

To:

- Integrated care boards:
 - chief executive officers
 - chief operating officers
 - digital directors
 - heads of primary care
 - heads of commissioning

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

28 November 2023

cc.

- NHS England regional:
 - directors
 - directors of commissioning
 - directors of primary care
- Regional:
 - heads of primary care
 - digital directors

Dear colleagues,

Additional investment for GP practices on sub-optimal digital telephony

As stated in the [letter](#) of 6 November, we are continuing to prioritise the [Delivery Plan for Recovering Access to Primary Care](#): a key component of that plan is to support all practices with analogue telephony to move to high quality digital telephony, which is a key part of how we are improving services for patients.

We are pleased to report that GP practices are making good progress. Thank you for your support and leadership in this. **This letter confirms additional support for practices that are on digital telephony but with lower functionality than the national standards, as set out in the [Better Purchasing Framework](#), and the actions commissioners need to take.**

We are extending support to these practices, on a time-limited basis for completion in 2023/24, and depending on demand, we may need to prioritise against available funding.

Prioritisation will target funding to practices that are unable to meet the functional requirements set out in Annex A, as well as consideration of the following supporting criteria:

- Local digital strategies including PCN/place-based models
- Value for money aspects, including assessment of contract life and incumbent supplier costs
- Practice commitment and willingness
- Practice engagement with the [General Practice Improvement Programme](#).

These aspects will support local quality improvement and ICB efforts to incorporate general practice demand into local OPEL reporting systems.

Given the limited time available to take advantage of this opportunity, and the significant on-going task of ensuring all analogue practices sign contracts and go live within this financial year, we aim to streamline this process as much as possible and continue to support nationally.

As the first step, we have already shared with you the cohort of practices that, based on the initial baselining information and additional intelligence gathered since, are currently using a solution that we understand does not meet the national enhanced reporting standard.

We are requesting the assistance of ICBs in the rapid validation of these practices, taking into account practice appetite, capacity and ability to transition.

The key steps and deadlines are as follows:

ICB validates practice eligibility and send a proposed long list **by 5pm on 5 December 2023** to necsu.adtelephony@nhs.net.

ICBs request long listed practices to confirm their agreement to **sign up in principle by 5pm on 18 December 2023**, via an email to: necsu.adtelephony@nhs.net, confirming they agree to:

- provide current telephony contract details including contract expiry date.
- engage with the NHS England National Commercial and Procurement Hub
- select a supplier by **15 January 2024**
- sign the contract with the supplier by **2 February 2024**
- go-live by **25 March 2024** latest

To ensure success, we need your help to engage with practices to encourage them to sign up in principle. In the event of oversubscription ICBs and regions will agree the final list.

Practices signing up in principle will be considered by a national prioritisation panel scheduled for the week of **18 December**, with representation from regional colleagues and ICBs, who will be asked to provide supporting information that they have collated during the period between 5 December and scheduled prioritisation panel.

The panel will then finalise the shortlist of prioritised practices based on information provided and available funding, and ICBs will be notified of the final allocation by **22 December**.

If you have any questions, please contact necsu.adtelephony@nhs.net.

Thank you for your continued support.

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 A

Digital telephony solutions must meet ALL the following standards and requirements taken from the national specification:

- auto attendant to enable routing of calls
- call-back and call queuing functionality
- support for remote working and business continuity
- enhanced reporting capability to support capacity/demand service planning:
 - call volumes – total inbound
 - call times to answer – waiting in queue
 - calls abandoned – after selecting option before speaking to team
 - wait time before call abandoned
 - call backs requested – from in queue position
 - call backs made
 - average call length times
 - no answer volumes – not picked up after selection of option e.g. no answer from extension, transferred to voicemail, rejected.