



Surgery Line

NETWORK EUROPE GROUP

Surgery Line helps Milton Keynes practice control flow of calls over two sites

Dr Patel's practice is comprised of two sites located approximately 5 miles apart. The two surgeries are situated on the outskirts of the thriving city of Milton Keynes, one in the small town of Bletchley and the other in North Furzton. Both practices have a diverse patient profile reflecting their different locations, but both come under the control of Milton Keynes PCT. The Bletchley practice has an older patient base with good family networks as the area itself is more established; there is also a higher proportion of patients from the Bangladeshi community registered with this practice.

The Furzton site is located within a socially mixed area with a combination of both private housing and housing association accommodation. The patient base also tends to be younger with a high proportion of single parent families and under 5s. The patients at this site tend to consult more frequently and have a less substantial family network nearby to offer support. Combined, the two surgeries incorporate six doctors with sixteen staff in total.

Prior to the installation of the Surgery Line system, the volume of calls coming into both surgeries was very heavy and



The Bletchley Surgery is located beside a small, but busy shopping centre

patients often experienced difficulties in getting through to the surgery especially at peak times of day.

“The automated system works really well and the staff have found it easy to use.”

The previous phone system was old and simply didn't have the lines or facilities needed to process calls quickly. “We felt that we needed a more up to date system which could improve our ability to handle large numbers of calls more rapidly,” explains Christine Zscherpel, Practice



Reception staff are better equipped to deal with incoming calls

Manager for both the North Furzton and Bletchley sites. The decision to install Surgery Line was made by Christine, Mrs

Patel, Business Manager at the practice and the partners after meeting with Chris Berry from NEG. "We also had to run the idea past Milton Keynes PCT for their approval which took a few weeks," explains Christine: the system went live at both sites by early December 2004.

There was some apprehension amongst the staff - changing a telephone number is a big adjustment for a surgery to commit to, but the long term gains and the state of the previous phone system made the decision to go ahead a relatively straightforward one. "We were unsure about how our patients would react to a change in the telephone number, but we felt that the improvements that the system could offer made the change worthwhile."

"Our telephone lines are utilised much more efficiently now, this frees up reception time..."

Although some patients complained about the number change, it was felt that this was to be expected. "Patients appreciate not having to wait or be put on hold, although some have been influenced by media reports about the cost of calls." However, with the new 0844 option charged at the same rate as BT's standard call rate, this is no longer an issue as patients may well find themselves paying less due to more efficient call handling and no need to redial.

So, what benefits has the system brought to the practice? Christine explains how the staff at both sites feel that using the system has made communication with patients more fluid and easier to handle. "Our telephone lines are utilised much more efficiently now and this frees up reception time. We like the use of headsets and the system has generally made call handling much quicker. The automated system works

really well and the staff have found it easy to use."

Christine has also found that the support from NEG has been reliable and of a consistently high standard. The Surgery Line system was installed quickly and integrated easily into the day to day running of the practice, fulfilling the requirements that staff at the surgery had for the system.



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Dr Patel's Surgery top five reasons for going ahead with Surgery Line:

1. Better utilisation of lines
2. Excellent support from help desk
3. Use of automated messages means that calls aren't put on hold
4. Easy to use equipment
5. Clear out of hours message and automated change over at the start/end of surgery

So what would Christine's advice be to another surgery that was considering changing over to a Surgery Line system? "I would say go ahead. The system has brought us many benefits: it is simple to use, we now have better control over call handling and our automated out of hours system works very well. It has fully lived up to our expectations."

What is Surgery Line?

"Surgery Line is a cost-effective way for forward looking surgeries to improve the service that they offer to patients, reduce stress levels for staff and self-fund a state of the art phone system," explains NEG's CEO, Richard Chapman. *"As you can see, this case study focuses on one of the hundreds of surgeries that have already switched to Surgery Line. By doing so, they have saved money, improved the service that they offer patients and relieved the pressure on busy staff."*

You and your staff benefit

When a surgery switches to an 084 number, NEG will install and maintain the most efficient communications system on the market. You specify exactly what equipment you want to receive (from handsets to switchboards) for no extra charge. With your own 084 number, you keep about 2p from every call to re-invest in your practice, instead of BT making all the profit from calls to your surgery.

How your patients benefit

Patients benefit by having their calls answered more quickly. The engaged tone becomes rare – even at peak times – because you are able to handle incoming calls more efficiently, whilst patient calls are spread out during the day. Calls to 084 or 'lo-call' numbers cost patients 4p per minute, the same as the first minute of BT's standard call rate between 6am and 6pm. This means that many patients will actually pay less in total because their call is answered and processed more quickly. Significantly, the cost of calls from mobiles remains unchanged - these account for around 30% of all calls to surgeries.

The phone system that won't test your patients

"I've met a number of practice managers who think that Surgery Line sounds almost too good to be true," says Chapman, *"but after it's been installed, they realise that NEG delivers everything we promise, and more."*

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For more information on how the Surgery Line system can help you visit www.networkeuropegroup.com or call

0800 096 86 26

