



CASE STUDY: HOW CONSULTANT CONNECT SUPPORTED A WAST PARAMEDIC IN SAVING THE LIVES OF A MOTHER AND HER NEWBORN BABY

Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust (WAST) clinicians have had access to rapid Advice & Guidance via Consultant Connect since 2020, enabling them to quickly talk with specialists over the phone to discuss patient care.

We recently spoke with Chris Ferris, a retired clinical lead manager for 40 years with WAST, who has since returned part-time as a paramedic. Chris informed us that his access to Consultant Connect is what contributed to his decision to return to clinical work from retirement:

How has Consultant Connect supported you in the return to clinical practice?

'The greatest challenge clinicians within ambulance services face nowadays is the need to be a jack of all trades, and master them too. **The ambulance service has changed so dramatically over the last 10 years** that we need to be familiar with numerous specialties within medicine, all within one clinical role. There are new procedures, drugs, and responsibilities, and that can be especially difficult for newly-qualified paramedics straight out of university.

'Many paramedics struggle with finishing their studies, immediately commencing a high-pressure job like this, and committing to it for many years. As a manager, I noticed that sick levels were increasing, and we had to question how much it was due to stress. Were clinicians becoming worried and panicked because they couldn't cope with the last few jobs they had attended?'

Continued

‘These days, we find that junior clinicians are not happy to admit that they’re struggling in front of their peers. It can be embarrassing, and they might not be confident enough to ask for help. This is where Consultant Connect comes in. I used it on my last shift just a couple of days ago, and **to be able to press a button to receive immediate help from a number of specialists is fantastic.** Whether it’s a trauma specialist, midwife, or paediatrician, the service is amazing. **I definitely wouldn’t have returned to clinical work if WAST didn’t have access to it.**

‘I’ve had crews tell me of terrible scenes they’ve attended, and how they weren’t sure if it went well. **I always advise them to use Consultant Connect in those instances because it gives them the safety net of having access to experienced colleagues.** It’s joint decision-making that can be evidenced, and it means you leave jobs feeling much more relaxed. It’s brilliant, **I wish we had Consultant Connect 20 years ago.**’

Patient example: avoiding emergency ambulance conveyance to hospital and freeing up crew to attend patients

‘I used Consultant Connect on scene a few days ago after I attended to a mother and her seven-month-old child. The baby had been sitting in some shallow water, and the mother was doing something in the background in the same room. When she had turned back around, a bleach-soaked cloth had fallen into the water. The baby had touched the cloth, and the mother couldn’t rule out that the cloth hadn’t entered the child’s mouth. It most likely had not, and the baby was fine on presentation, but we had to ensure that we’d taken the appropriate precautions.

‘There’s an onus on the ambulance service to encourage patients to make their own way to hospital if the clinical presentation is not an emergency. This is to release ambulance clinicians to attend more urgent jobs, and this particular situation seemed the ideal opportunity for the mother to take her child to hospital herself.

‘The baby clearly didn’t require frontline emergency ambulance transportation, so **I used Consultant Connect to speak to the clinical desk to ensure it was the correct decision.** All I needed to know from a specialist was whether they were happy for the baby to travel to hospital with the mother, and free up an emergency ambulance for another patient. **The specialist had no concerns, and I felt reassured and comfortable moving on to the next job.**

Patient example: Continued

'If I hadn't been able to seek that affirmation, I'd have still decided to send the patient and her mother in, albeit independently, but I almost certainly would've called the family a couple of hours later to see if everything was okay. If I couldn't get hold of the family, I'd have been worrying about why they weren't answering, which would've played on my mind long after finishing my shift. **Having Consultant Connect available to share your problems with is unbelievable; it's kept me in the ambulance service.'**

Patient example: Accessing specialist support to aid the delivery of footling breech baby

'Approximately a year ago, when I was operating out of the rapid response vehicle, a colleague and I attended a patient's address at 3am after she phoned 999 in labour with her first child. Upon arrival on scene, the baby was footling breech, and guidelines state that with a footling presentation, the patient should be transferred to the nearest obstetrics department as quickly as possible. I was working solo out of a car, the patient lived in a rural location 40 minutes from the obstetrics department, it was the dead of night, and access and egress to the property were treacherous. We were considering what actions to take because this type of presentation is associated with complications during delivery due to the associated risks of navigating the birth canal.

'We decided that the safest thing to do for the mother and baby was to proceed with delivery. **I used the Consultant Connect App to speak with a midwife who talked us through the delivery.** When the baby was born, it was in cardiac arrest, but was fortunately resuscitated and conveyed to hospital in the ambulance that had arrived. We stayed with the mother until we could get a second ambulance to transport her to hospital.

'Not long after, I spoke with the consultant and learned that both the mother and baby had recovered well. **If I hadn't been able to contact the midwife for delivery support via Consultant Connect, we would've been looking at a very different outcome.** Ultimately, the scenario was extremely difficult and emotional, but we certainly saved two lives that day. **Without the midwife's assistance via Consultant Connect, it would've been a total disaster.'**



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