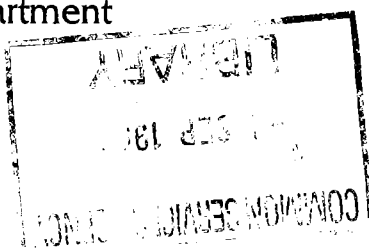




Health Department

St Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

Dear Colleague



**GOVERNMENT TELEPHONE PREFERENCE SCHEME  
(GTPS)**

**Summary**

1. Changes have been made to the Government Telephone Preference Scheme following Home Office review. Revised details given at Annex A replace the information at paragraph L5.1 of "Responding to Emergencies", issued by MEL(1998)76, which will be amended in due course.

**Action**

2. Area Health Boards are delegated authority to nominate lines for inclusion within GTPS in accordance with Annex A.
3. All Health Boards, the Common Services Agency and NHS Trusts will wish to review their use of the scheme, particularly in view of its relevance to the possible congestion of public telephone services which might occur during the Year 2000 New Year period.

Yours sincerely

KEVIN J WOODS  
Director of Strategy and Performance Management

31st August 1999.

**Addressees**

For action:  
General Managers  
Health Boards

Chief Executives  
NHS Trusts

General Manager  
Common Services Agency

General Manager  
State Hospital

Chief Executive  
Scottish Ambulance Service

**Enquiries to:**

C J Hickinbotham OBE  
Scottish Executive  
Health Department  
Emergency Planning Unit  
Room 30  
St Andrew's House  
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## GOVERNMENT TELEPHONE PREFERENCE SCHEME (GTPS)

### Introduction

1. The Government Telephone Preference Scheme (GTPS) exists to ensure that essential users can continue to use the public switched telephone network (PSTN) at times when the network or part of it is severely overloaded or damaged. It operates by removing the ability to make outgoing calls, including 999/112 calls, on all telephone lines other than those registered under the scheme. The ability to receive calls is unaffected. The scheme does not apply to mobile phones.
2. GTPS is provided free of charge by BT, Cable and Wireless and, though not in Scotland, Kingston Communications. Other operators do not necessarily have the technical capability to provide GTPS, nor are they obliged under the Telecommunications Act 1984 to do so. Most users whose connection to the PSTN is via the network of an operator other than BT, Cable and Wireless or Kingston Communications would be either indiscriminately affected or totally cut off if that network encountered excessive demands. However other operators may, in certain circumstances, connect users to their networks through BT or Cable and Wireless lines and exchanges and GTPS might be available in such cases.

### Eligibility

3. Eligibility for registration of lines under GTPS is limited to those organisations providing services important to the community as a whole. In addition to the emergency services, national and local government, the utilities, other key industrial and life supporting organisations, call boxes are included within the scheme to provide continued public access to the 999/112 service. Both business and residential lines are eligible, however for the latter this is restricted to lines serving either:
  - those people likely to have a significant role in an emergency and who will need to make outgoing calls at that time, or
  - those in the community dependent on the line to support the operation and/or monitoring of essential life sustaining equipment.
4. The number of lines that may be registered for GTPS must be restricted to the minimum consistent with the maintenance of essential services. No more than 10% of the total lines connected to a local exchange can be registered, otherwise GTPS will cease to be effective.

### Application to the NHS

5. Business and residential lines essential to the operation and co-ordination of the NHS in response to an emergency are eligible for registration under GTPS. While registration of Direct Exchange Lines, which directly connect a user with a BT or Cable and Wireless PSTN exchange, is straightforward, PSTN connection for most NHS users is through a switchboard or private branch exchange (PBX). These may have a mixture of lines linking them to the PSTN. Some may be direct, others through a Centrex service or Virtual Private Network. Some lines may be dedicated to incoming calls, others to outgoing, yet others to

“bothway” working, possibly for data or other applications. Determination of which lines to register under GTPS is thus likely to require local consultation with the network service provider. Similarly, since the PBX may require modification to limit access to GTPS registered lines to essential users, consultation with the PBX maintainer will also be necessary.

6. While GTPS registration of lines will involve no cost to the NHS, that is not the case for any reconfiguration or modification of PBX that might be required prior to registration. Provision of extra Direct Exchange Lines to serve essential users may well prove to be a cheaper, as well as simpler solution and should be considered.

#### Registration

7. Applications for registration of lines under GTPS may be made by all Health Boards, the Common Services Agency or NHS Trusts. Applications should include all lines on which the ability to make outgoing calls to the PSTN is judged essential to the operation of the organisation and its services. These may include:

- lines serving their own sites
- home lines of key response staff to whom para 3 applies
- lines of patients dependent on, eg. home dialysis
- lines serving manufacturers/suppliers of essential goods and services
- lines serving private hospitals etc.
- lines serving the Voluntary Aid Societies
- lines linked to fax machines, computers/networks via modem, alarms etc.

8. All applications for registration should be submitted to the relevant Area Health Board, determined by the address to which the application relates. To Area Health Boards is delegated authority by Scottish Executive Health Department to make GTPS nominations on its behalf to BT/Cable and Wireless. Annex B gives details of the addresses and contacts for the submission of nominations. Annex C provides a format.

9. GTPS nominations should be reviewed annually and updated lists sent to the network operator concerned, to a mutually agreed timetable.

#### Technical advice

10. Technical advice is available from:

Mr Jack McArdle  
Telecommunications Consultant  
Information Systems Support Group  
Common Services Agency  
Trinity Park House  
EDINBURGH  
EH5 3SQ

Telephone: (0131) 551 8369  
Fax: (0131) 551 8495

## **APPLYING FOR GTPS REGISTRATION**

Please use the format shown in Annex C, with additional pages as necessary.

### **BT**

Those Health Boards that already have arrangements in place with BT for providing and updating GTPS lines do not need to submit new nominations for already registered lines. Changes, and new nominations should be addressed to:

BT Emergency Planning Manager (Scotland)  
Room 122  
Capital MNSC  
357 Gorgie Road  
EDINBURGH  
EH11 2RP

Telephone enquiries: (0131) 345 4281

### **CABLE AND WIRELESS**

All applications for GTPS registration by Cable and Wireless Communications should be addressed to:

Emergency Planning Manager  
Cable and Wireless Communications  
Bedford House  
21a John Street  
LONDON  
WC1N 2BL

Telephone enquiries: (0171) 674 5451

**A separate application must be made for each operator.**

This sheet is number 1 of .....

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