



New system for access to urgent NHS care in Herefordshire and Worcestershire

This is a stakeholder briefing on improvements to urgent and emergency care services across Herefordshire and Worcestershire being introduced later this month.

Background

As part of making arrangements for Winter 2020/21, organisations across Herefordshire and Worcestershire STP have been working collectively to improve our urgent and emergency care system.

We wish to do everything we can to keep patients and staff safe while Covid-19 remains in circulation and have been selected to be an early implementer of a national programme called NHS 111 First, which is designed to:

- Reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission
- Protect Emergency Departments for those who need urgent care
- Signpost and support the public to receive care from the right place at the right time

What are the changes?

Use NHS 111

The public will be strongly encouraged to contact NHS 111 if they have an urgent – but not serious or life-threatening – medical need that they think might require treatment at an Emergency Department. A public campaign will be launched in Autumn 2020 to support the public to use NHS 111 and NHS 111 online.

Booking for urgent care

NHS 111 is already able to refer and book people into a number of services, such as GP services. In the coming weeks, this will include Emergency Departments and Minor Injury Units. This will apply both to Herefordshire and Worcestershire residents and to anyone visiting the area.

Waiting areas

Introducing booking slots will help to manage the volume of people in waiting areas and minimise Covid-19 infection risks.

Advice on getting the right treatment at the right place

In the future, people arriving at Emergency Departments without an allocated time slot may experience longer waits, unless they need immediate treatment. Care Navigators will be in Emergency Departments to help people use NHS 111 while they wait. As a result, people may be directed elsewhere where they could be treated sooner.

Arrangements will not change for people with serious or life-threatening illnesses or injuries. People will be advised to continue to dial 999 as before.



What does this mean?

In the future the public will be asked to contact NHS 111 before attending an Emergency Department. In return, the public will benefit from being directed to the right service for them. For example this could be an appointment with their GP or dentist, or a timeslot at an Emergency Department. This will provide a better experience and help to keep the public and NHS services safe.

However, nobody that attends an Emergency Department without having contacted NHS 111 beforehand will be turned away.

What will be the benefits for patients?



Patients will get to speak with a senior clinician earlier; in some cases this can also be a video consultation so patients can see who is advising them on their care.



If a patient does need an urgent face-to-face appointment, this can be arranged there and then, without any further delay. They will know exactly where to go, and when. This will help reduce waiting times for all patients.



By advising people where and when to go, **we can control crowding and significantly reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission.**

What will happen next?

These changes will eventually be introduced at Hereford County Hospital Emergency Department, Worcestershire Royal Hospital Emergency Department, the Alexandra Hospital Emergency Department and Minor Injury Units in Worcestershire. Starting next week partner organisations across Herefordshire and Worcestershire will begin to test the system, ready for a widespread public launch later in October.

We will keep stakeholders continually updated with developments.

