



# Campaigns

**ONLY 17%**  
of 1,367 adults aged 15+ in England  
surveyed knew the  
phone number for NHS Direct  
2006 WHICH? SURVEY

Consumers are confused about where to go for out-of-hours care

## In need of urgent attention

### HEALTHCARE

**W**here do you go if you need urgent medical attention when your GP's surgery is closed? A walk-in centre? An urgent care centre? Perhaps you'd try your minor injury unit. Or most likely you'd head for the accident and emergency (A&E) department of a local hospital.

Our research has shown that too often consumers are confused about which service to go to for out-of-hours medical attention and that almost one in three people turn to A&E. But with as many as 29 A&E departments in England currently under threat under plans to create super-trauma centres, there is a real danger that many consumers will be left unsure about where to get help when their GP surgery is shut.

The risk is increased by the fact that the provision of out-of-hours medical care across England is inconsistent and patchy, with services in some areas working well, while others are failing to meet consumer needs adequately. That's why we've sent an unequivocal message to the government: halt plans to close A&E



**Accident and emergency departments are under threat of closure**

departments across England until you've made sure that out-of-hours services are up to scratch.

We're also calling on the NHS and government to work together to improve the information available to consumers about out-of-hours services. NHS Direct could be a really useful source of information, yet in our survey only 17 per cent of 1,367 adults in England knew its phone number (0845 46 47 in England and Wales; in Scotland, call NHS 24 on 08454 24 24 24;

there's no equivalent in Northern Ireland). We want an easy-to-remember, three-digit number, to make it simpler and quicker for consumers.

To find out more about our recommendations to improve the provision of out-of-hours care, and your experiences of accessing health services, go to the health and wellbeing section of [www.which.co.uk/campaigns](http://www.which.co.uk/campaigns) and download a copy of our report *Negotiating the out-of-hours maze*.

### CAMPAIGN NEWS

#### Legal services debated

Consumers had their say on legal services when a cross-party panel of parliamentarians, including Bridget Prentice MP, visited Which? at the end of last year. Top of their concerns was whether the Office for Legal Complaints really will be a completely new, independent body. We'll continue to lobby to ensure that consumers' experiences are not forgotten as the Legal Services Bill is debated.

#### Bank charges review

As the Office of Fair Trading's first-stage, fact-finding exercise into overdraft bank charges draws to a conclusion, we calculate that current-account providers hit us with £4.7 billion in charges for unauthorised overdrafts in 2005-2006. If you think you've been charged unfairly, go to [www.which.co.uk/bankcharges](http://www.which.co.uk/bankcharges) for information on how to claim. We'll update you on the OFT's investigation as soon as we can.

#### Pension proposals

Which? has welcomed the proposals for a low-cost, simple and secure pension scheme, unveiled in the pensions White Paper. But we'll continue to press for consumers to be represented in the new planning group, known as the delivery authority, and for good-quality, straightforward advice to be available for prospective account holders, so that consumers end up with a pension scheme they can trust. See [www.which.co.uk/campaigns](http://www.which.co.uk/campaigns) for more on our fight for a better pension deal for consumers and for news of all our campaigning activities.

### MONEY OFF DIGITAL RADIOS

## Great savings with Hughes Direct

This February Hughes Direct is offering Which? members exclusive discounts on selected digital radios featured in this month's report (p56). There are also discounts on popular digital radios from

the November 2006 report, too.

To find out more details about these member-only discounts offers, log on to [www.hughesdirect.co.uk/which](http://www.hughesdirect.co.uk/which) or call **0845 678 0084**.



Offer is valid until 31 March 2007.

Each month Which? members can take advantage of the competitive deals offered by Hughes Direct. All goods are guaranteed to be a minimum of 10 per cent below high-street prices published in

Which? product reports (even taking into account delivery charges). If you find the same product cheaper elsewhere (including delivery) within seven days of purchase, Hughes Direct promises to refund 110 per cent of the difference. Call now or go online to see how much you can save.