt response or the timescale of the call back. E.g. -
 - 'quick professional advice and action taken'
 - 'the ambulance arrived while I was still on the phone to NHS 111'

- 12 comments were about the booking of an Out of Hours GP appointment. E.g. -
 - ‘unwell child, arranged to be seen at GP out of hours urgently’
 - ‘booked straight into an out of hours appointment’
- 1 comment was about being directed to the appropriate service -
 - ‘for daughter age 18 months, advised to go to pharmacy’

Negative comments

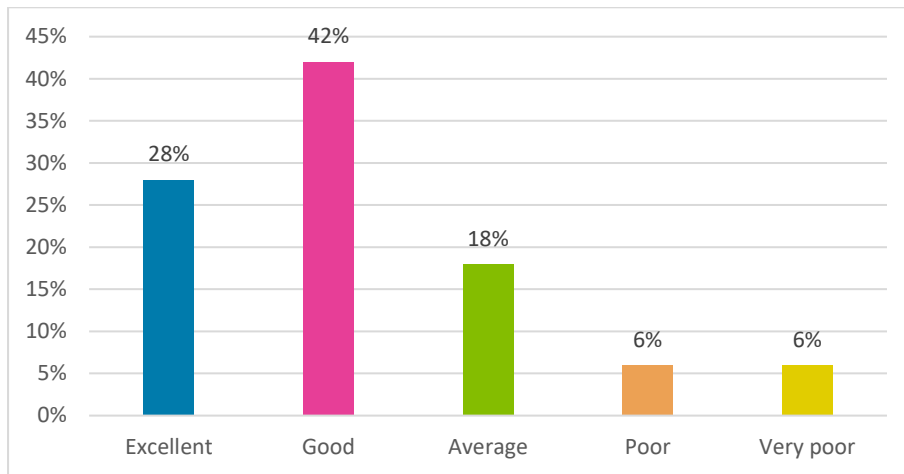
42 of the comments were classed as negative.

24 comments were about a time delay in responding or waiting for a call back. 4 of these comments said that because 111 had taken too long to respond they had taken alternative action - 2 going to their GP when it opened and 2 going to Accident and Emergency.

- E.g. -
 - ‘Very dissatisfied with time taken. Rang 9pm, took time to ring back. Early hours of morning rang back. Would not use again!’
 - ‘took 8 hours to get a call back. My twin children age 1 year were very poorly and it was at the weekend’
 - ‘took 8 hours and no one rang back. Went to A&E and saw someone for child in half an hour’
- 10 comments were about the time it takes to answer the questions and / or the same questions being asked twice
 - ‘very automated. Did not necessarily cover what I asked’
 - ‘you go through a litany of useless questions with them, then they put a nurse on the phone, you go through the same info again’
 - ‘frustrating having to go back and forwards with the questions to get the answers that are repeatedly asked’
- 3 comments were about receiving a poor service
 - ‘they tend to refer me to A&E rather than minor injuries units, yet when I go there it has not been necessary.’
- 1 comment was about insufficient staff at busy periods e.g. bank holidays
- 1 comment was about feeling staff did not have relevant experience
- 1 comment was about relevant questions not being asked -
 - ‘as a nurse, the relevant questions were not asked to determine whether there was an underlying health condition (i.e. diabetic)’
- 1 comment was about the Doctor being difficult to understand
- 1 comment was about there being a limited knowledge of children

3.2 Overall satisfaction with NHS 111

How would you rate the service overall?



70% of those who had used NHS 111 rated the service either good or excellent. This increases to 78% of those who had used the service within the last year.

98 people made additional comments about their overall satisfaction with the service.

Positive comments

53 of the comments were classed as positive

- 24 of the comments were about receiving good or helpful advice. E.g. -
 - ‘they were really helpful and knew what they were talking about’
 - ‘getting help and advice was so easy in the early hours of the morning’
- 16 of the comments were about receiving an appropriate service or good outcome. E.g. -
 - ‘organised a home visit at night’
 - ‘advice from out of hours GP was good’
 - ‘a doctor did make a home visit because the gp surgery was closed. The visit was necessary and did prevent a hospital admission’
- 11 of the comments were about receiving a prompt response. E.g. -
 - ‘got an appointment with an out of hours GP really quickly’
- 2 of the comments were about feeling reassured by NHS 111. E.g. -
 - ‘put mind at rest’

Negative comments

39 of the comments were classed as negative.

