

## NHS 111 & GP Out of Hours

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### 1. Summary

- 1.1. Within Somerset there have been ongoing challenges within the NHS 111 Service and the GP Out Of Hours (OOH) Service both provided by Vocare Limited (known locally as Somerset Doctors Urgent Care). These challenges have been closely monitored by Somerset CCG from both a Performance and Quality Perspective.
- 1.2. In April 2017 the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted an announced comprehensive visit to both services based at Wellington House in Taunton to inspect these services for safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led care. Immediately following the inspection, the CQC issued one warning notice to the NHS 111 service and two warning notices to the GP OOH service, which highlighted areas requiring urgent attention. The conclusion of the CQC's inspection, published in reports on 4 August 2017, is that overall the NHS 111 service was awarded 'Requires Improvement' and the GP OOH service 'Inadequate'. The GP OOH service following the award of this rating has been placed into 'Special Measures' by the CQC.
- 1.3 The CQC conducted a follow-up visit to review the services against the three warning notices on 24 August 2017. The CQC are currently in the process of reviewing this follow-up and will be formally sharing the conclusion of the follow-up visit as soon as it is available.

### 2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1. Somerset CCG will continue to work with Vocare Limited to improve the 95% 60 Call Answering target and the levels of shift fill within the GP OOH service.
- 2.2. Somerset CCG is looking to work with the existing urgent care system across Somerset to deliver a more sustainable model for integrated urgent care. This will require Somerset CCG to implement the recently published NHS England national service specification for Integrated Urgent Care.

### 3. Background

- 3.1. Within the NHS 111 Service and the GP Out Of Hours (OOH) Service provided by Vocare Limited, there have been performance and quality challenges. This has been closely monitored by Somerset CCG through the regular meetings that take place with the provider.

**3.2.** The NHS 111 service had a Contract Performance Notice (CPN) issued in December 2016 by Somerset CCG for non-compliance with the national target for call answering. This target sets out the expectation that 95% of calls are answered within 60 seconds. Somerset CCG agreed a recovery trajectory with Vocare Limited which committed to a sustained recovery in performance by March 2017. Unfortunately, the agreed recovery in performance was not achieved within the timescale required. Key actions agreed to support the recovery were that Vocare Limited would increase the numbers of staff locally to support the service. Although some progress was made in line with this agreement, Somerset CCG has continued to raise concerns regarding the levels of staff in the service to deliver the agreed improvements and this has been discussed on a weekly basis with monthly reviews within the Contract Review Meetings. Contractual penalties have been applied where applicable.

**3.3.** Somerset CCG agreed a further recovery trajectory with Vocare Limited in April 2017. This trajectory was expected to deliver a sustained position of 95% of calls answered within 60 seconds at the end of August 2017. Unfortunately, Vocare Limited was unable to meet the agreed position within the revised trajectory. Somerset CCG has continued to raise concerns regarding staffing levels during this time. To address these staffing shortfalls, in order to build a more robust workforce, Vocare Limited has commissioned some external support to achieve a sustainable position.



**3.4.** Within the GP OOH service Somerset CCG has also raised concerns regarding staffing levels and the impact that this is having on the timeliness that patients are seen. Initial concerns were focused on periods of higher pressure such as bank holidays and weekends. The initial period of concern was over December 2016 and January 2017. Somerset CCG has requested a higher level of scrutiny regarding the level of GP shift fill to gain assurance that there are adequate staffing levels in place, which is shared with Somerset CCG weekly, and system partners.

**3.5.** In March 2017, Somerset CCG issued a CPN that related to shift fill and non-compliance with national standards to see patients at a treatment centre or patients home within timescales that relate to clinical urgency (2 hours and 6 hours).

- 3.6** Somerset CCG and Vocare Limited are having ongoing conversations regarding the recovery of staffing levels and actions required to address the performance of timely performance.
- 3.7** NHS England has, on 24 August 2017, published a paper 'Integrated Urgent Care Specification' which encompasses the traditional NHS 111 service and the GP OOH service into one fully integrated service. This combined service, in addition to this integration, adds a Clinical Assessment Service (CAS). The CAS would add an extra layer of staff who would provide specialised clinical assessments. These assessments offer patients, by phone, the opportunity to either have their care concluded during the call or are referred into the most appropriate service for their care needs to be concluded.
- 3.8** The 'Integrated Urgent Care Specification' will support a new way of working which is expected to see improvements with NHS 111 and GP OOH. Somerset CCG is working with Vocare Limited to implement the specification.

#### **4. Implications**

- 4.1.** Somerset CCG will be required to review the current contractual position within Somerset in line with the mandated Integrated Urgent Care Specification.
- 4.2.** Where appropriate and in line with the interests of patients and the public, Somerset CCG will consider, by way of variation, modifying existing contracts to meet the new guidance within the new NHS England Integrated Urgent Care Service Specifications.