

11th April 2005

Gateway ref: 4848

*From: Gary Belfield
Head of Primary Care
New Kings Beam House
22 Upper Ground
London SE1 9BW*

To: PCT Chief Executives

Dear colleague

Telephone Numbers for GP Practices

On the 24th February, the Department of Health announced it was stopping GP Practices adopting high cost telephone numbers. A ban on practices adopting 0870, 0871 and 09 numbers comes into force on 14th April.

You may be aware that Ofcom recently consulted on proposals to change the regulatory regime that supports Number Translation Services (including the 0870, 0844, 0845 and 09 number ranges)¹. Ofcom is considering a number of options including changes to the pricing arrangements and withdrawing the regulatory support for revenue sharing on some or all of the NTS number ranges. This could mean that revenue sharing on 0844 numbers is not possible. We understand that Ofcom expects to publish a statement in the summer setting out its revised policy.

PCTs need to be aware that the Department of Health is reviewing the use of all non-geographical numbers in practices in light of the Ofcom consultation, including whether such numbers should be used by practices or by the NHS at all. Practices should bear this in mind if they are considering a move to non-geographical numbers, such as 0844, particularly until Ofcom have published the outcome of the review and the implications are understood.

I would be grateful if you would ensure that all practices in your PCT receive this information.

Kind regards



Gary Belfield
Head of Primary Care

¹ A copy of the consultation Number Translation Services: Options for the Future is available at Ofcom's website: http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/ntsoptions/nts_future/?a=87101