



Surgery Line

NETWORK EUROPE GROUP

West Midlands practice finds that Surgery Line eases call congestion and helps with time management

The Bath Street Medical Practice is situated in the West Midlands town of Sedgley, on the northern fringes of Dudley Metropolitan Borough. The town saw a rapid period of growth in the 1950s and 60s with several large housing estates built during this time. Sedgley has a population of over 11,000 residents and the surgery itself has approximately 3,200 patients on its register.

In 2004, the practice decided that they had to look at ways of solving the recurring problems that they were experiencing with their phone system, which was unable to cope with the volume of calls received at peak times. Patients would often complain that they had to spend all morning on the phones before they could get through and speak to anyone.

“The support from the customer services department has been fabulous”

“We had a complete bottle neck of calls,” explains Practice Manager, Jean Taylor. “This meant that patients spent a lot of time trying to contact us, which understandably led to some frustration.”



Sedgley High Street – the town itself is a busy suburban area

Disappointed in the service that they were receiving from their previous phone supplier, the partners opted to meet with NEG. The practice decided that Surgery Line offered a wide range of options and a comprehensive service and elected to sign up for the system.

“In the 12 months since installation we have seen a dramatic improvement in the way in which we are able to handle calls. For example, it has stopped people calling for repeat prescriptions at peak times. This alone has eased the congestion,” comments Jean. “Staff really like



Bath Street Practice in the West Midlands town of Sedgley

having direct dial numbers as it makes it easier for people to call us direct, and again it relieves the pressure on the switchboard. This makes it quicker and

cheaper for the caller, and eases the level of congestion for the staff. Surgery Line has really helped us to manage our staff time more effectively.”

The Bath Street Practice has selected a number of options from the range available, including call queuing, headsets for Reception staff and a tannoy system for patient appointments. “The staff on Reception love their headsets, and the doctors can now call the patients in via phone by using the tannoy system. This has proved popular with both staff and patients,” says Jean. Despite the changes that the introduction of the new technology has brought, personnel at the surgery have quickly mastered using the system “We have found Surgery Line so easy to use as everything is already set up for the appropriate time of day, requiring minimal input from us. We don’t have to worry about changing the system over to the night service, or making alterations at holiday times as this all takes place automatically.”

“We have seen a dramatic improvement in the way in which we are able to handle calls”

The practice is also full of praise for the NEG support service, some of which has been remote and some of which has taken place on site as needed. “The support from the customer services department has been fabulous,” says Jean. “They have responded quickly when we have needed them, and the personnel are always friendly and helpful.” There are still some areas in which additional training is required, such as using the call recording facility, but generally the staff feel that they have mastered the options available to them.”

But how do the patients feel about the change? Implementing a new system can

cause confusion and concern no matter how smoothly things are handled. Fortunately, the response from patients has been overwhelmingly positive. Time and time again patients have commented on the advantages of the service, saying that it is easier and quicker to get through to us,” explains Jean. “The out of hours service has also been praised for the improvements that our patients have noticed.”



NEG staff have delivered “fabulous support” to the surgery

The Bath Street Medical Practice’s top five reasons for going ahead with Surgery Line

1. The ability to handle calls directly via DDIs (direct lines)
2. The range of features available with the Surgery Line package
3. The easing of call congestion
4. The quality of support from NEG
5. The extra time made available for staff to attend to patient care

The ultimate test of any product is whether the user would recommend it to others. Jean comments “I can only go by our experience, but in my view, the staff have found it makes their lives easier and the patients find it’s easier to get hold of staff when they need to. If patient care and staff welfare are important to your surgery, don’t even think twice.”

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.networkeuropgroup.com or call

0800 096 86 26

