

Q1 Do you agree with Ofcom's view that the proposed non-emergency healthcare service represents a justified use of a three-digit number? Please give reasons for your views. :

NHS Direct already has a special shorter number, 0845 46 47. This is already charged at a premium over standard 01/02/03 calls, and literature (and public awareness) is sufficient to allow people to know of this facility.

Adopting 111 as their new number will only cause confusion and frustration, both for users (who expect the call to be free as 999 calls are) and for those who feel that reprinting all the literature with the new number is a waste of public money.

Three digit numbers should remain as a short access number for key services - I would like to see departmental numbers for the various Emergency Services such as they have in France (one number for Police, one number for Fire etc - all calls to which are intelligently routed to your nearest local station).

NHS Direct does not need a triple digit number for its non-emergency service.

Q2 Do you agree with the DHs view that:

- A) a three-digit number is the best choice for the proposed service and
B) of the three-digit numbers available, 111 is the best option?**

Please give reasons for your views. :

A) No.

B) 111 isn't even the most intelligent choice, because if a mobile phone is left with the keys unlocked in someone's pocket and a number is hit three times, the likelihood is that 111 would receive a good deal of calls which are just the sound of peoples' phones rustling in their pockets! This happens more often than people might think.

Why wasn't a short number like 647 (which spells NHS on a phone keypad) chosen? At the very least, a number which has one different digit to avoid accidental dialling would be essential. 111 is a poor choice, and is also confusingly similar with the European emergency number 112.

Q3 What are your views on the tariff options selected by the DH? :

That the DH insists there is no inherent tariff is misleading, as all the mobile and fixed line telephony providers will insist on charging a per-minute access fee.

NHS Direct should be moved to an 03 number, as they are used widely by nonprofits and the public sector and are included in most peoples' inclusive call packages. I've seen a figure of 40% of calls quoted as being made from mobile phones - it seems unfair to charge an additional amount on top for a telephone-based NHS service which is supposedly funded by the taxpayer.

Q4 Do you have any comments on the proposed notification of modification to the Numbering Condition in Annex 8 of this document

The proposed notification of modification is unnecessary, particularly as I feel that the choice of any three digit number for NHS is a mistake.