

**Select Committee on Health and Adult Social Care – 18<sup>th</sup> November 2010**

**Report of the Director of Community Engagement and Primary Care**

**Out of Hours GP Service – Briefing on Telephone Number Change**

**Purpose of Report**

1. This is a briefing paper for information to explain the background and reasons for the PCT changing the GP out of hours telephone number.

**Background**

2. In 2004 the new GP contract was introduced and in November of that year Dudley, Walsall and Wolverhampton launched the GP Out of Hours service. In 2006 this service was re-tendered and a new number was launched as Primecare took over the contract. This number (0845 145 1800) is owned by Wolverhampton PCT. The line receives around 3000 calls for Dudley each month.
3. Each PCT has decided to have a separate number because they have all tendered and awarded contracts to meet their individual contract needs. Therefore the shared number solution is no longer viable. A shared number also presents significant additional costs (because of the technicalities of accurately directing calls), which can be removed by going with single numbers. It is an opportunity to review the patient charges associated with accessing the service to see if improvements can be made. For Dudley the services will remain the same the only thing to change will be the number that patients call to access the service
4. The out of hours service is provided to all Dudley Registered patients - everyone registered with a Dudley GP. The GP Out of Hours Line is open from 6:30 pm to 8:00 am, Monday to Friday or anytime on Saturday and Sunday (and Bank Holidays).

**When will the Change Happen?**

5. The new number will go Live on the 4<sup>th</sup> January 2011 but the current one will remain until the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011. The current number is an 0845 number charged at local rate. The new number will be an 0300 number, also charged at local rate.

**What does the change mean for Patients?**

6. From 4<sup>th</sup> January patients will be able to use both numbers as we communicate the change. Those using the old number will be reminded of the change and directed to use the new number in future. The 3 month lead in period, coupled with the communications strategy (see below) should capture most callers.

**What actions are we are taking to communicate the change?**

- 7.
  - i. A toolkit for GPs - Posters; Business Cards; New voicemail instructions.
  - ii. A briefing for PALs
  - iii. A leaflet to every household via the weekly newspaper to include details on the change
  - iv. Posters to community locations
  - v. Briefing to Stakeholders including community voluntary groups
  - vi. Health Care Forum to receive this briefing
  - vii. Select Committee on Health and Adult Social Care to receive this briefing
  - viii. Lap over period to pick up any people calling the old number prior to full Go Live
  - ix. Recorded message on the old line for 3 months post full go live to instruct people of change.
  - x. Changes to NHS Choices Website
  - xi. Notify all regional Head of Communications to cascade across other NHS orgs
  - xii. Notify all Emergency planning leads to update plans across region
  - xiii. Update PCT websites
  - xiv. Press release

**What are the Benefits for the PCT?**

- 8. By going for a single number option we will be reducing the complexity of the current technical links which are hosted between 2 locations. The new solution will mean a system which has more resilience as it is located in one place and will also provide us with cost savings of around £39,000 each year. This will more than offset the costs of around £5,400 each year (based on 36,000 calls) that would be incurred by going for an 0300 number.

**Equality Impact**

- 9 The actions taken to manage the change have been impact assessed and will be reviewed as the project progresses.

**Recommendation**

- This report is for information.

*Kimara Sharpe*

.....

**Kimara Sharpe  
Director of Community Engagement and Primary Care**

Contact Officer: Steve Corton  
Telephone: 01384 322063  
Email: [steve.corton@dudley.nhs.uk](mailto:steve.corton@dudley.nhs.uk)