



# Surgery Line

NETWORK EUROPE GROUP

## Surgery Line helps Crawcrook Surgery manage time more efficiently

Crawcrook Surgery is situated in Crawcrook, an old mining village, a few miles west of Newcastle upon Tyne. The surgery comes under the control of Gateshead PCT. The landscape surrounding the practice is an area of natural beauty and many of the village's residents now commute to the nearby towns and cities. The surgery serves patients from reasonably affluent backgrounds. It employs four doctors and fourteen additional staff in a variety of roles.

***“The old system was out of date and unable to cope with the heavy call traffic”***

As is the case with many surgeries all over the UK, patients at Crawcrook would often complain of problems when trying to contact the surgery by phone. Deciding that this recurring issue needed to be addressed, staff at the practice started investigating the possibility of replacing their previous phone system. The old system was out of date and unable to cope with the heavy call traffic that the practice received at peak call



Many of Crawcrook Surgery's patients commute to nearby cities such as Newcastle upon Tyne

times in the morning and afternoon. In order to tackle the problem, Doctor Chapman and the Partners met with Kath Simons from NEG to find out what Surgery Line could do for their practice, “The bottom line was that we needed a new system as our old one was simply out of date,” comments Marion Hurst, Practice Manager at Crawcrook. “As a good phone service is such a crucial part of any practice, we needed to



Calls are handled more efficiently enabling the surgery to use less staff at quieter times

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find a new system which would enable us to run the practice more smoothly. We also felt very strongly that any system we installed should be secure as obviously patient confidentiality is a priority for any surgery."

The Partners were convinced by Surgery Line's functionality, range of features and flexibility; accordingly the system was installed in March 2005. "Prior to installation, we did have some concerns about whether we would be able to understand how to use the system as it does use quite advanced technology," comments Marion, "However, the support from NEG met all our expectations and the system proved easy to use."

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When the system was first installed, Marion explains that some patients were concerned over the changes and confused about the pricing issue. "Initially, we did have some patients who were worried about the length of calls and how much it would cost them. However, now that people are used to the system, these complaints have stopped."

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***"The out of hours service is excellent"***

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Marion now reports that Surgery Line is working well at the practice and has helped with many of the issues that they wanted to address. "We are able to make better use of staff time and handle calls more efficiently: this has also enabled us to use less staff at times when they aren't needed. Also, whilst patients may still have to queue at particularly busy times, they are able to get through and speak with someone more easily."

## **Crawcrook Surgery's top five reasons for going ahead with Surgery Line**

1. The ability to handle out of hours calls
2. Quality of equipment
3. Facility for handling calls on a Bank Holiday
4. Helpful staff
5. Able to use staff time more efficiently



The NEG help desk and support staff ensured a smooth transition

Now that the system is well established and running smoothly, Marion feels that the time is right for more training to make full use of the features that the system is able to offer. She is also happy to recommend the system to others. "If another surgery with similar communication issues to ours were considering the system, I would be happy to advise them to go ahead," she adds. "The system has worked well for us: the excellent out of hours service and queuing system are just two of the options that have helped us to operate more efficiently as a practice and improve the service we are able to offer our patients."

## **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. 49

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