



Surgery Line

NETWORK EUROPE GROUP

Guildford commuters enjoy a smooth ride with Surgery Line

St Luke's Surgery in Guildford is located close to the town centre and comes under the control of Guildford and Waverley PCT. Located on the River Wey, and with good transport links including rail, air and road, Guildford is within easy commuting distance of London. The county town of Surrey, it is a prosperous locality with high employment. The borough has a population of over 129,000, including a substantial proportion of students who attend the nearby University of Surrey. St Luke's patient base is a mix of social classes reflecting the relative affluence of the surrounding locality.

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The practice has a staff of 10 doctors made up of 6 partners, 1 flexible career GP, 1 retainer and 2 registrars, making a total of 16 staff. They were one of the very first surgeries in the country to install the new Surgery Line package developed by NEG in 2004.

The practice conducts regular patient surveys as part of their commitment to patient care. Prior to the installation of Surgery



St. Luke's Surgery in Guildford.

Line, these surveys were regularly highlighting the difficulties that patients were experiencing when trying to contact the practice. This situation is a common problem amongst surgeries across the UK. At St Luke's, frequently engaged lines, particularly at peak call times, meant that patients were often experiencing the frustration and expense of redialling in order to make an appointment or to speak with a member of staff. As this was a recurring issue, the practice felt it had to be tackled and decided to take action.

After meeting with George Neal from NEG, the partners took the decision to install a



The contemporary front reception area at St. Luke's.

Surgery Line system in July 2004. "We were particularly attracted by the fact that the system could provide us with more lines at no extra cost to the practice,"

explains Sharon Rees, Practice Manager at St Luke's. "We did have some concerns about changing our telephone number, but patients have found that calls are answered more quickly and that the cost of calls has not proved to be any greater."

Surgery Line has integrated smoothly into the day-to-day running of the practice. Staff have found that the new system has made a significant difference in the way that they are able to handle communication with patients. The up-to-date phone system, in addition to the other equipment that has been installed as part of the Surgery Line package, has met an affirmative response. "The partners and staff are pleased with the new system," comments Sharon, "we all feel very positive about it." Happily, staff at the practice have found the system easy to use from the very beginning.

The Reception staff are pleased by the range of features that the system is able to offer. "The facility to leave messages is really useful," comments Carmen Quarry, Secretary. "I particularly like the fact that the number comes up on the phone's screen so I can see who is calling before I actually answer it," adds Sarah Byrne, Administration Assistant.

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The response from patients themselves has also been generally positive. When a system changes, some form of disagreement is inevitable and there were a very small number of complaints from patients about the number change. This has been far outweighed however, by the numbers of compliments that the surgery has received since using the system as the patients have quickly come to appreciate its benefits. "We now find it much easier to get a line to

dial out," explains Sharon, "calls are also answered more quickly which has to be good for our patients."



The modern St. Luke's estate near the surgery.

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

1. The ease of use
2. Good quality equipment
3. The help desk is on call
4. The back up service is very good
5. The information on new products is good

The test of any product or service is whether those using it would recommend its use to others. Nine months after installation, the staff at St Luke's are so positive about the system that they would be happy to recommend it to other surgeries considering making the switch. Sharon Rees explains further: "I would advise a surgery to listen to what's on offer as this system gives the surgery a chance to improve their telephone system with a first class package." The practice also singles out a number of staff working for NEG for praise. They are quick to acknowledge NEG's commitment to ensuring that the system does all that it is supposed to. "The installation was well planned and did not disrupt the surgery at all. We also had good training on site - we have found the service that we have received to be very good throughout," concludes Sharon.

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. 20

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

0800 096 86 26

