

PAT/10/203

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## **Pennine's Contact Centre gets thumbs up from patients**

THE Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust customer contact centre - a service which deals on average over 20,000 telephone calls a month – has been given the thumbs up from patients, following a recent satisfaction survey.

The Trust contact centre, which is based at Fairfield General Hospital in Bury, is the first point of contact for patients needing to attend, book or cancel an outpatient appointment.

Using the latest telephony technology to answer calls from patients, the team who runs the centre have been praised by patients and users of the service.

A recent patient satisfaction survey, which sampled 220 (10%) calls taken during a period of one week, found that 96% of patients felt their calls were answered within an acceptable time limit and 98.5% felt their enquiry was dealt with effectively. The service was rated as 'excellent' by 90% of callers.

Anthony Edwards, patient access manager for outpatients at the Trust, said:

"We handle over 22,000 calls a month and over 7,000 appointment requests via email. The performance of the contact centre is monitored closely and reports are presented to the Trust Board on a quarterly basis. It's encouraging to see that over a four month period, the centre answered 92.7% of calls, of which 89.3% were answered within 30 seconds. Overall the average call waiting time during this period was only 19 seconds.

"If patients do not want to wait for an operator to answer though, they have the option of using a call-back facility where they can type their telephone number into their handset and the centre will call them back or they can email the centre directly. This survey is promising and shows we provide a good service for our patients, but we are always looking at ways to improve."

The centre has also helped reduce the number of people who 'do not attend' (DNA) their outpatient appointments at the Trust's hospitals for whatever reason. Missed appointments can be a particular problem for the Trust with around 7,500 appointments missed each month, costing the Trust in excess of £1Million.

Anthony added: "Missed appointments can keep other patients waiting if we are not informed; and it costs the NHS a lot of money. We would encourage patients who are due to attend an outpatient appointment to call or email our contact centre to change or cancel you appointment."

The customer contact centre is open Monday to Friday from 8am to 8pm and Saturdays 9am to 1pm on 0161 778 2233 or email [booking@pat.nhs.uk](mailto:booking@pat.nhs.uk)