

Stakeholder briefing – October 2020

‘111 First’ – Changing the Way Communities in Coventry & Warwickshire Access Urgent Care

Ways of accessing urgent care will soon change for the people of Coventry & Warwickshire.

In line with a phased national roll-out of a new ‘111 First’ system, our area is now preparing to implement that change – which is likely to impact significantly (and positively) on those who use hospital emergency departments, as well as those who work within them.

Here, those changes are explained...

What is the change?

‘111 First’ is a national programme that aims to ensure patients get the right urgent care in the most appropriate place - whilst simultaneously reducing the risk of them acquiring COVID-19 or a hospital infection.

Based on ‘talk before you walk’ principles, the programme will use NHS 111 to reduce unnecessary attendances at Emergency Department.

Instead of attending an Emergency Department unannounced, patients will use NHS 111 online or by phone to book an appointment with a service that best fits their need.

That could be one of a variety of existing out-of-hospital services, an assessment service at an acute hospital, or an appointment with a GP or dentist.

In cases where it is appropriate, patients will be given a ‘time slot’ appointment at the Emergency Department itself.

*** As the public takes time to become used to this new way of accessing urgent and emergency care, no-one that attends an Emergency Department WITHOUT having contacted NHS 111 beforehand will be turned away.*

Why the change?

During the peak months of the COVID-19 pandemic the number of people attending Emergency Departments reduced dramatically, particularly those seeking help for minor illnesses.

However, in recent weeks the number of people visiting Emergency Departments has risen, and in some cases, sharply. At the same time, due to social distancing and infection prevention measures, the space in those departments is greatly reduced.

The change will enable us to provide emergency care safely to those who need it – particularly the vulnerable and shielded – by ensuring appropriate distancing in waiting rooms.

When will the change occur?

Portsmouth, London and our neighbours in Hereford & Worcester have already introduced the change.

It is expected that all areas across the country will develop a similar model ahead of this coming winter.

Coventry & Warwickshire has been asked to be one of the first systems in the Midlands to introduce the change.

We have therefore begun discussions with local partners and clinicians about the design and delivery of an approach that will work for our local population.

We will keep stakeholders continually updated with developments and work with partners to develop a comprehensive communication plan for the programme.

- Coventry & Warwickshire Health & Care Partnership comprises University Hospitals of Coventry & Warwickshire NHS Trust (UHCW); South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust (SWFT); Coventry & Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust (CWPT); George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust; Coventry City Council; Warwickshire County Council; NHS South Warwickshire Clinical Commissioning Group; NHS Warwickshire North Clinical Commissioning Group and Coventry & Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group.
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