

Enhanced NHS111 service launches for Kent, Medway & Sussex

From today the NHS 111 service in Kent, Medway and Sussex is being enhanced and it can now offer access to a wider range of health care professionals.

GPs, paramedics, nurses, mental health professionals, dental nurses and pharmacists are all part of the new NHS111 clinical assessment service which launched today (1 October 2020).

People who call 111 – free from mobiles or landlines 24/7 - or access the service via www.111.nhs.uk will speak to call handlers and/or healthcare professionals who will be able to assess symptoms over the phone, issue prescriptions and directly book people into onward care appointments if they need one.

It is the start of a number of improvements to the NHS 111 service for people living in Sussex.

Over the coming months, NHS111 will integrate more closely with SECAmb's 999 service and existing out-of-hours care, which means that people who call or visit 111 online will be able to be access evening and weekend GP appointments, home visiting services, and appointments at minor injury units, urgent treatment centres and A&E departments. This is known as direct booking and NHS 111 First and we will share more on this in coming weeks as it prepares to launch in Sussex.

The new clinical assessment service is a result of a new contract for NHS 111 in Kent, Medway and Sussex.

The new five year contract was awarded to South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SECAmb) as the lead provider, and they are working in conjunction with not-for-profit social enterprise Integrated Care 24 (IC24).

SECAmb and IC24 already provided NHS111 to parts of the south east separately but will now work together to deliver a more joined up service.

NHS111 Clinical Lead for Sussex, Dr Victoria Beattie said: "NHS111 will be pivotal in ensuring patients get access to the right care, at the right time and place for their symptoms. The new clinical assessment service will mean patients can talk to a doctor or healthcare professional sooner, giving patients real confidence in the care they will receive."

FAQ

- Is this NHS 111 First?

The launch of the clinical assessment service and NHS 111 First are separate but they are both set to further improve what is on offer to local people by calling 111 or visiting 111 online.

NHS 111 First allows people who have contacted 111 to receive booked appointments in urgent care services such as the minor injury units, urgent treatment centres and A&E/ED if they need this level of support.

This will be going live across Sussex by the start of December, in line with all regions across the country.

By launching the clinical assessment service before this, people who contact 111 will have access to a wider range of health care professionals at this point of contact, who can assess their needs, and advise the best next steps for them. Before NHS 111 First is available, this will be to direct people to the most appropriate service, but when NHS 111 First launches this will mean the person will be directed to the most appropriate service with a booked appointment.

- How much is the contract?

The indicative value of the contract for 60 months from April 2020 is £90.5 million with the option for a further 24-month extension.

- Why did it not launch sooner?

The original go-live date of 1 April 2020 was postponed due to heightened demand brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic, and SECAMB's interim contract was extended to bridge the spring/summer season allowing the team to focus on the immediate response. At the peak of the pandemic, 111 health advisors were handling almost four times the usual daily call numbers. NHS111 continues to play an integral role during the pandemic, helping patients access essential NHS services and receive the care they need from the most appropriate place.