

Consultant Connect is a telemedicine provider transforming patient care in the NHS. Our services are used by over half the NHS in England, Scotland, and Wales, connecting clinicians with specialists for rapid Advice & Guidance (A&G). Consultant Connect's services are utilised by over 5,000 GP practices, 10,000 specialists, 42 ICB/Health Board areas, over 130 hospitals, and 7 ambulance services, covering 42 million patients. 80% of users would recommend Consultant Connect to a colleague.

Supported by the National Consultant Network (NCN), our Enhanced A&G service consists of Telephone A&G, Photo Messaging A&G, and Email A&G. All A&G activity is recorded for medico-legal purposes, including phone calls, messages, and photos.

### Providing A&G via Consultant Connect

#### 1. How does providing A&G work?

Consultant Connect routes Telephone A&G calls from clinicians to specialists through existing or new telephone numbers. Secondary Care specialty teams can set a 'rota' consisting of one or several telephone numbers, anonymised to clinicians seeking Telephone A&G.

If you are part of a specialty team responding to Messaging A&G requests, you will be alerted by in-app and email notifications when a new or follow-up message has been sent. How you are notified will depend on how you choose to access the service and your settings. You can review queries via either the Consultant Connect App or [in your browser](#). Once you have signed up with your NHS email address, you can use the same credentials across both platforms.

At the end of each call or after a message has been closed, the system will ask the clinician to leave an outcome, e.g., 'Referral avoided'. The advice seeker is always the first person to be asked to leave an outcome; however, if they do not do so, the responder is then prompted to provide an outcome. Leaving an outcome allows your commissioning organisation to monitor the effectiveness of the service. The information also supports the addition of new specialties to the service. After finishing a call within the app, a menu with outcome options will appear on the screen. Select an outcome from the menu by tapping it.

#### 2. Will my number be shared with clinicians, and how will I know a clinician is calling me?

Your number will not be shared with clinicians. The numbers are held securely within the Consultant Connect system. All calls made via Consultant Connect will always arrive from a single inbound number: **01865 922021**, meaning personal numbers are never disclosed to the caller. We recommend saving this number to your phone contacts as 'Consultant Connect clinician call'.



### 3. Do I have to take the calls?

In most cases, specialists will be taking calls during their normal work plan, and it is up to individual specialists as to whether they can answer a call. When answering a call via Consultant Connect, an automated message will prompt specialists to press or say '1' to speak to the clinician. If specialists are unavailable when a clinician calls, the system automatically connects to the next person on the rota rather than sending the caller to voicemail.

### 4. How many calls will I take?

Experience to date shows that clinicians continue to adhere to established local pathways and use this service wisely, being aware that they are contacting already busy teams. On average, nationally, specialists take around 2-3 calls per week, which average just under 4 minutes each in duration.

### 5. Can I access call recordings?

All calls made via the service are recorded for medico-legal reasons. Call recordings can be accessed via [Consultant Connect in your browser](#). You will need to register an account to listen to your call recordings (see question 1 in the next section). Once logged in, click 'Reports' and the sub-category 'Calls'. In the call report, you will see that for any calls you have answered, under the column 'Recording', there is a cloud icon. Clicking this icon will automatically start downloading an MP3 file of the call to your device.

There is no expiry date for call recordings, so you can go back and listen to previous A&G calls whenever necessary.

Please note that calls can only be downloaded in your browser and **not** via the Consultant Connect App.

### 6. Will I get called out of hours?

No. You will not get called outside the clinical hours your clinical lead/director set.

### 7. Will I have access to any patient records?

Not always. We ask clinicians to assume that you will not have access to any patient records and that advice should be based entirely on the information that is provided to you via telephone/photo/message.

### 8. Who is responsible for the patient whose care is being discussed?

The clinician seeking advice remains responsible for deciding what treatment is to be provided following the receipt of A&G. They decide whether a referral or admission is



appropriate for their patient or not. All calls are recorded for medico-legal purposes and can be accessed by you or your clinical lead as appropriate.

### 9. We have poor Wi-Fi and mobile signal at our organisation. How can we answer Telephone and/or Messaging A&G?

#### Telephone A&G:

If you have poor mobile phone signal and are unable to use Wi-Fi, you can set a landline or baton phone as the device to receive Telephone A&G calls.

