Dear Andrew

SELF CARE, PATIENT SUPPORT AND THE NEW 111 SERVICE

I am writing to alert you to concerns that have been raised with me about the new 111 service and to request a meeting to discuss them.

It has been put to me that:

- The model of service currently being piloted emphasises telephone-based signposting to other services. While consistent with the goal of improving access, this represents a potential reduction in support to patients and a diminution of service quality.

- In particular there is a reduced emphasis on web-based support and self-care.

- The service is leading to increased referrals to primary care and urgent care services.

- Roll-out will precede evaluation results, so it is unclear how the model will be improved in the light of experience from the pilots.

- The model of procurement does not sit easily with the emerging clinical commissioning groups and there has been very little clinical engagement.
These concerns have been brought to my attention by Joanne Shaw, chair of NHS Direct. Though NHS Direct has a commercial interest in this matter as a potential bidder for 111 contracts, I believe that Ms Shaw raises questions about the patient and public interest in 111 which merit further exploration. These issues have also been shared within the Self Care Forum, of which National Voices is a member, where some concern has been expressed.

From National Voices’ perspective, there is a direct link with our members’ interests in information for patients, support for self management and better out of hospital care. I would add that it is unclear to us to what extent there has been patient and public involvement in the development of 111, the unwinding of the previous national NHS Direct service, and in examining options for the development of phone and web-based services more broadly.

I would be grateful for the opportunity to discuss these concerns with you or with the relevant senior officials in order to understand the Department’s perspective, whether it acknowledges any of these issues as risks, and if there is any planned mitigation.

I am copying this letter to Giles Wilmore, Bob Gann, Rachel Neaman and Stephen Johnson.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Taylor
Chief Executive