



# Surgery Line

NETWORK EUROPE GROUP

## The Lodge Surgery is impressed by NEG's levels of customer care

The Lodge Surgery is located a few miles south east of the centre of Chippenham in North Wiltshire. Chippenham itself is an historic market town with a population of over 40,000, situated midway between Bath and Swindon. The practice, which comes under the control of Kennet and North Wiltshire PCT, serves a patient base largely made up of residents from the surrounding housing estate.

With good transport links making the area attractive to commuters, the estate has expanded considerably over the past twenty years. The surgery currently has a total of 7,800 registered patients, many of whom are relatively young, reflecting the social mix of the local populace.

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The practice is an average size, employing a total of twenty eight staff, including six doctors. It also has a Natural Therapy Centre attached to the surgery which offers a variety of treatments including acupuncture, homeopathy and



The Lodge Surgery is close to the River Avon which runs through the middle of Chippenham

reflexology. As the patient base around the practice expanded, staff at The Lodge Surgery were aware of the increasing problems that patients were experiencing when phoning in to the surgery. Callers were finding it difficult to get through to speak with a receptionist and were repeatedly hearing the engaged tone.

Whilst this is a common problem in surgeries up and down the UK, the partners at The Lodge felt that this situation couldn't be allowed to continue and decided to take action. Following a meeting with Paul Hounsell and



The Lodge Surgery, Chippenham

Richard Chapman of NEG, the partners took the decision to install a Surgery Line system with the whole implementation process completed by mid February 2005.

So what convinced the practice that the Surgery Line option was the one for them? "We were particularly encouraged by the opportunity of improving our phone system but without any financial outlay from the practice," comments Lynn Smith, Assistant Manager at The Lodge Surgery, "we were also attracted by the fixed rental agreement."

Now that the system is in place and fully functioning, staff at the practice feel that it has delivered what was promised. "We are very happy with our new system," comments Lynn, "it has lived up to the expectations that we had of it. We now have a modern switchboard with eight lines as opposed to four, which means that the patients find it much easier to get through to us."

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They have commented that the recording sounds very professional and also like the emergency button option which enables a patient in urgent need to take priority when calling in to the surgery."

Since its installation, the Reception staff at the practice have noticed how much simpler it is to manage day to day communication with patients, which in turn underpins the smooth running of the whole practice. "The Reception staff are very happy with the system and the new equipment and they find it easy to operate," adds Lynn.

She also singles out NEG's approach to customer care for specific praise. "It has been a pleasure to deal with such a professional company who genuinely seem to care about the whole process."

The staff at NEG went out of their way to support us throughout the transition and kept us fully informed of any changes as they happened. They were eager to ensure that we were happy with the process throughout. It is a major upheaval for a surgery to change its number, but NEG ensured that the changeover was handled as smoothly as possible," explains Lynn.



Lynn Smith, Assistant Manager (left) and Chantal Collins, Practice Manager (right)

### **The Lodge Surgery's top five reasons for going ahead with Surgery Line:**

1. No financial outlay
2. Attractive fixed rental agreement
3. Modern system installed
4. Helpful support team
5. Easy to use equipment

Whilst a few patients have inevitably grumbled about the number change, the system has brought many benefits for both staff and patients. "Calls are more streamlined now which makes call handling much easier," comments Lynn. "If any other surgery were considering installing the system with NEG, I would tell them to go for it!"

### **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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Case Study No. 23

For more information on how the Surgery Line system can help you visit [www.networkeuropegroup.com](http://www.networkeuropegroup.com) or call

**0800 096 86 26**