#### Messaging A&G:

If you are unable to use Wi-Fi and your mobile signal is poor, you can use [Consultant Connect in your browser](#) to send or respond to messaging queries, including photos. Log in using the same credentials you use for the app and select 'Messages' from the main menu.

#### PhotoSAF:

You can still capture patient images via PhotoSAF without internet access, but you will not be able to cross-reference an NHS number with the patient's data. The system will still advise whether the NHS number input is valid. When using PhotoSAF offline, we recommend saving the NHS number in the notes section and retrospectively inputting it via <https://consultantconnect.org.uk/service/login> when you're back online.

If you have any questions, please email [hello@consultantconnect.org.uk](mailto:hello@consultantconnect.org.uk).

### 10. Is the service free?

The service is paid for by Welsh Government, meaning there is no cost to users other than the cost of a local call if you are seeking Telephone A&G. The Consultant Connect App can be downloaded for free from the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#).

### 11. Does this service replace other A&G routes?

No, this service aims to provide users with additional options for quicker and more efficient access to A&G. Pre-existing A&G routes will typically continue to be available.

### 12. Can existing trust/hospital helplines be included?

Yes, existing lines can simply be integrated into the system and positioned as the priority number on the call rota (there is no change for the teams who answer the helplines).



## Seeking A&G and other benefits to Secondary Care

### 1. How do I sign up?

If you are joining the Consultant Connect service to provide Telephone A&G, you don't need to sign up – it's as simple as answering a telephone call. Often, specialty managers will speak to your Account Manager at Consultant Connect and create a call-answering rota (see question 2 in the previous section).

The free Consultant Connect App is highly useful for Secondary Care clinicians. Your Consultant Connect Account Manager can set your access to enable you and your colleagues to make phone calls and send messages\*:

- Across your hospital/trust
- To other healthcare professionals
- Via GP practice Bypass Numbers\* to avoid switchboard queues

We can also set up hospital-specific solutions, such as Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs), Patient Initiated Follow-Up (PIFU), and more.

The app is like your pre-programmed phone directory, and all calls are recorded for medico-legal purposes. You'll also be able to take IG-secure and GDPR-compliant clinical photos via the app using the PhotoSAF feature. If enabled, you will be able to type messages to share alongside photos with specialty teams via the app.

You can download the free Consultant Connect App on the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#). Only devices running on an Apple operating system (iOS) of 15 and above or an Android operating system of 11 and above will support the Consultant Connect App. This is to comply with the latest data protection regulations. Follow the simple steps to sign up, and when asked for your organisation, please include the hospital/trust you are based at. **For locums or clinicians who work across multiple organisations, you can toggle between hospitals/trusts in participating NHS areas under 'Profile'.**

For those who prefer to use their desktop or cannot access the app, Telephone A&G calls can be made via [Consultant Connect in your browser](#). Simply log in using your credentials for the app or sign up with your NHS email address. Clinicians accessing Consultant Connect in their browser can also send messages for advice, attaching existing files/photos when necessary.

\* Features/specialties available will differ by NHS area.

### 2. Is the app safe for me to download on my personal phone?

Yes, in addition to Consultant Connect App activity being stored in an IG-secure cloud, two-factor authentication is required upon initial registration.



Use of the app is entirely voluntary; you can make calls and send messages by logging in to [Consultant Connect in your browser](#) using your credentials for the app. Please note that the IG-secure photography feature, PhotoSAF, can **only** be accessed via the app.

### 3. Will I pay any phone charges?

If using the app on your organisation's Wi-Fi, you will not be charged for making a call or sending a message. However, if using the app on 3G/4G/5G, this will come out of your data allowance. Mobile data will only be used if your phone isn't connected to Wi-Fi. Only a small amount of mobile data is used: 1GB allows you to make over 300 calls.

### 4. I have forgotten my password. What should I do?

You can [reset your password here](#).

### 5. I don't have photo or messaging options on the app – can you set this up?

Please email the team at [hello@consultantconnect.org.uk](mailto:hello@consultantconnect.org.uk) or give us a call on 01865 261467 so that we can make sure you have the right access.

### 6. Why do users need to input the NHS number?

The NHS number is attached to the medico-legal call recordings and photo/message PDFs to assist subsequent retrieval by relevant organisations should it be necessary as a patient identifier.

