



Surgery Line

NETWORK EUROPE GROUP

Speedy access to GPs saves patients time in Guildford

Dapdune House Surgery in Guildford is situated on the edge of the town centre and comes under the jurisdiction of Guildford and Waverley PCT. The Dapdune Surgery has 7 partners and is a training practice with two registrars and retainer doctors. With a total of 21 support staff, some of whom work part-time, it is a busy practice often seeing over 200 patients per day.

The patient base is fairly prosperous, reflecting the social profile of the town, and includes a high proportion of students from the nearby Guildford College. Of the 11,500 patients registered at the practice, 14% are over 65, with a relatively large number of younger patients (46% under 35). The student population means that the practice can be affected by seasonal outbreaks of illness as large numbers of students live in close proximity on campus.

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Prior to the installation of the Surgery Line system, the practice had experienced significant difficulties with engaged lines making it hard for patients to contact them,



Dapdune House Surgery

particularly at peak times of day. After meeting with George Neal of NEG, the practice saw the opportunity to treble capacity and upgrade to a modern system to dramatically improve its ability to meet patient demand. NEG were able to install the system relatively quickly: within 4 weeks it was up and running, just in time for Christmas 2004.

“We did have some concerns about how our patients would respond to the change,” explains Paul Middleton, Practice Manager at Dapdune. “We did, however, feel it would be quickly accepted when, with the addition of three times as



Main Reception area at Dapdune

many lines, patients suddenly found a two hour engaged tone a thing of the past. We were getting a modern system for no capital outlay. This meant that we were provid-

ing a better service for patients, saving them both time and money by doing away with the need to redial. We also liked the management system which enabled us to measure the performance of the service, our staff and the costs," he continued.

As is often the case when change occurs, there have been some minor teething problems when the system was first implemented, but these were transitory and easily solved. "The problems could have been reduced through better pre-implementation planning, but the support and commitment from NEG has been first class, they are a very customer focused supplier," adds Paul.

Some of the benefits that Paul cites include the voicemail services, the facility to route calls directly to non-clinical areas via direct dialling which removes traffic from reception, as well as the ability to obtain an outside line which was previously restricted due to the size of the old system. The Surgery Line package also enables staff to monitor and evaluate their telephone system by providing the necessary data. "Our management information previously was non-existent, but now we can see half hour details of how well we respond to our answering time targets, as well as average call duration by extension if we so wish."

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Paul explains one patient's reaction to the system as an example of how well it has been received by the majority: "He had been suffering from a serious illness and thanked us for saving him so much time as he needs to contact the surgery regularly; he now saves up to half an hour each time he contacts us as we are no longer constantly engaged in peak periods." The Reception staff are also happy with the new system and feel that the patients will

soon get used to the changes. The Patient Services Manager, Alison Tickner, particularly appreciates the voicemail, direct dial facilities and group feature which enables more staff to answer calls in peak periods maintaining the 4 rings or 12 second response targets.



The waiting area for patients is bright and airy

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

1. The quality of the equipment
2. The commitment and support of the Surgery Line team
3. The ease of use
4. The value of the proposition
5. The capacity and flexibility of the system

Even though Surgery Line is still fairly new to the practice, Paul obviously has a clear vision of how the system can be used in the future to further improve the services that the practice is able to offer its patients. "One of the factors that convinced me to go ahead is the potential for the implementation of a digital system leading towards VOIP (Voice Over IP) and the platform to take advantage of future computer/ telephony integration. This system has been a great leap forward in technology for our practice at very little cost. It will form the backbone of future technology enhancements leading to greater productivity and efficiency."

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."

Surgery Line

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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

