



**NHS England battles the BMA GPC
over 084 telephone numbers**

Yesterday NHS England issued a letter to be sent to GPs still using 084 telephone numbers after this was prohibited by the terms of contract revisions introduced in 2010.

Today, the BMA GPC is reported as saying that *“practices should not be bullied like this now as a result of signing up to long-term contracts”*.

The full content of the letter has not been published, but it does nothing more than restate the contractual position to which the GPC agreed, as follows:

“In April 2010 there was a contractual obligation placed on Practices regarding use of [expensive] telephone numbers Entering into, renewing or extending such use was prohibited and those already using such numbers were required to take all reasonable steps to bring their use to an end. ...

“The telecoms industry in general, and leading providers of surgery telephone systems including Daisy Group, providers of the Surgery Line system, permit migration from 084 to geographic rate numbers at any time within the term of existing system and network telephone service arrangements, without penalty.

“It is NHS England’s view that this represents one "reasonable" step that a practice could take.”

The ridiculous suggestion that practices need to incur penalty charges for early termination of contracts is an ‘Aunt Sally’ argument. This is not, and has never been, what is necessary for GPs who have chosen to deploy advanced telephone systems to comply with the principles of the NHS. They can comply with their commercial contracts and operate these systems without subsidising the cost of their services at the direct expense of their patients. It is their choice!

Most NHS GPs are deeply committed to the principles of the NHS; it is perhaps they who should be ‘bullying’ their wayward colleagues to get back in line with the terms of their contracts.

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Notes

- See the NHS England press release - [NHS England calls on GPs to end use of expensive 084 numbers](#)
- See the fair telecoms campaign news release - [This MUST be the end of 084 numbers for NHS GPs in England](#)
- Media coverage of the story is found on the [fair telecoms campaign news feed](#).