

16<sup>th</sup> December 2008

## **NEG WELCOMES GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON ENHANCED TELEPHONY SERVICES TO GP SURGERIES**

The Network Europe Group has today welcomed the announcement from the Department of Health that it is beginning a 14-week consultation to seek a nationwide solution for GP surgeries that combines the valued extra functions and level of service 084 numbers provide, but at the cost of a local call.

The announcement has been made this morning by Health Minister, Ben Bradshaw, who said:

“We have a duty to ensure that patients receive the best possible service from the NHS, but telephoning a GP practice or other NHS organisation should not cost more than the equivalent cost of a local rate call.

“We know that patients value the additional functions that 084 numbers offer but they are more expensive. If no action is taken, some patients will continue to pay more to access services provided by the NHS and it is not an option to leave things as they are. We want to ensure that wherever you are in the country, you get the same quality of service, better access and pay no more than the cost of a local telephone call.”

The 14-week consultation, which closes on 31 March 2009, is seeking views from users of 084 numbers; those who provide services using 084 numbers; NHS organisations that do not use 084 numbers, the telecommunications industry, and other interested parties.

Responding to the announcement of the consultation, Dean Rayment, Group Managing Director of The Network Europe Group, the leading industry supplier of enhanced telephony services to GP surgeries, said:

"We are delighted that the Government share our recognition that patients and GPs value the significant additional benefits they get in terms of convenience, choice and access if they use an 084 Surgery Line number to call their GP surgery. We also share the Government's determination that patients all over the country should receive the best possible service. The issue of cost and equity is something that all of us who value the NHS and work within it need to constantly keep in mind. We look forward very much to continuing to work with the Department of Health as part of the consultation process to determine the most appropriate solution that meets everyone's needs."

- ends -

DoH : Announcement

[http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Liveconsultations/DH\\_091879](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Liveconsultations/DH_091879)

BBC News : Doctors' phone line use reviewed

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/7783963.stm>