

# News release

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## **Big Sam helps NHS Direct to move into the “premier league”**

Bolton Wanderers Manager Sam Allardyce is today joining NHS Direct staff at their new contact centre and North West regional headquarters – within kicking distance of the Reebok Stadium – to help them celebrate moving into purpose-built accommodation.

Since NHS Direct was formed in pilot sites in the late 1990s staff have been delivering a first class service while sometimes working in less-than-ideal premises including a cramped call centre in Bolton and leased space in Preston.

Now, after a £0.8m fit-out, the health advice and information teams from Bolton and Preston have come together at Sefton House, a new building at Middlebrook which provides a far superior working environment than in the past.

The new 10,000 square feet contact centre has been equipped with the latest telephony and information technology systems to help the team to deliver a faster and more efficient service for patients, as Sam Allardyce will be able to see for himself when he performs the official opening.

After unveiling a commemorative plaque Sam will meet some of the 250 staff who help to provide a 24/7 service every day of the year – and he is sure of a warm welcome as many of them are Wanderers fans.

Before performing the opening Sam commented: “I was really pleased to be asked to do this because the NHS means a great deal to me and my family. NHS Direct is an innovative service, which offers all round support to families across the North West when help is required, especially when services such as GPs’ surgeries are closed”.

Jill Stringer, NHS Direct’s Regional Director for the North West, said: “It’s great to have Sam along with us as he’s done great things with the Bolton team. We can see the Reebok Stadium from our new home and his visit is a real boost for our staff who do a terrific job, often under pressure at very busy times like weekends and Bank Holidays”.

Ends

**Operational notice: Sam Allardyce will be unveiling a plaque and meeting NHS Direct staff at 3pm on Friday 2 March. If you wish to send a reporter/ photographer or to arrange an advance interview with somebody from NHS Direct please contact Communications Manager David Wiggins at [David.Wiggins@nhsdirect.nhs.uk](mailto:David.Wiggins@nhsdirect.nhs.uk) or phone 07899 995918**

## Notes to Editors

### About NHS Direct:

The new contact centre at Middlebrook is NHS Direct's North West Region headquarters and is staffed by:

- 53 nurse advisers
- 139 health advisers
- 51 supervisory, support and regional management staff

NHS Direct North West also has contact centres at Carlisle, Kendal, Blackburn, St Helens, Liverpool and Nantwich.

NHS Direct provides health information and advice 24hours a day, 365 days a year and nationally

- NHS Direct handles around 6.5 million telephone calls a year on its 0845 46 47 number
- The NHS Direct website [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk) attracts more than 1.5 million visits each month
- NHS Direct Interactive is available on:
  - Freeview by going to channel 108
    - Freeview has 150 pages on
    - Answers to common health questions
    - Information about NHS services
    - Advice on looking after yourself such as eating well, exercising and giving up smoking
    - Features on long-term health conditions
    - News on current health issues
  - Sky Digital by pressing the interactive button on the remote control, scrolling down to the top of page two, choosing NHS Direct Interactive and pressing 'select'. The service provides 3000 pages on 500 health topics