- 21 of the comments were about the quality of the advice or service or the training of the staff. E.g. -
 - ‘did not feel understood medical needs’
 - ‘limited help’
 - ‘felt more confused after talking with NHS 111, ended up calling an ambulance’
- 11 of the comments were about having a long wait for advice or a call back
 - ‘told to wait for a call but by then we had taken the child to hospital as felt we had waited too long’
 - ‘takes too long for little ones’
 - ‘work with nursing / residential and dementia patients. Due to time delay in phone call back and action contacted 999.’
- 7 of the comments were about the number of questions, taking too long to get to the issues and / or duplication of questions. E.g. -
 - ‘I think they ask too many questions that are not relevant at that time’.

Other comments

There were 3 other comments which reported mixed experiences of using NHS 111, for example - ‘different experiences and variable responses’

The responses and comments given about the experiences and satisfaction with the NHS 111 emphasise the importance of patients receiving an effective and efficient service, both for the health outcome of the individuals and helping to relieve the pressures placed on Accident and Emergency, primary care and 999 services.

Recommendations

1. Consider carrying out and publishing an in depth review of waiting times, examining the causes of the long waits and reviewing what actions could be taken to mitigate these waits.
2. Consider carrying out a review of questions asked by NHS 111 staff, looking at the number of questions, range of questions and whether there is scope to reduce duplication.

Focus on - Health and Social Care Students

We delivered workshops to 88 students studying health and social care at HOW College in Redditch, Worcester Sixth Form College, Evesham College, Kidderminster College and Dyson Perrins High School. As part of these workshops students took part in group activities, discussing and presenting their feedback about NHS 111.

Feedback from students attending our workshops suggests that nearly all of them had heard of NHS 111. They also showed a good awareness of the services NHS 111 could offer. Many being aware that you can book an Out of Hours Doctor's appointment via NHS 111. Although the numbers of students who had contacted 111 was not that high; most of those who had reported receiving a good service. Nearly all of the young people said that they would contact NHS 111 in the future if they needed to. Reasons given were their own and others' previous good experiences and not wanting to call 999 or go unnecessarily to Accident and Emergency.

Some students did feel that if there was a drop-in option available, such as the Minor Injuries Units or Out of Hours Doctors without appointments, that they would prefer this to having to telephone.

The students all felt that social media would be the best way to promote NHS 111 to young people. They also thought that it would be helpful to have posters and leaflets in colleges. They felt that it would be important to reinforce messages about when people should use 111 rather than other services. Some examples given were using a slogan such as 'urgency care not emergency care' and filming a fly on the wall documentary on people using NHS 111 and the staff dealing with the calls.

We asked students to look at the NHS ASK App, which provides access to NHS 111 services. Students generally thought that this was useful to provide trustworthy information about medical issues, because it is an NHS app, as they thought young people may search for information and find incorrect information on other sites. They also felt that this may save time for GPs and appeal to young people who may prefer to use an app rather than speak on the phone.

However, they felt that some people would not be able to or want to access an app. Most of the students felt that for specific issues and making decisions about needing urgent treatment or an appointment that speaking to a 'real person' would be better and more reassuring. The app is currently only available to people over 18. The students felt that it should be available to those over 16, as it is more likely that this is an age group who would be more likely to use an app.

University of Worcester Workshop

We also delivered a workshop to health and social care students at the University of Worcester. As part of the workshop we gathered feedback from 60 students about their awareness and experiences of NHS 111.

Nearly all of students were aware of NHS 111 and said that they would call 111 if they needed urgent medical care but it was not an emergency. More than half of the students knew that NHS 111 could book an appointment with an out of hours GP.

The higher awareness levels reflect the variations shown in the survey, as the majority of the students were either under 25 or parents of children under 18. They also felt that social media and leaflets would be the most useful way to promote NHS 111.

