

**Media Release**

**27<sup>th</sup> September 2011**

**EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS ARE **NOT** THE PLACE FOR COUGHS,  
COLDS AND MINOR CUTS, WARNS NHS NORTH SOMERSET**

This summer's court case involving a Weston super Mare man who rang 999 to complain about the quality of his KFC meal may seem like an extreme example. But it highlights a serious problem which costs NHS North Somerset thousands of pounds a year. The pct is now launching an autumn campaign appealing to people not to attend the emergency department of Weston Hospital unless they have a genuine medical emergency.

While reassuring patients that anyone needing it will get fast track emergency care they are keen to emphasise that people will receive speedier care by either treating the condition themselves or by consulting their GP or pharmacist.

Explained Associate Director of Commissioning Alan Lawler: "More than fifty thousand people from North Somerset went to A&E Departments last year. This cost NHS North Somerset alone £4.2 million - that's over £10,000 every day. One in four of these people could have treated themselves or used other local healthcare services. "

**The resulting savings could have paid for 1 Consultant, 2 GP's, 10 Community Matrons and 10 Nurses.**

He added: “We want people to receive the care they need but the GP should always be your first point of contact if you are unsure. When your surgery is closed you can reach the Out of Hours GP Service on 0845 121 0235

A new integrated urgent care department was opened earlier this year at Weston Hospital, which has transformed patients’ experience of emergency treatment by ensuring they receive the speediest and most appropriate treatment for their condition. NHS North Somerset wants to ensure that it is used only by patients with a genuine emergency.

Nationally, patients with minor problems are costing the NHS £136 million a year, according to a survey by the Co-operative Pharmacy which revealed that emergency departments were being swamped by injuries such as nose bleeds, insect bites, and sprains. The financial cost is the equivalent of 6,500 nurses or 3,700 doctors. Half of the people polled had gone to A&E with an ailment which could have been treated more quickly at a walk-in centre, GP or pharmacy.

One in 10 said they had phoned an ambulance for a small burn or being drunk. The top minor conditions people said they were willing to present at emergency departments were:

- Sprained muscle
- Stomach ache
- Stubbed toe
- Minor burn
- High temperature

Other illnesses or injuries people said they would seek emergency hospital care for included: being drunk, cystitis and insect bites.

Added Alan Lawler: “We urge patients with minor illnesses and injuries such as coughs and colds to consider *other* healthcare options before calling 999.

Many people think arriving at an emergency department in an ambulance means they will be seen more quickly, but that is not the case.”

**-ENDS-**

**Notes to Editors**

- NHS North Somerset is the local Primary Care Trust for North Somerset. The trust was established in April 2002 to ensure the provision of the highest quality healthcare services to the residents of North Somerset. It was recently assessed as one of the most improved PCTs in England by the Care Quality Commission.

**Press Release issued by Karen Daniel at NHS North Somerset. For more information please contact her on 01275 546895**