

- To:
- Integrated care boards:
 - Chief executive officers
 - Chairs
 - Medical directors
 - Chief operating officers
 - Digital directors
 - Heads of primary care
 - Heads of commissioning

NHS England
Wellington House
133-155 Waterloo Road
London
SE1 8UG

6 November 2023

- cc.
- NHS England regional:
 - Directors
 - Directors of commissioning
 - Directors of primary care
 - Regional:
 - Heads of primary care
 - Digital directors

Dear colleague,

Funding for practices moving to digital telephony requires signed contracts before 15 December 2023 to avoid adjustment of funding allocation.

In the [Delivery Plan for Recovering Access to Primary Care](#), we committed to move all practices using analogue solutions reliant on the PSTN network to digital telephony (also called cloud-based telephony). This is a key element of supporting practices to move to the '[Modern General Practice](#)' model and will improve patient experience of contacting their practice.

The plan provided support to practices to move to digital telephony by funding: (i) any incumbent supplier costs; and (ii) implementation costs needed to transition including, the purchase of digital headsets.

We know that through the hard work of ICBs and general practice we already have over 80% of practices on digital telephony, a significant increase from just over 50% just a year ago. Furthermore, through your help, we saw 100% of the remaining analogue practices sign up in principle in July to move to digital telephony. These are major achievements. We now need ICBs to continue to work with their eligible practices to make the most of the funding for the transition to digital telephony, which is only available this year.

To guarantee funding, eligible practices will need to have signed a digital telephony contract by 15 December 2023. This allows enough time for implementation and any installation work needed to go live before the end of March 2024 and ensures that funding is spent this financial year.

Funding is not available for digital telephony beyond this financial year. Practices moving to digital telephony beyond these dates will need to bear the costs themselves. All practices will have to move by 2025, when the PSTN network will be switched off across the UK.

The funding has been allocated to ICBs based on the number of analogue practices in their system. If any practice does not sign by 15 December 2023, we will need to adjust the allocated funding accordingly.

The national team is working closely with regional and ICB leads to monitor and track the number of eligible practices transitioning to digital telephony, including when contracts have been signed. Following the 15 December deadline, we will identify any practices that have not yet signed a contract and the activities will commence to make the appropriate adjustments to funding via the ICB Integrated Finance Return (IFR) monthly process.

ICBs are asked to cascade the letter attached to all eligible practices to ensure they are aware of the deadline to sign contracts. ICBs should continue to work with the NHSE National Commercial and Procurement HUB to ensure ongoing engagement with all eligible practices, providing collaborative support with all stages of the transition process, including business change and implementation. All ICBs have a list of practices and are already actively engaging with those transitioning and making good progress, working closely with regional teams.

ICBs should also ensure that processes are in place to enable contracts to be signed quickly, ahead of the 15 December deadline.

For any queries relating to procurement, ICBs should contact commercial.procurementhub@nhs.net, for general queries, please contact necsu.adtelephony@nhs.net.

As always thank you to you and your teams and to our regional colleagues for your continued hard work and efforts during this extremely busy period.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amanda Doyle', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr Amanda Doyle
National Director for Primary Care and Community Services
NHS England

Annex letter

Dear colleagues,

Funding for practices moving to digital telephony requires signed contracts before 15 December 2023 to avoid adjustment of funding allocation.

In the [Delivery Plan for Recovering Access to Primary Care](#), NHS England committed to move all practices using analogue solutions reliant on the PSTN network to digital telephony (also called cloud-based telephony). This is a key element of supporting practices to move to the '[Modern General Practice](#)' model and will improve patient experience of contacting their practice.

The plan provided support to practices to move to digital telephony by funding: (i) any incumbent supplier costs; and (ii) implementation costs needed to transition including, the purchase of digital headsets.

Your practice signed up in principle to move to digital telephony and we want to ensure that you make the most of available funding to transition, which is only available this year. We recognise how hard general practice is working, with an unprecedented demand in challenging circumstances. To be able to respond to this demand, meet patient needs and improve patient experience, we need to transform the way we deliver services.

To guarantee funding for digital telephony, eligible practices will need to have signed a digital telephony contract by 15 December 2023. This allows enough time for implementation and any installation work needed to go-live before the end of March 2024 and ensures that funding is spent this financial year.

Funding is not available for digital telephony beyond this financial year. Practices moving to digital telephony beyond these dates will need to bear the costs themselves. All practices will have to move by 2025, when the PSTN network will be switched off across the UK.

What do practices need to do?

Eligible practices were asked to sign up for digital telephony before 1 July 2023. Those practices now need to engage with their ICB and the HUB as a matter of urgency to ensure participation in the programme. This will enable practices to take advantage of the funding and support to procure and implement a digital telephony solution from the Advanced Telephony Better Purchasing Framework.

How can practices check if they are on the list?

Practices should contact their ICB Primary Care/Digital Lead who will be able to advise if they are included in the list of eligible practices.

What is the role of the Commercial and Procurement HUB?

The National Commercial & Procurement HUB (HUB) is commissioned by NHS England to provide comprehensive commercial and procurement support to enable practices and ICBs to transition to digital telephony.

Engagement with NSHE National Commercial and Procurement Hub is a pre-requisite to receiving funding – providing support with:

- negotiation of incumbent supplier costs
- navigation and use of Better Purchasing Framework
- negotiation of new supplier costs, terms and conditions to ensure appropriate value for money contracts
- collaborative working across practices/PCNs/systems to support at scale deployments

As always thank you to you and your teams for your continued hard work and efforts during this extremely busy period.

Yours sincerely,

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