Recommendation

- **Consider promotion of NHS 111 via social media and posters and leaflets in schools and colleges.**

Focus on - People with a Learning Disability

We attended two meetings organised by SpeakEasy NOW to gather feedback from people with a learning disability.

- We went to their Health Checkers' Meeting, attended by people with a learning disability who gather feedback from others with a learning disability about health services.

- We also attended a Forum Meeting, attended by representatives of SpeakEasy NOW's local self-advocacy groups across Worcestershire. The Self Advocacy Groups had previously been sent some Easy Read questions about NHS 111 to discuss and feed back to the Forum Meeting we attended.

Feedback suggested that awareness of NHS 111 and what it does varied between the different groups. Those who were members of the Health Checkers or attended SpeakEasy meetings for some time had a better awareness. In one of the self-advocacy groups no-one had heard of the service.

The Health Checkers suggested that people with a learning disability might find it difficult to know when something was 'urgent' rather than 'an emergency'. Feedback from the self-advocacy groups also suggests that this might be an issue and that the group members had found it helpful to have a discussion about this.

Those who had previously contacted NHS 111 had mostly done so with support or someone had phoned on their behalf. A support worker who attended one of the self-advocacy groups said that they had found NHS 111 useful to provide advice, especially about medication for those they support, which had provided reassurance and avoided needing an appointment with the GP.

Many people said that they would feel worried about having to explain what was wrong to someone on the phone. One person who had contacted NHS 111 said that some of the questions could be difficult to understand. The groups felt that those who lived independently may not always have someone to support them to make the telephone call. They thought it would be really helpful if a flag on the system showed the person they were talking to that they have a learning disability. Or if this was a question they asked when you first get through. They thought it would also be helpful if the people who they speak to on the phone have had some training about learning disabilities. At the Forum Meeting the group decided that they would contact Care UK to offer to deliver some training.

Everyone agreed that it would be a good idea to tell more people with a learning disability about NHS 111 and when to phone them. They thought that having Easy Read information or someone visiting their self-advocacy groups would be helpful.

Recommendations

- **Consider how to identify if someone has a learning disability or long term health condition to ensure they are given the appropriate advice and support**
- **Consider reviewing questions to ensure they are easy for everyone to understand**
- **Consider how to raise awareness of NHS 111, the range of services provided and when to use it to people with a learning disability, including distribution of Easy Read leaflets and information.**

Conclusions and Recommendations

Our findings suggest that there is a good overall awareness of the NHS 111 service and that the majority of people who have used NHS 111 feel they have received a good service. However, there is not such a good understanding of the range of services NHS 111 provides and concerns have been raised about the quality of service received in some cases, particularly in relation to the time taken to respond and the questions asked.

Our findings also suggest the importance of awareness of the NHS 111 service and patient experience and satisfaction, both for the health outcomes of individual patients and helping to relieve the pressures placed on Accident and Emergency, Primary Care and 999 services.

Awareness of NHS 111

1. Consider how to raise awareness of NHS 111 service and the range of services it provides. In particular booking of Out of Hours GP appointments and home visits.
2. Consider the promotion of NHS 111 and the range of services it provides using leaflets and posters in community, health and educational settings across Worcestershire and using social media and local media.
3. Ensure that information about NHS 111 is provided in a variety of formats to make it accessible, including Easy Read and different languages.
4. Consider how to raise awareness of NHS 111 and the range of services it provides to older people.

Quality and effectiveness of NHS 111

5. Consider carrying out and publishing an in-depth review of waiting times, examining the causes of the long waits and reviewing what actions could be taken to mitigate these waits.
6. Consider carrying out a review of questions asked by NHS 111 staff, looking at -
 - a. Number of questions asked
 - b. Range of questions to ensure long term medical needs and support needs are identified
 - c. Any scope to reduce duplication of questions
 - d. Ensuring questions are easy to understand

Healthwatch Worcestershire will also be seeking information from commissioners and Care UK to gain an understanding of current arrangements for patient participation and engagement for NHS 111.