

1st December 2020

Media release

Stay safe and avoid waiting in A&E – just call 111 first

People in Surrey who need urgent NHS care are being asked to call NHS 111 **before** they decide to walk into the local Emergency Department (ED), or as many people know it, A&E.

The new approach will ensure that patients can access the clinical service they need, first time. It will help to us to maintain social distancing, reduce the risk of spreading Covid-19 and keep patients and staff as safe as possible.

To ensure social distancing in the emergency department waiting areas, people with urgent, but not life-threatening, health problems are being asked to contact NHS 111 before attending. NHS 111 will provide help straight away; if you need urgent care they will book you in so you can be seen quickly and safely. They may signpost you to an alternative service where you can access the right care in the right place.

Surrey Heartlands will go-live on 1 December as part of the national roll out.

Dr Tom Perry, an ED consultant at Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trust, said: “This is about making it easier for our patients to access the right care quickly and, importantly, keeping them safe during the pandemic. This winter it is crucial that we carefully manage the numbers of people in our emergency department and calling NHS 111 first can help to prevent overcrowding.

“This is specifically for people who are not in serious danger but need urgent attention. The fastest way to get the right care is to contact NHS 111.

“They will be spoken to by a trained professional and a clinician if needed. If it is decided you need to go to the emergency department then you will be given a suitable time to attend and staff at the hospital will be expecting you. That means less waiting around and faster treatment.”

Nationally around 70 per cent of people attending emergency departments had just walked in and the majority of those could have been seen through other services such as the urgent treatment centres, GP or even pharmacy.

Anyone who attends the emergency department (A&E) without an appointment from NHS 111 will still be seen but could be directed to other services for treatment. Those with appointments from NHS 111 will also be given priority unless there is a medical need.

People with life threatening conditions that need emergency attention should still call 999. Likewise, if the condition is not serious, they should still seek advice from their pharmacy or make an appointment with their GP.

ENDS

For more information please contact the Press Office on 07825 946551.

[Note to editors](#)

About Surrey Heartlands CCG

Surrey Heartlands CCG is the merged Clinical Commissioning Group which formed in April 2020 combining East Surrey, Guildford and Waverley, North West Surrey and Surrey Downs Clinical Commissioning Groups. The CCG is part of the [Surrey Heartlands Health and Care Partnership](#), which covers a population of over one million people.