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Guidance

999 and 112: the UK's national emergency numbers

999 and 112 is the national emergency response service in the UK. 112 is the pan-European equivalent to 999 and can be used in the UK.

From:

Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-digital-culture-media-sport>), Department of Health and Social Care (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health-and-social-care>), and Home Office (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office>)

Published

12 August 2021

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Calling for assistance

Calls made using 999 or 112 are identified and prioritised by the communications providers and forwarded to, and then answered by, call handling agents in one of six call-handling centres. The call-handling centres are owned by BT Plc, who operate the service on behalf of all the communications providers (mobile, fixed line and broadband). An agent at one of the BT Plc call-handling centres responds with “emergency, which service?”. The geographic location of the caller, which is normally automatically available, enables the call to be transferred to the relevant geographically located emergency service control room.

Ofcom, the independent communications regulator, oversees regulation of the telecommunications aspects of the 999-112 service through the General Conditions of Entitlement (<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/information-for-industry/telecoms-competition-regulation/general-conditions-of-entitlement>).



The 999-112 Liaison Committee

Technical and operational oversight of the Service is provided by the 999-112 Liaison Committee, hosted by the Department for Digital, Culture Media & Sport. The terms of reference of the Committee can be found here below.

999/112 Liaison Committee: Terms of reference

(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1010448/999_112_Liaison_Committee_Terms_of_Reference_-_May19.pdf)

P.D.F., 256KB, 2 pages

The Committee represents all organisations that have a role to play in delivering and managing the 999-112 service, these include: The Home Office, Department for Health & Social Care, the emergency services, Ofcom as the telecommunications regulatory body and the fixed and mobile communications providers.

The Committee also oversees sub-groups responsible for specific areas such as access to the service by vulnerable members of society, such as those with hearing impairments and the role played by emergency calls activated by smartphones. The Committee also has responsibility for the Code of Practice for the Public Emergency Call Service (PECS) between communications providers and the emergency services. This document outlines the key roles and responsibilities of stakeholders involved in the conveyance of emergency calls from caller to the relevant emergency service.

Strategic leadership

The Liaison Committee is overseen by the 999-112 Strategic Leadership Group which reports to ministers. This Group considers strategic, policy-related issues that affect the 999 and 112 service that fall outside the scope of the operationally-focused Liaison Committee. This Group focuses particularly on issues that cut across all the emergency services in the UK. The terms of reference of the Group can be found below.

999/112 Strategic Leadership Group: Terms of reference

(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1010451/999_112_Strategic_Leadership_Group_TOR-v2__1__2_.pdf)

P.D.F., 379KB, 3 pages

The telecommunications ecosystem is evolving rapidly. Technological advances have had a considerable effect on society's communication preferences. The Strategic Leadership Group is closely involved with all stakeholders to ensure that the 999-112 service remains fit for purpose.

Who to contact for more information

Enquiries regarding the 999 and 112 service should be addressed to DCMS at telecoms.resilience@dcms.gov.uk

Published 12 August 2021

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