

Press Release

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How well is Urgent Medical Care working in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin?

From December 2020, NHS England launched a new system called NHS 111 First. If you have an urgent, but not life-threatening health problem you can now contact NHS 111 First to find out if you need to go to A&E.

The public are encouraged to call NHS 111 to be directed to the correct service, whether that is an Emergency Department (Accident & Emergency), their GP, or self-care. Callers to NHS 111 can now receive time slots at local Emergency Departments (EDs) or other urgent care departments, as well as receive time slots with GPs or out of hours GP services. The new service aims to reduce waiting times at EDs and limit the number of people in waiting rooms, to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Initial findings in national research are showing that many people do not know that NHS 111 First could book them into the different services they may need. Healthwatch Shropshire and Healthwatch Telford & Wrekin would like to hear from people who have used NHS 111 and how they were helped to access services.

Barry Parnaby, Chair of Healthwatch Telford & Wrekin, said “If your condition is not life-threatening, 111 may direct you to a more appropriate service or one that can see you sooner. You may also be asked to wait at home until the Emergency Department is ready to see you, avoiding a long wait in A&E for you and helping to prevent overcrowding. If you need an urgent face-to-face assessment or treatment, NHS 111 should be able to arrange this immediately for you.”

Lynn Cawley, Healthwatch Shropshire Chief Officer, told us, “NHS 111 First was implemented in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin in December and we would like people to share their experiences of ringing 111 and how they were helped to access the right service. Time slots for Emergency Departments have been introduced to help both the NHS manage demand during these difficult times and help people avoid long waiting times. No one who turns up in A&E should be turned away or asked to call NHS 111. But how does it work in practice? We will share everybody’s experiences with the NHS to help improve the system as it develops.”

People can let us know by filling in our online survey at:
www.healthwatchshropshire.co.uk/urgent-medical-care-survey or
www.healthwatchtelfordandwrekin.co.uk/nhs-111-first-survey or
giving us a ring on 01743 237884 or 01952 739540 and staff will fill out the survey for them.

Dr Julie Davies, Director of Performance for Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin CCGs, said: “It’s now nearly three months since we launched the NHS 111 First service and it’s important that we listen to and learn from people’s experiences so that we can continue to develop and improve the service.”

“We are really grateful to Healthwatch Shropshire and Healthwatch Telford and Wrekin for their help in carrying out this survey and encourage everyone who has used our urgent care services since December 1st to share their experience with us. Whether or not you contacted NHS 111 First before using any of our urgent care services, we want to hear from you.”

Healthwatch Shropshire and Healthwatch Telford and Wrekin are the independent consumer champions for Health and Social Care in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin. They gather the views and experiences of patients, service users, carers, and the general public about services including hospitals, GPs, mental health services, community health services, pharmacists, opticians, residential care and children’s services. They also have statutory powers that can be used to influence service provision by encouraging improvements.

Ends

Notes for Editors:

Healthwatch Shropshire and Healthwatch Telford and Wrekin are part of a network of 148 Local Healthwatch in England. They are supported by a national organisation, Healthwatch England.

It has a team working in community engagement, plus a volunteer programme, a visit programme to health and social care premises and an associate membership scheme to involve the public in its work. It also has a signposting service to help people access health and social care services and support.

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