

## “Purge the Bleep, not the Pager”

PageOne agrees with the Health Secretary’s ambition to use the latest and most effective communication technologies to help doctors and nurses fulfill their challenging roles as efficiently and collaboratively as possible, but the recent press articles referring to “purging pagers from the NHS” have a number of inaccuracies which PageOne would like to address.

Whilst PageOne operates the UK’s only national paging network, we supply only a small proportion of the reported 130,000 pagers used in the NHS. The vast majority of NHS pagers are old legacy bleeps (simple tone pagers that bleep and you have to call the switchboard to find out what the message is). PageOne has long been pushing for such systems to be replaced with next generation paging and alerting technology that can improve productivity through streamlined processes and communication.

Contrary to what is said in some of the articles, paging technology has indeed continued to evolve. PageOne has pioneered two-way pagers that provide detailed text messages, delivery and read confirmations. Allowing users to reply/respond or update their status and availability is already helping streamline resource management, information flow and incident response. Multi- network pagers deliver enhanced coverage and resilience by receiving messages via both paging and GSM mobile networks. Lone-worker pagers offer GPS location positioning, SOS alerts and man-down monitoring. Paging is fully integrated with many software systems in use within the NHS, providing automated messaging and responses. PageOne will also shortly be piloting the UK’s first 2-way pager using new 5G LTE IoT technology.

PageOne is pleased that Matt Hancock has recognised that paging should continue its important role in incident and emergency communications. With GSM mobile and Wi-Fi coverage often lacking capacity and coverage within hospital buildings, paging often delivers better radio coverage. Its unique group broadcast capability means it is ideally suited to efficient one-to-many broadcast notifications. Paging’s independence from public mobile networks ensures a level of resilience and message throughput that is isolated from the overload issues that can affect GSM public mobile and Wi-Fi networks during major incidents.

Mobiles, pagers, and apps all have a role to play in an NHS communications mix and PageOne has developed its Connect and Bridge messaging services to embrace a multi-channel approach to NHS messaging, allowing effective communication and messaging across device types and networks. Some Trusts are already using PageOne’s Responder app, affording secure two-way paging and messaging for non-critical applications, augmenting paging and other mobile technologies.

PageOne has been at the forefront of assisting NHS Trusts deliver a multi-channel messaging approach fit for the 21st century and welcomes the opportunity to drive change and modernise legacy systems. Mobile, email and app-based messaging all have a place, but modern paging technology remains relevant and will continue to play a unique and valuable role in the NHS communications mix.

So, whilst welcoming investment in transforming NHS communications to improve productivity and collaboration, we think the right message should be 'purge the Bleep', not the pager. A modern two-way triple resilient pager still has a vital role to play in the mix of communication requirements in the NHS.

#### Inaccuracies in the press articles:

- **PageOne is the only paging provider** – PageOne is the only national paging network operator but it is not the only paging provider to NHS. Multitone, Stanley Blick, Ascom and Swissphone provide onsite bleep paging systems to NHS Trusts.
- **PageOne is the last remaining pager network left in the UK, which will lead to increased costs** - PageOne is the last remaining wide area paging operator in the UK, but the majority of pagers in the NHS are simple bleep pagers connected to legacy paging systems provided by other suppliers. PageOne provides a small fraction of the total pagers in use within the NHS and the majority of these PageOne supplied pagers are procured via the Government's own RM1045 Network Services framework where PageOne prices have been fixed for at least the last three years.
- **Pagers are one-way** – Not true. PageOne has led the way in two-way paging that is already used across blue-light and NHS, allowing confirmation of message delivery and enabling the recipient to reply/respond.
- **To send a message, a user has to phone an automated phone or an operator** - Not true. Paging messages can be initiated via the desktop, internet browser, mobile device, email, and a variety of third-party software and Nurse Call systems.
- **Pagers bleep or show a message so the user must find a phone to call back** – Not true. Message pagers allow for full text messages to instruct, direct or notify without the need to call-back. With two-way pagers, the user can respond directly from the device.
- **Paging is outdated technology** – Not true. Paging is a proven, efficient mobile network technology. Device technology has continued to progress. PageOne's Responder pager provides two-way paging as well as GPS location and emergency SOS alert functions. Multi-network capability allows the device to receive messages via either paging or GSM mobile networks to deliver enhanced network coverage and resilience. PageOne will shortly be piloting the first 5G IoT pager for the emergency services.
- **NHS use 10% of world pagers** – Not true. There are many millions of pagers in use worldwide. It is estimated there are 2 million pagers in the USA alone.

- **Email and mobiles are cheaper** – Not true. Each has a device cost and an airtime cost. Paging provided by fixed monthly costs and no per message charge delivers excellent value for money.
- **Pagers do not support the sharing of information between staff on the move** – Not true. Paging is unique in providing a true broadcast capability such that groups of pagers can receive information simultaneously via a single message, meaning everyone receives the same information at the same time.
- **Apps are better** - Smartphone apps are reliant on the coverage of the GSM network and Wi-Fi networks, cloud-based push networks (Apple, Google) as well as compatible mobile phone operating systems that are regularly updated for features and bug fixes. PageOne's two-way pagers are not dependant on any of these variables, and as a result deliver a more durable, controlled and auditable service.

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