



Surgery Line

NETWORK EUROPE GROUP

Horsman's Place Surgery finds Surgery Line offers great value for money

Horsman's Place Surgery in Dartford is located at the centre of this busy town. Situated very close to the M25, and with good road and rail links into London, Dartford is a popular commuter town a few miles south east of the capital. The town itself dates back to roman times and has a rich industrial heritage, notably in the area of paper making and cement production. Like many towns in the area, it is densely occupied, with a population of over 85,000.



Horsman's Place surgery is situated a stones throw from the busy Dartford tunnel section of the M25

“The phone units are of a high quality and the back up and support from NEG has also been good”

The surgery, which comes under the control of Dartford PCT, has a total of 11,000 patients registered from a mixed variety of backgrounds and socio-economic groups. Like many GPs' practices across the country, Horsman's Place Surgery found that its previous phone system was unable to cope efficiently and consistently with the volume of calls coming into the practice, particularly at peak times of day when patients were trying to book emergency appointments or obtain test results.

Patients complained of finding it difficult to speak with a member of staff and often called up only to hear the engaged tone.

The Practice Manager Tony Mulville met with Richard Chapman of NEG to discuss how Surgery Line could help to solve the difficulties that they were experiencing with their communications; he then went on to recommend the system to the partners. “Our previous phone system was poor and we really needed to update it,” explains Tony. “We were unsure about how the



11,000 patients are registered at the Horsman's Place surgery

patients would react to the new system, but were convinced by the efficient handsets, the call logging facility and

the price benefits of getting an up to date system for a significantly reduced cost." The system was sanctioned by the partners and was installed in April 2004.

"The system has so many features to recommend it"

Inevitably there were some issues as the system bedded in – changing a phone number is obviously a major commitment for a surgery. Tony explains further: "Our experiences of working with NEG and the Surgery Line system have been good. It wasn't the company's fault, but we did have some initial problems with patients' complaints which were time consuming to deal with.

When the system was first installed, the event was a little clouded by the issue of non geographic numbers which was picked up by the national press. This led to some disquiet from the patients who had the false impression that the doctors were profiting from the system. However, since the implementation of the 0844 lo-cost number, this situation has eased."

"We particularly like the facility for leaving voice mail messages as well as the overall standard of the equipment"

One of the features of the system, sometimes under used by surgery staff, is the facility for running reports to evaluate call times, call handling efficiency and costs.

Tony has analysed the cost savings to the practice and has also canvassed staff on their opinions of the system. "Our Head Receptionist, Denise Barnett, is very

happy with the system – despite some initial misgivings and our patients have really come to appreciate the extra flexibility that it offers."



Telephone support and backup is available from NEG staff

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

1. The quality of the customer support
2. The high quality units
3. The reduced costs
4. The flexibility offered by the system
5. The ability to record calls

Eighteen months on, the surgery remains pleased with their Surgery Line system. "The phone units are of a high quality and the back up and support from NEG has also been good," comments Tony.

"We particularly like the facility for leaving voice mail messages as well as the overall standard of the equipment – our phone bill audits are also more comprehensive now. The system has lived up to our expectations and has much to recommend it – not least the option of a high quality system at a reduced cost."

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

