

GP Out of Hours Survey – FAQs

1. Can I contact the GP Out of Hours service directly, rather than via 111?

Unfortunately, this is not something we are able to change. The NHS 111 service changed in 2018 to become a single point of access for urgent healthcare services across Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin. This is a national requirement, so we are unable to put alternative arrangements in place locally.

2. Why do I have to travel for a GP Out of Hours appointment?

The Out of Hours service is designed for urgent health needs which can't wait until the next day that your local GP practice is open. This means that the service has to cover the whole of Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin overnight and on weekends/bank holidays and it would not be practical to have face to face appointments available in every local area. Appointments are available at several locations across the county, and we will continue to work with the Provider under the new contract to ensure an equitable spread of bases to meet the needs of the local population.

3. Can I see a GP at my own practice outside of normal hours?

This is an urgent care service for health concerns which can't wait until your own GP practice is open again. There are currently 50 GP practices across the county, so it wouldn't be practical or safe to have clinicians available at each practice during every out of hours period.

4. Why have I been advised to contact my own GP the next time they are open, rather than being seen by someone Out of Hours?

This service is available for urgent health needs outside of normal general practice hours but there may be occasions where a need that feels urgent could wait until your normal GP practice is open. The GP Out of Hours provider will triage all calls and decide which are urgent and need to be seen quickly, and which are not as urgent and could wait until the following day. The triage process is also used to assess how quickly someone receives a callback during the out of hours period. This is why it is often not possible to call everybody

back within a short timescale, and why there may be a delay in you receiving a callback. We appreciate that it can be worrying when you or your loved ones are ill, but please be assured that calls are returned in priority order to ensure the most urgent cases are dealt with in a timely manner.

5. Can the Out of Hours GP come and see me at home?

Home visits are available for those people who are unable to leave their home to seek help, but the service covers a large, mostly rural area. The majority of appointments are offered in local bases across the county so that the GP Out of Hours clinicians are able to see and treat more people face to face.

6. Will the service Provider for the new contract have a knowledge of the local area and the services available locally?

The service specification outlines the value of this aspect of the service for local residents, and also describes the requirement for integration, collaboration and relationships with other services and Providers across Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin and neighbouring areas. All Providers who submit a bid for the new contract will be required to demonstrate how they would ensure these requirements are met, their experience of delivering similar services and achieving the required outcomes, and how they would achieve continuity of care during the transition process.

7. How will you ensure that the level of service under the new contract is the same (or better) than the current service?

All Providers who submit a bid for the new contract will be required to demonstrate how they will achieve certain requirements and criteria, and this will be evaluated based on their answers to these questions. Once the contract is up and running, a greater level of performance monitoring will be in place to ensure that the requirements outlined in the service specification (such as response times, patient experience and the impact on other services like A&E) continue to be met. Improvement plans will also be implemented to manage poor performance, where they are required.

