



### GP's will not give up 0844 telephone numbers - they prefer NHS patients to pay their telephone bills for them

This release is the third in a series covering recent developments in our campaign to remove 084 telephone numbers from the NHS - from its front door, GP's, in particular.

- ① [Lists of UK GP's using 084 telephone numbers](#) (10 June) identified 938 cases from current official NHS sources, with summarised total by Area / Health Board. This information may be a little out of date, as we know of other cases.
- ② [GP's are now free to give up 0844 telephone numbers](#) (16 June) quoted the provider of the **Surgery Line** system, used by the overwhelming majority of these GP's. **Daisy Group** expressly denies the **BMA GPC** claim that users of this system cannot switch to a legitimate number during the term of their contract. "... **Such customers can switch free of charge**".

I have now received the following formal statement from the **BMA**, in response:

***"Dr Laurence Buckman, Chair of the BMA's GP committee said: ... in many cases GP practices may not be able to change their contract without incurring financial penalties that could impact on a practice's budget and its ability to deliver services to patients."***

**Dr Buckman is referring only to the loss of the subsidy being provided by patients.**

We have shown that these so-called "**financial penalties**" are not for early contract termination, nor a "switching" fee imposed by the system provider. The additional cost is nothing more than the full cost of the system to which the GP contracted, but without the benefit of the subsidy.

- ③ [Some GP's want their patients to continue subsidising their telephone system](#) (today). As this is a clear breach of the principles of the NHS, we await the reaction of patients of any surgery which now refuses to switch. As this is a clear breach of the terms of the contracts held with NHS England, we await the action which it will take following "active research".

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**I offer the following comments on behalf of the fair telecoms campaign, but also as a "campaigner for the NHS", in my own name.**

Clearly additional payments from patients impact a practice budget, affecting its ability to deliver services. GP's who choose to work within our taxation-funded NHS must recognise that this option is not available to them. The generous public funding they receive must be used effectively and wisely to deliver the best possible service. This includes acquiring telephone systems.

GP's are now leading Clinical Commissioning Groups, spending the bulk of the English NHS budget, presumably well aware of this principle. Do they deal with external providers thinking that those who do not extract additional payments from patients are thereby incurring a "financial penalty"?

NHS GP's who had failed to understand their duties in England and Wales were reminded of them by a revision to their contracts in April 2010, three years ago. This prohibited use of 084 numbers, but allowed 12 months grace to those who needed to make the switch and adjust their budgets.

Dr Buckman refers only to "**many cases**" of practices which "**may**" still not wish to switch.

**I wonder how many committed NHS GP's would join Dr Buckman in describing the loss of an improper subsidy, at the expense of patients, as a "financial penalty".**

