

# Official: NHS 111 call line not safe

Boss accepts patients were put at risk

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It is a diagnosis most patients would have given months ago – but top NHS officials last night finally admitted the chaotic implementation of the non-emergency 111 number has harmed patient safety.

Health officials have launched an investigation into the advice line after a number of potentially serious incidents, including three deaths, have been linked to the service.

Patients in the West have complained about calls going unanswered, poor advice being given and calls being diverted to the wrong part of the country.

It has also put an intolerable strain on accident and emergency departments.

Dr Mike Durkin, who appeared at the Patient Safety Congress in Birmingham earlier yesterday, was asked whether there was evidence of harm to patients as a result of the new 111 number.

A conference spokesman said that Dr Durkin told delegates he believed that patients had been harmed.

He later said: "We have a fantastic incident reporting culture in the NHS that helps us to learn lessons throughout the healthcare system.

"Of course, since its introduction, reports related to NHS 111 have come through to us.

"We recognise there have been problems with the system, and these safety reports will be vital in helping us learn the long-term lessons to

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behind you, Gary**

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