

For the attention of all GP Contractor
Lead GPs and Practice Managers
across London



20th May 2013

Dear Colleague

RE: Diversion of Telephone calls During Core Hours to NHS 111

As you will be aware, the vast majority of NHS 111 pilots are now live in London.

It has recently come to our attention that there are an increasing number of examples where GP practices are diverting patients to 111 during their core hours of 08:00-18:30 on Monday – Friday except Bank Holidays.

We refer you to clauses 46, 47, 48 and 54 of the Standard GMS Contract (and equivalent clauses within PMS and APMS contracts):

46. The Contractor must provide the services described in clauses 47 to 52 (essential services) at such times in core hours, as are appropriate to meet the reasonable needs of its patients and to have in place arrangements for its patients to access such services throughout the core hours in case of emergency.

47. The Contractor must provide-

47.1. Services required for the management of the Contractor's registered patients and temporary residents who are, or believe themselves to be-

47.1.1. Ill, with conditions from which recovery is generally expected;

47.1.2. Terminally ill; or

47.1.3. Suffering from chronic disease

Delivered in the manner determined by the practice in discussion with the patient;

47.3. primary medical services required in core hours for the immediately necessary treatment of any person to whom the Contractor has been requested to provide treatment owing to an accident or emergency at any place in its practice area.

48. For the purposes of clause 47.1, "management" includes-

48.1. Offering a consultation and, where appropriate, physical examination for the purpose of identifying the need, if any, for treatment or further investigation;

54. Where an additional service is to be funded under the global sum, the Contractor must provide that additional service at such times, within core hours, as are appropriate to meet the reasonable needs of its patients. The Contractor must also have in place arrangements for its patients to access such services throughout the core hours in case of emergency.

It therefore follows that, regardless of whether your contract is GMS, PMS or APMS, directing your patients to NHS 111 during core hours does not constitute the Contractor having *'in place arrangements for its patients to access such services throughout the core hours in case of emergency.'*

Further, NHS 111 has not been commissioned as a service to either 'cover' or 'substitute' for general practices during its core hours of responsibility or to handle routine in-hours calls from patients who are attempting to contact their GP practice.

The following are some of the examples that have arisen of **misuse** of 111/inconvenience to patients we are picking up across London:

- **Diversion of phone to NHS 111 for Lunchtime Cover** – If practices are not contractually required to have their phone lines open at lunchtime, it should be diverted to a provider with which you have made arrangements
- **Diversion of phone to NHS 111 for Morning Cover** – If practices are not contractually required to have their phone lines open from 08:00, it should be diverted to a provider with which you have made arrangements.
- **Diversion of phone to NHS 111 for Half Day cover:** In the event that a practice needs to close for a half days as a result of planned training and patient administration, subject to the requirements of specific contracts, the phone line should be diverted to a provider with which you have made arrangements.
- **Diversion of phone to NHS 111 when a practice may need to close unexpectedly:** On such rare occasions, the practice's business continuity plan should take effect. Ordinarily, the practice should divert its calls to its sister site during the emergency period. The NHS 111 Directory team should be notified in order to help direct patients appropriately if they call 111 directly without first phoning the practice, NHS 111
- **Diversion of phone to NHS 111 when a practice is particularly busy:** If a practice does not have any available appointments or is having staffing difficulties with reception, it is not appropriate to direct those calls to 111. The NHS 111 providers report to commissioners each month and contain profiles of day time calls. The Primary Care Commissioners will be kept informed of any higher than expected daytime call patterns relating to patients of a particular practice.

Please be aware that a breach notice will be issued to any practice which is not making suitable arrangements for its patients to access essential and additional services during its core hours. Practices are welcome to contact their London Areas Teams via our generic emails if they need further clarification on any aspect of this letter.

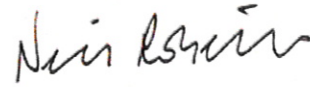
Yours sincerely



David Sturgeon
Head of Primary Care
South London Area Team



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Head of Primary Care
North West London AT



Neil Roberts
Head of Primary Care
North Central & East AT

Copies to: Deputy Heads of Primary Care, South, North West and North Central & East
London
Londonwide LMCs Officers
NHS 111 Providers across London
CCG SROs for NHS 111 pilots
Eileen Sutton

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