



# Surgery Line

NETWORK EUROPE GROUP

## Amersham Medical Centre finds switch to Surgery Line worthwhile

Amersham is a thriving town, situated 27 miles north west of London amongst the Chiltern Hills. The metropolitan underground line runs from the town and there are good road and rail links into London, making it popular choice for commuters. The Amersham Medical Centre is a large, busy practice with over 11,000 patients on its register, located centrally within the town. The surgery runs clinics on a variety of medical issues, ranging from hypertension to family planning, and also produces a quarterly newsletter to complement its own website which keeps patients fully informed about events, improvements and changes at the practice.

***“The Surgery Line system is a very good phone system that is working well at our practice”***

The Medical Centre, which comes under the control of Chiltern and South Bucks PCT, employs 6 doctors and 29 staff in total. Its patient base is mixed, but is generally fairly affluent as employment is high within the area. As a sizeable and busy surgery, patients often complained of congested lines when trying to contact the surgery by phone. In order to resolve



Amersham Medical Centre is situated in the same building as the local Primary Care Trust

the issue of engaged lines and an out of date phone system, the GPs and Practice Manager met with Chris Berry of NEG in autumn 2004. Less than 3 weeks later they had come to a decision to install the Surgery Line system.

“Our previous system was old and increasingly unreliable,” explains Joyce Hayes, Practice Manager at Amersham. “We did have some reservations about the system: we were concerned about the reaction from patients, the ongoing cost and the time commitment that we would have to make to a



Staff find NEG's headsets useful for taking and making calls

company that we hadn't previously heard of. However, we decided to go ahead as we were attracted by the high quality of the system and were assured

that call revenue should cover most of these costs." The system was approved and was installed at the practice in October 2004.

***"I'd recommend the system to other surgeries as the system is very good and they won't regret having it"***

"The phone system has certainly lived up to our expectations," explains Joyce, "we particularly like the hands free headsets and handsets for doctors. We now have six lines and it is certainly much easier now to get through to the practice, especially on Monday mornings which are traditionally our busiest times.

Test results are now given out later in the day and this also relieves congestion during the early morning rush. Our ability to handle calls has definitely improved, especially with the use of the headsets. The support from NEG has also been good overall."

***"The phone system has lived up to our expectations....we particularly like the hands free headsets and handsets for doctors"***

So the system has achieved its major priority and patients are able to contact the practice more easily, but what about the whole issue of the number change?

It is a considerable undertaking for a surgery to change its phone number, and the benefits must outweigh the disadvantages, so what would Joyce say to surgeries considering the switch to Surgery Line? "You do need to be prepared for the fact that your rental costs may not be wholly covered and that some patients don't initially like the number change - but they will accept it.

Having said that, I'd certainly recommend the system to other surgeries as it is very good and they won't regret it."



The reception area of Amersham Medical Centre

### **Amersham Medical Centre's top 5 reasons for going ahead with Surgery Line**

1. You get an up to date phone system
2. The hands free headsets for Reception staff and the Practice Manager
3. The handsets for doctors are good
4. The reports facility
5. The menu options

Joyce concludes by summarising her experience of working with the system. "The Surgery Line system is a very good phone system that is working well at our practice. With the 0844 lo-cost number, patients are getting a good deal as well as the practice.

There are some costs in having the system, but these are considerably reduced by the money from the calls. If I had to sum up my experiences of Surgery Line in one sentence it would be this: it is an excellent phone system."

### **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

Case Study No. 32

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**

