

**Enfield Island Village Residents' Association Limited
(EIVRAL)**

39 Island Centre Way
Enfield
Middlesex
EN3 6GS

Tel: 01992 769143
Email:
info@eiv.org.uk



Ms Helen Robinson
Practice Manager, GP Surgery
Island Centre Way
Enfield, Greater London
EN3 6GS

5 September 2011

Dear Ms Robinson

Open letter - Telephone numbers

The Department of Health has informed us that regulations came into force on 21 December 2010 to require that phone numbers used by NHS organisations do not cost more to patients than the equivalent cost of calling a geographical number.

Enfield Island Village is fully cabled by Virgin Media and many residents therefore use this for their telephone services. To phone you, they are charged a connection fee of 13.24 pence and a per minute charge of 10.41 pence. This compares, for normal geographic numbers, with a connection fee of 8.68 pence and a maximum (peak rate) per minute charge of 8.68 pence per minute.

It is therefore the Trust's view that the number you are using is in breach of the regulations. We twice wrote to the PCT about the implementation of the new regulations before the start of this financial year, but they have failed to reply. Presumably the current premium number is used by a sub-contractor to the surgery to reclaim money from patients to offset the costs of the switchboard system. This should not happen in an NHS that is supposed to be free.

In addition, many local people have inclusive calling plans. On this basis, calls to 01, 020 and 03 numbers (Ofcom expects public bodies to use 03 numbers) are effectively free to many local residents, whether they are using a fixed line or a mobile. The cost of calling you by mobile phone is around 35 pence a minute (Vodafone contract rate), when many mobile subscribers also have inclusive calling rates to 01, 02 and 03 numbers.

Our request is that you move to a local geographic or 03 number. If no change is made, then we will consider further action, given the disproportionate impact of your calling charges on those residents who are in poor health and have limited mobility and low incomes.

Yours sincerely



Tony Thake
Chairman