



fair telecoms campaign quoted as credit is taken for move away from 0844 number by local GP surgery



The Farnham Diary



FREE focus on Farnham

website: www.farnhamdiary.co.uk

June 2013 No.105

Editorial: Ted and Jean Parratt - emp66@btconnect.com - tel. 01252 713477 Advertisements: Keeley Allen tel. 01252 725224

INSIDE

Meet the Mayor

Farnham's new Mayor, who has vast experience of unexploded bombs, has chosen BLESMA as his 2013/14 charity. **PAGE 6**



Jim reaches 15

Licensees come and go, but Jim MacDonald-Good is now King of the Landlords, as he marks 15 years at 'The Hop.' **PAGE 3**



Healthy eater

Follow the example of the Friends of Farnham Park and sprinkle some muesli if you want to check on local minibeasts. **PAGE 5**



GPs go back to local line

News in action as Farnham Diary story helps in return to 01252 'phone number

THE power of the press combined with local people pressure appears to have resulted in the Downing Street Group Surgery in Farnham reverting to a local 01252 telephone number again, instead of the premium rate line with an 0844 prefix it has had for the past five years.



Now the surgery has issued a press release in which it states that: "Following requests from patients, Downing Street Group Practice in

Farnham town centre, will be reverting to its local number (01252 716226) on June 18th, 2013." Lesley Barton,

practice manager at the surgery continued: "Five years ago, the surgery, like many other GP practices around the country, signed up to a seven-year contract for an 0844 number. The surgery felt that the use of this number offered excellent call queuing and "comfort messaging" functionality...Any revenue generated was to pay for an automated telephone appointment system, allowing patients to choose an appointment time using the telephone without waiting to speak to a receptionist.

"However, the 0844 number was unpopular with patients and the telephone appointment system was not as well utilized as expected."

The Farnham Diary was the only local newspaper to cover the story about this problem following national newspaper and television coverage of the issue in Health Minister Jeremy Hunt's constituency - but, according to *The Daily Star Sunday*: "Despite several requests for comments on the fact that patients at that practice are forced to use

Please turn to page 10 →

→ From page 1

its 0844 line, nobody responded."

The national newspaper article continued by quoting David Hickson, from the Fair Telecoms Campaign, who was reported as saying: "These GPs (those who still operate 0844 numbers) are flouting the law and ripping off patients. It's a disgrace. We succeeded in our campaign for a ban and are furious it is not being

implemented.

"GPs are allowing their telecoms providers to rack up fortunes in phone charges from some of the most vulnerable patients who can ill afford a hefty bill, while they (GP practices) avoid costs they have been paid to cover."

The Farnham Diary has also published letters and has received telephone calls from readers outlining problems encountered by young people who

needed to make a doctor's appointment but whose parents (who frequently pay for the calls made by students) had blocked the system to prevent premium lines from being used.

Downing Street Group Practice manager, Lesley Barton, ended: "Patients calling on the new number (01252 716226) should note that, although the number of incoming lines will be doubled, the telephone system can only queue eight callers

at one time, so additional callers will get an engaged signal at busy times. Please avoid calling between 8am and 11am unless you require an emergency appointment."

Patients who have been registered with the Downing Street Surgery for more than five years may see this as a case of déjà vu - 716226 is an old (not a new) number used by the practice, as can be verified by checking in old 'phone directories and guides.

Visit the [Farnham Diary website](http://www.farnhamdiary.co.uk), for a text version of this article and to view this edition as published.

See also the March 2013 edition for the earlier coverage of this story.