If no NHS number is input by the clinician, the recordings/PDFs can still be tracked by a date/time reference.

If you don't have access to the patient's NHS number, you can still initiate an advice query, and NHS numbers can be added retrospectively via [Consultant Connect in your browser](#). Simply log in using your credentials for the app, and in the main menu select 'Reports' and 'Calls' or 'Messages'. Identify the interaction to which you would like to add the NHS number, and under the 'Patient #' column, select 'Update'.

### 7. I forgot/didn't have time to leave an outcome after my call finished. What should I do?

Following a call, you can leave an outcome by logging in to [Consultant Connect in your browser](#), using your credentials for the app. The call history does not expire so you can update and add outcomes for calls at any time. Once logged in, click on the 'Calls' tab. Here you will see a complete list of calls you have placed. To leave an outcome, click 'Leave Outcome' underneath the 'Outcome' column.



### 8. My call wasn't answered. What should I do?

Whilst routing advice lines via Consultant Connect results in a higher connection rate (an average first-time connection rate of 80%) than traditional methods i.e., switchboard, we cannot guarantee that 100% of calls are answered the first time. Please be patient and wait a few minutes, as the specialist may be undertaking other clinical duties, and try again. However, if you find that calls to a specific line continuously go unanswered, please report this to your Account Manager so that we can investigate and improve the service. If you don't know who your Account Manager is, please contact a member of the team on [hello@consultantconnect.org.uk](mailto:hello@consultantconnect.org.uk).

### 9. Can I send messages for advice via the Consultant Connect App?

Yes, in areas where this feature has been enabled, clinicians can click on the 'Messages' button within the Consultant Connect App to compose and send messages to specialists.

### 10. Can I send a message for advice if I don't have a mobile phone?

Whilst the Consultant Connect App is a secure and reliable way to send messages and share patient photos, you can also send messages and share existing files from your computer. Once logged in to [Consultant Connect in your browser](#) using the same credentials you use to log into the app, you can upload existing images (e.g., for Teledermatology) or files (e.g., ECGs, echo reports, scans, or x-rays) for specialist advice.

### 11. My message for advice hasn't been answered. What should I do?

Most Messaging A&G lines have a response time of 1-2 working days, but we realise that some services may be busier, and therefore take longer. If you have not received a reply after three working days from when you sent your message, please contact your Account Manager so that we can investigate on your behalf. If you do not know who your Account Manager is, contact a member of the team on [hello@consultantconnect.org.uk](mailto:hello@consultantconnect.org.uk). Please do **not** include any PID when contacting us.

### 12. How do I transfer photos and messages from Consultant Connect to patient records?

Photos and messages are also sent to the clinician via email as a PDF summary and can be downloaded via [Consultant Connect in your browser](#) by admin staff.

### 13. My photos haven't been uploaded. What should I do?

After you take and save images using the PhotoSAF feature, they are automatically uploaded to [Consultant Connect in your browser](#) for easy access at any time. If your



photos don't appear in your account on your desktop, please contact your Account Manager, including the date and time (if known) the images were captured, for further assistance. If you don't know who your Account Manager is, please contact a member of the team on [hello@consultantconnect.org.uk](mailto:hello@consultantconnect.org.uk).

### **14. Is there a limit on the size of an image I can send for advice and guidance?**

Images up to 211MB can be uploaded without loss of resolution, and this compares to limits of 10MB or less on other systems, such as email. This means messaging can be used for large files such as dermatoscopic images and OCT scans.

### **15. Who should I call for help with the service?**

If you have any questions or would like further information, please get in touch with your Account Manager. If you don't know your Account Manager, please contact a member of the team on 01865 261467 or email us at [hello@consultantconnect.org.uk](mailto:hello@consultantconnect.org.uk).



## FAQs for Secondary Care



### Useful links for Secondary Care clinicians:

On the [Secondary Care webpage](#), you can find hints and tips for using the Consultant Connect service, including how-to guides, videos, and case studies from colleagues.

Make the most of your Consultant Connect service: [Secondary Care demonstration video](#).

[Consultant Connect Wales Secondary Care introduction one-pager](#).

### Download the free Consultant Connect App:

- On the [App Store](#).
- On [Google Play](#).

[Consultant Connect in your browser sign-in](#).

To [reset your Consultant Connect password](#).

[Consultant Connect user case studies](#).

