

New Research shows that over half of parents using NHS 111 in North West London, only called because it was out of hours for their GP

Though parents using the [NHS 111](#) triage line in North West London generally reported positive experiences of calling the service, (with less than one in ten reporting that they would not call again, if their child had the same problem in the future), over half of those calling had only done so because it was out of hours for their GP. This finding from a new [Picker Institute Europe](#) study could suggest that, had they been available, parents would have ordinarily and preferably chosen to use and access these services before calling the triage line.

The report, commissioned by the [Royal College of Paediatrics and Child and Health](#) (RCPCH); “*NHS 111: Development and Testing of a new Patient Reported Experience Measure for Parents*,” focused on calls made to the service by parents and carers of children under the age of 16 years in North West London, between March and June 2015. Specifically those who called the helpline, on behalf of their child, for one of four common conditions (constipation, diarrhoea and vomiting, fever or breathlessness.) With the overall aim being to understand what matters most to these people, and how their feedback could be used to support telephone triage and care pathway improvements.

Parents reported that the advisor gave them enough information to assist them, while in a number of cases, they were offered further, specialised assistance, and connected with other professionals for further detailed explanation. Parents also reported having a positive experience of the call which included feeling listened to and having confidence and trust in the advisor. Ultimately having a positive experience was associated with parents feeling the advice was correct and subsequently, following it. If this feeling was not felt, they would not subscribe to the guidance offered.

For those who did not follow the advice given by NHS 111, over a third reported that they did not fully agree with the advice offered. With feedback including comments like “*sounds like they talk from a book it would be better if they knew what they were saying,*” and “*this person didn't help...*” This speaks further to the need for parents to trust the advice given in order to follow it.

Speaking on the study's overall value and impact, Sarah-Ann Burger, Senior Project Manager at the Picker Institute said; “*It is refreshing to see that overall these parents are positive and receive what they need from the service, however some areas for improvement have been clearly identified. It is essential to understand whether parents feel listened to, are involved in decisions, and have confidence in the call advisor, since this can impact their decisions to follow the advice and thus the overall effectiveness of the service. Ultimately, we all want to ensure that parents and children receive the most appropriate and effective care for their needs, therefore listening to their experiences can and should assist providers with improving their services.*”

Other key findings include:

- **A fifth of parents called the service for advice or reassurance**
- **13% believed the situation was not urgent enough to call 999**

- ***A third of parents who did not follow advice ended up going to another urgent-care-service, and for a large proportion this was because they didn't feel the advice given was right***

The report is one of a number of key studies that form the basis of a wider review, led by RCPCH in collaboration with [NHS England](#), the Picker Institute and [The Health Foundation](#); *“the use of primary and secondary care services by children and young people following contact with NHS 111: investigating the patient experience and flow of four common conditions.”* As part of this work evaluating NHS 111 services for children and young people, the organisation approached the Picker Institute, the leading non-profit, committed to using peoples experiences to improve care quality, to develop and pilot a Patient Reported Experience Measure (PREM) to gather feedback from these service users.

Understanding these experiences and using them to make assessed, localised improvements, could potentially support the wider evaluation of the service, with the PREM being developed further to inform how parents interact with the triage telephone line on a national scale.

Dr Ian Maconochie, clinical lead for the NHS 111 review for the RCPCH said; *“The Picker Institute are a credible, highly regarded, quality healthcare research provider. When feedback tools are specifically tailored to the healthcare needs of particular patient groups, they can be used to effectively capture and improve the care experiences that are most important to them. Parents and children are amongst the highest users of urgent-care-services therefore understanding their experiences of using a service such as NHS 111, and considering the factors that may influence their decision to follow advice is vital for the service to be effective. Only by sharing the positive experiences of our North West London callers and encouraging more people right across the country to make the most of this important service, will we really being to ensure that all children receive high quality care at the right place, at the right time.”*

Patient and service user experience is widely recognised as a key component of health care quality, along with patient safety and clinical effectiveness, so it is vital to assess users' experiences to understand what matters most to them, and ensure that going forward these factors are a primary consideration.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- The full report is available for download <http://www.pickereurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/RCPCH-NHS-111-PREM-Full-Report.pdf>
- The survey was designed by the Picker Institute on behalf of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
- The survey was developed with extensive input from service users and stakeholders, and we acknowledge the kind support of all of those who contributed their views and experiences to this process.
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