



St John's Way Medical Centre... Nomis provides new lease of life for customer service

Case study St John's Way Medical Centre

St John's Way Medical Centre in Holloway is a busy primary health care centre supporting 12,500 patients.

The practice has nine GPs, four practice nurses, a health care assistant and two counsellors. An attachment team consists of a health visitor and other healthcare professionals including midwives, diabetic nurses, district nurses, community matrons, psychologists, a community dietician, specialist alcohol and drugs nurses and exercise advice specialists. The clinicians are supported by a team of administrative and reception staff.

Practice Manager Penny Borrow was charged with sourcing a new telephone system to better support the practice.

"Our ageing system was beginning to give us problems. Reception and support staff were spending far too much time handling calls that required them to constantly repeat generic information such as opening hours and the availability of test results. The voicemail system was complicated and we ran the risk of messages being lost or misdirected," she said.

"The age of the system made upgrading impossible, and its inflexibility and sporadic unreliability meant it was time for a full review. We contacted Simon Lincoln of Nomis Connections, along with four other solutions providers, to help us consider our options.

Our key requirements from a new telephone system were to enable more effective call routing, and improved voicemail facilities. And of course we were looking for the best price," explains Penny.

Simon worked with Penny to analyse the needs of the practice, before suggesting a solution based on an Aastra Intelligate 2045 IP PBX with 12 channels, providing all the functionality the practice required.

So that Penny could see the system in action, Simon set up a visit to Aastra headquarters to see a demonstration of the Intelligate range, and discuss how its inbuilt features would benefit the practice.

"The proposal Nomis made was excellent – it was future-proof, flexible and more than met our specification, particularly in terms of a call routing system that would improve the patient experience. Being invited to Aastra headquarters to meet the people and see a live demonstration cemented our decision to opt for this solution," said Penny.

Summary of benefits:

- Call-related admin time required has been significantly reduced
- The customer experience has been improved
- Extra outbound call services are available when needed
- Internal and external messages are quickly and correctly handled
- Cost effective scalability available as required



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Developed to meet the needs of organisations with up to 60 on-site or remote working staff, the 2045 is a modular, high-functionality system with a wide range of handset options, from simple analogue phones to integrated cordless DECT (Digital Enhanced Cordless Technology) handsets.

Along with other products in the Intelligate range, the 2045 is designed to smoothly adapt to any existing IT installation and network infrastructure, while offering easy and cost effective scalability alongside business needs.

Nomis drew up a project plan and started to tailor the system hardware to the practice requirements, programming and testing it off site.

A series of recorded messages was installed to support the agreed call direction options, and Nomis imported the practice's Microsoft Outlook contacts book into the system, giving users caller identification facilities from day one.

The team also trained staff in the use of the system, before implementing it out of practice hours, to ensure a smooth 'go live' date and ensure the switchover resulted in business as usual for staff and callers in this busy practice.

CallXpress messaging

At the medical centre, receptionists now use cordless headsets and a screen-based operator console to deal with calls swiftly and efficiently.

The CallXpress function has opened up a world of internal and external communications functionality for callers and staff, through its comprehensive voicemail, call processing and unified messaging abilities.

Each member of staff has personal voicemail, which includes an email alert to both PC and mobile, allowing them to receive and respond to messages anytime and from anywhere.

Callers are greeted by a series of options directing them to information such as the appointments service, test results opening hours, flu jab availability and other generic information formerly given out individually by receptionist staff.

The system intelligently switches between practice hours and out of hours mode, with the latter giving out practice opening hours and other information, alongside details of emergency contacts, website addresses and other sources of health-related support.

For example, a caller who rings with a query on swine flu – in or out of hours – can choose from a range of messages such as general information on the virus, plus advice on what to do next if they think they have the symptoms, and website addresses and telephone numbers where they can get further help and information.

CallExpress also automatically simplifies many of the practice's day to day, non-clinical activities, such as recruitment. When a vacancy is advertised, voicemails, email alerts and associated messages are routed straight to the member of staff who is handling applications and interviews.

All of the system programming for both non-clinical call activity, and those on topical subjects such as flu jab availability, can be done by trained practice staff as and when necessary, supporting them when a fast response to circumstances such as epidemics is required.

Advanced features

One of the advanced features of CallXpress is its outbound call handling. Using data imported from Excel or other standard spreadsheet software, the system is able to make evening calls to an identified list of patients, for instance, informing them that flu vaccinations have started and prompting them to ring the surgery for an appointment.

By removing the need to have admin staff tied to phones to carry out this task, the operational cost savings and revenue benefits far outweigh the nominal spend per call.

Future scalability

Looking to the future, the system has the capacity to evolve alongside the practice in terms of both functionality and scale, and there are already discussions around adopting IP to combine voice and data traffic.

Penny said: "Nomis really understood our needs, and the new phone system – in particular the email message integration with voicemail – has revolutionised the way that we handle call routing and messaging and resulted in considerable savings in terms of admin time.

Our drivers for change were patient access and user needs, and Nomis responded by implementing a user-friendly system that supports the practice by providing much more efficient internal and external communications. We can provide a fast, proactive call service to our patients, and it is also flexible enough to adapt alongside the practice as our needs change.

Any teething problems were quickly resolved by the Nomis team, who provide an excellent first response service.

Our last annual survey showed that patients appreciated some of the automated services we had introduced, such as SMS text reminders and self-check in systems, and we are expecting our next survey to show similarly good results in terms of the new and improved call handling services."

