



Press Release

Date: 14 April 2014

Doctors in Stafford urge the public to call 111 for non-urgent healthcare needs this Easter

Doctors in Stafford and the surrounding areas are advising the public to consider picking up the phone and dialling 111 to find the fastest route to the right care if they need to access non-urgent health services over the Easter Bank Holiday weekend.

With the holiday weekend fast approaching and pressures likely to increase on hospital services and particularly Accident and Emergency departments, Stafford and Surrounds Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is asking people to consider calling the non-emergency number when they are in need of healthcare advice.

Stafford-based GP, Dr Sue Knight, Clinical Leader for Stafford and Surrounds CCG said: "Members of the public who call 111 will be assessed by highly-trained call handlers and clinical staff who can direct them to the nearest and most appropriate health services for treatment," she said. "Those call handlers can also make all the arrangements necessary if they assess the caller as being in need of emergency care.

"People often turn up at A&E or call 999 with illnesses and injuries that could be treated faster and more efficiently elsewhere and in doing so put extra pressure on emergency services at periods that are already busier than usual."

"By calling NHS 111 patients can access appropriate alternatives to A&E faster and contribute to relieving the pressure on hard-pressed hospital departments. "

Dr Knight said there were a number of other sources of professional advice and healthcare available to the public including local pharmacists who offer free, qualified health advice at any time with no appointment and can help to treat coughs, colds, aches and pains, and offer expert advice on everyday illnesses and answer questions about prescribed and over the counter medicines.

Alternatively members of the public with smartphones can download the 'Choose Well' mobile phone app, produced by a group of Staffordshire CCGs to help people make better choices on where to go if they have non-urgent healthcare needs.

The app is available now for free download, for Android users from Google Play Store and iTunes App Store for iPhone and iPad users – search for "Health care - Choose Well".

Details of when pharmacies across Staffordshire are open over the Easter Holidays are available <http://www.england.nhs.uk/mids-east/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2014/04/easter-open-hrs-staffs.pdf>

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