



Surgery Line

NETWORK EUROPE GROUP

The Village Surgery uses Surgery Line to put patient care first.

The Village Surgery is a small local practice situated in the old mining village of Llanbradach; a rural area of striking natural beauty a few miles north of Caerphilly. The surgery has a patient base of just less than 3000 which accounts for the majority of the local populace. Coming under the control of Caerphilly Local Health Board, the practice has 3 GP's at present and 1 practice nurse, 1 phlebotomist and 7 receptionists.

Despite being a fairly small practice, the Village Surgery found that its patients were experiencing difficulties when trying to contact the surgery. Lines were often engaged - this was a particular problem at peak times of day such as the morning rush between the hours of 8.30 and 10.30am.

"We were also particularly attracted by the out of hours option which enables patients to automatically transfer to the out of hours service."

In order to improve this aspect of patient care, Alison Soos, Practice Manager and Dr Mathur of the Village Surgery, decided to investigate



The surgery is situated just few miles north of Caerphilly Castle

alternative options that could help to ease this problem. They met with Julie Jerrum of NEG to discuss how the Surgery Line system could solve their communication problems.

The decision was made fairly quickly – within a month of the initial meeting, the go ahead was given. "Having met with Julie the second time, we were convinced to go ahead," explains Alison Soos. "She explained everything so clearly that we could understand how the system could help us. We were also particularly attracted by the out of



Alison Soos, Practice Manager

hours option which enables patients to automatically transfer to the out of hours service."

Things moved on rapidly from there and the installation of the system took place in December of 2004. Apart from a few initial teething problems, the system has bedded in well and is being used effectively by staff and patients to improve communication. "We now have two phone lines which makes it easier for patients phoning into the surgery," explains Alison. "We were initially concerned about the queuing facility, but have actually found that it helps the patients to know where they are in the system."

This also means that they should rarely hear the engaged tone, if at all." Whilst there was some initial concern from patients over the number change, the surgery's transition to the low call 0844 option means that patients pay about the same or even less for calling the surgery. Patients are getting used to the new way of contacting the surgery and seem happy with the innovative system.

"We have been impressed by the company's obvious commitment to customer service."

Alison singles out the support that the surgery has received from NEG personnel and their customer services department for particular praise. "The staff at NEG are always pleasant to deal with and very helpful. We have been impressed by the company's obvious commitment to customer service. They are very helpful and approachable – keep up the good work."

So now that the system is up and running efficiently, how does the practice see it developing? "I feel that the system has the potential to be used more effectively." Having lived with Surgery Line for several months, the staff can see a number of new ways in which it can

benefit them, and they are keen to learn more about ways in which it can help them to improve efficiency. One area yet to be explored is the reporting option which provides detailed statistics of how long patients have been waiting and how many calls are received at different times of day – in fact it offers a complete package of reporting for Practice Managers to use as much or as little as they want.



The Village Surgery in Llanbradach

The Village Surgery's top 5 reasons for going ahead with Surgery Line

1. The facility for the Practice Manager to have their own voicemail
2. The automatic transfer to the out of hours service
3. The choice of options for the patients
4. The option of having either one or two reception phones on
5. The quality of customer care

The Reception staff have found the Surgery Line system easy to use and are happy with it, as are the patients. So what advice would Alison give to other surgeries considering opting for a Surgery Line system? "I would advise them to go for it." Her message to NEG is equally simple: "just carry on with the great customer service that you provide."

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.networkeuropegroup.com or call

0800 096 86 26

