

Why can't you give an assurance from mobiles?

Unlike the OFCOM-regulated cost of calling a number from a BT landline, there is no such thing as "the cost of calling from a mobile".

An OFCOM Report as recently as December 2010 stated "calls to geographic numbers can be as high as 8.5pm with a call set up fee of up to 11p (fixed) and up to 25 ppm (mobile), and 084 numbers can be as low as 0.5ppm with a call set up fee of 3p (fixed) and 20ppm mobile."

The cost of calling any number from a mobile is unregulated and can be changed repeatedly and at a moment's notice by any one of the myriad mobile providers in the UK, offering hundreds of different tariffs.

Standard Industry practice, adopted by banks, building societies, retailers and broadcasters is always to state the cost of calling a number from a BT landline.

Enhanced Telephony

THE FACTS



Understanding Enhanced Telephony

1 in 5 doctors' surgeries in England use enhanced telephony to deliver a better service for patients. The number is growing all the time as more and more GPs come to realise the better service it delivers for patients. The practice issuing this leaflet is one of them.

Why do we choose a better telephone system for our patients?

- ✓ So you can contact us more easily and more conveniently
- ✓ So we can deliver targeted health information to you when you need it, for example about arrangements for flu injections
- ✓ So you don't constantly get the engaged tone when you need to get through
- ✓ So we can better organise the way our staff are able to deliver support services, to work more efficiently and effectively

The DH Patient Survey confirms that the type of enhanced telephone system we use delivers better results for patients compared with a normal landline:

- ✓ Patients at surgeries using enhanced telephony find it twice as easy to get through to the surgery on the phone
- ✓ Patients at surgeries using enhanced telephony find it more than twice as easy to speak to a doctor on the phone
- ✓ Patients at surgeries using enhanced telephony find it 3 times as easy to get test results on the phone
- ✓ More than 9 out of 10 patients at surgeries using enhanced telephony get test results easily on the phone, compared with 1 in 3 nationally

Surgeries switching to 084 numbers almost invariably receive praise from patients satisfied with the new service.

Sometimes a small number of patients express concern or opposition because they genuinely but mistakenly believe the 084 numbers always cost more for people to call than a landline. This misunderstanding is sometimes reinforced by the national and local media who don't always convey important facts. Facts like 084 numbers can actually be cheaper to call from a landline than geographic numbers beginning with 01 and 02. This can lead to Primary Care Trusts receiving complaints from journalists or from patients relying on inaccurate information.

Confusion such as this can obscure the reality that enhanced telephony and the use of an 084 number by a GP practice is all about improving access to NHS services for patients through eliminating the engaged tone and providing other important call switching functions.

Calling the GP is always important, and there are times when getting through quickly can be very important. Surgery Line is about making sure that patients can get contact the GP without the frustration and even distress that can be caused with traditional telephone systems.

Reassurance from our telephone supplier

- Users of Surgery Line can be assured that we have worked extremely hard to ensure that our product complies fully with the guidance on the Department of Health Regulations provided by the British Medical Association. We also continue to work in conjunction with the Department of Health on this matter;
- Unlike the traditional basic landline, Surgery Line meets the new standards for Primary Care Telephony published in April 2011 by Connecting for Health;
- GP practices using Surgery Line have reviewed their telephone arrangements and confirmed that, in their opinion, taking the arrangement as a whole, they do not cost their patients more to contact than a normal landline number. We continue to keep this under review as further guidance is received from the Department of Health.