

Provider out-of-service guidance

Planned and unplanned downtime



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Introduction

When an urgent care provider goes out of service, whether expected or not, local teams must act themselves to stop referrals being sent from NHS 111 online during the outage.

These instructions explain how providers can stop receiving cases from [NHS 111 online](#) during a service outage.

Scope

NHS 111 online DoS profiles consist of many different service types, with opening hours ranging from 24/7 availability, GP 'out of hours' provision, to other services that are only available for a few hours on certain days of the week. Any NHS 111 online DoS service profile may need to be deactivated from time to time, depending on the availability of service providers.

This document provides some guidance on the best practice approach when dealing with planned or unplanned service outages for DoS profiles that use the Digital Referral role.

Planned downtime

1. Follow existing (e.g., telephony) change advisory board procedures regarding notifying NHS England of NHS 111 service downtime.
2. Identify which NHS 111 online DoS profiles have endpoints that will be affected by the downtime.
3. Send an email to nhs111online@nhs.net marked **FAO Implementation Team** and this will be picked up and logged, and any support needed will be made available. Please provide as much information as possible regarding the outage e.g., specific services are affected, the expected start and duration of the outage.
4. **For the time of the service outage:** Set 'specified opening time' to override the normal opening times for specific dates/times as required.
5. 24/7 profiles will need the 'open all hours' setting off (to be replaced with 00:00-23:59 opening hours seven days a week) and the 'only return if open' (ORIO) setting on. Once the downtime is over, profile opening timings will need to be manually reverted to normal.

Important notes: For profiles that allow both online **and** telephony referrals, rather than adjusting the opening times as above, the digital referral role should be removed so the profile continues to return for the telephony contingency provider.

If specified opening hours are provided on a given date, all other opening hours will be ignored. If the affected service operates overnight (for example 8pm - 8am), and the planned closure is from 2-3am, specified reopening hours will be required from 8pm-midnight.

Unplanned downtime

1. Follow existing (e.g., telephony) change advisory board procedures regarding notifying NHS England of NHS 111 service downtime.

2. Identify which NHS 111 online DoS profiles have endpoints that will be affected by the downtime.

Depending on preference, either:

1. Use specified opening time to override the normal Mon-Sun opening times for a date period **longer** than downtime is expected to last.
2. For 24/7 services, the 'open all hours' setting should be turned off (to be replaced with 00:00-23:59 opening hours seven days a week) and the 'only return if open' (ORIO) setting should be turned on. Once the downtime is over, profile opening timings will need to be manually reverted to normal.
3. **Important note:** The disadvantage of using specified opening hours in this context is that it's not usually possible to know the length of time the outage will last. Therefore, there may be a period during which NHS 111 online referrals are not received after the downtime has finished, if downtime finishes earlier than expected. Conversely the downtime may continue much longer than expected in which case it will be necessary to revisit the profiles again anyway to extend the specified hours.

OR:

1. Remove digital referral role from the profiles. Once the downtime has completed, add digital referral role back on to relevant profiles.
2. **Important note:** This will require manual intervention as soon as possible post-outage to add Digital Referral back on to the affected profiles.

OR:

1. Use capacity status to set profile to RED for the period of expected downtime. The capacity status will revert to normal after the pre-set time or can be manually extended on RED or reactivated to GREEN at any time if necessary.
2. **Important note:** This option may also require manual intervention post-outage depending on the expected length of the outage matching the actual outage time.

A note on DoS changes out-of-hours

Commissioners are encouraged to find cost-effective ways to enable urgent DoS changes during the out-of-hours period. They might establish an on-call facility among DoS personnel, utilise existing on-call structures (e.g. directors) or 24/7 staff groups (e.g. IUC/999 supervisor desks), or enable direct access by key individual providers.