



CASE STUDY -

Real-time ENT advice supports urgent treatment for patient with neck swelling

We spoke to Debbie Brewer, Advanced Nurse Practitioner at Weymouth Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC), and Dr Moneeb Afiz, GP in Bolton and Bury, about how rapid access to specialist advice is **helping clinicians make confident decisions, reduce delays, and provide patients with the right care the first time.**

UK-wide stats*:

 **>66,000**
active users

 **>28,000**
calls made

 **22 seconds**
average answer time

In conversation with...



Debbie Brewer
Advanced Nurse
Practitioner

Enhanced Advice & Guidance (A&G) via **Consultant Connect** has **been available in Dorset since 2018**, rapidly connecting clinicians with specialists for Telephone A&G.

In Greater Manchester, **Enhanced A&G was rolled out across all 10 localities in October 2025**, providing NHS clinicians with access to specialists across a wide range of elective specialties via telephone and photo messaging.

Supporting timely decisions for patients

For Debbie, who works in a busy UTC where patients are allocated brief appointment slots, **being able to speak directly with a specialist can make a significant difference to how quickly a patient's care can progress.**

'By the time you've got a history, examined them, and done the tests, if you aren't 100% sure what's going on, **you don't have a lot of time to wait on hold to speak with the appropriate team.**'

Previously, contacting the hospital could mean lengthy waits and multiple calls before reaching the right clinician.

‘I would see the patient and advise them that I’m calling the hospital, but I could be gone for half an hour, waiting for an answer. **I would often need to keep trying because there was no one available to direct my call.**’

Consultant Connect gives Debbie a direct route to a specialist when she needs another clinical opinion, helping her make decisions without introducing unnecessary delays into the patient’s care.

‘**Now, I call via the Consultant Connect App, and I’m straight through**, which is so much better. It has a direct impact on the wait time for patients.’

Rapid ENT advice helps manage a patient with neck swelling

Debbie recently **used Consultant Connect when a walk-in patient presented with neck swelling that was compressing the airway**. The patient had undergone dental surgery two days earlier, but it was unclear whether the swelling was due to oedema, bleeding, or infection.

‘An ambulance was required to convey the patient to hospital, so **I used Consultant Connect to speak directly with an ENT specialist in real-time for support on managing the patient whilst we waited**. The patient was given oxygen and intravenous antibiotics and was cannulated. The consultant advised intravenous hydrocortisone and nebulised adrenaline, **supporting me to provide appropriate treatment whilst the patient awaited an ambulance** for direct admission.’

‘I used Consultant Connect to speak directly with an ENT specialist in real-time for support on managing the patient whilst we waited’

For Debbie, the direct conversation made a real difference at a time when the patient needed urgent care.

‘**It’s so much better than going through the bed bureau and waiting for them to answer**. That would often take upwards of 30 minutes, and you’d be hanging on waiting for them to get back to you.’

Debbie’s experience also highlights the wider impact of timely specialist advice in a busy UTC, where delays can quickly affect other patients.

‘**The more appointments we can keep on time, the more capacity we have and the more patients we can help**, so it’s in the best interests of the patient to utilise Consultant Connect.’

In conversation with...



Dr Moneeb Afiz
General Practitioner

For Dr Afiz, **the benefit of rapid specialist advice is the ability to have a two-way clinical conversation** when a patient's presentation is uncertain or complex.

'The advantage of Consultant Connect is that you pick up the phone and you're talking with someone within a few minutes.'

'Because calling local hospitals can take a long time, and then writing a letter for A&G can have a turnaround of up to a week, **the advantage of Consultant Connect is that you pick up the phone and you're talking with someone within a few minutes.'**

He finds being able to converse means **advice can be translated into a practical management plan, including treatment, monitoring, and what to do whilst the patient awaits an outpatient appointment:**

'It's always better to have a verbal conversation, because some cases can be so nuanced. **You can ask immediate follow-up questions,** such as how long the medication should be taken for, what needs to be monitored – **it's quick clarification.'**

This can result in **a more complete management plan that can begin while the patient awaits a specialist appointment.**

Rapid urology advice identifies post-vasectomy haematoma

Dr Afiz recently contacted urology through Consultant Connect about a patient who had developed an unusual presentation following a vasectomy. **The consultant identified the presentation as a likely haematoma and advised that the patient needed to attend A&E that day.** The consultant gave Dr Afiz the clarity he needed to act quickly and speak with the local urology team to organise the patient's care.

'That was really good advice, because I might have considered a watch-and-wait approach for the particular presentation. As soon as I knew what the complication was, I spoke to the local urology team, and **it meant that the patient got the care he needed quicker.'**

'It meant that the patient got the care he needed quicker.'

Specialist advice can also provide an opportunity to consider a patient's wider needs rather than simply addressing the immediate presentation.

Dr Afiz contacted rheumatology about a patient with recurrent gout, where he had concerns about the safety of allopurinol in relation to the patient's ancestry and potential risk of developing Stevens-Johnson syndrome. **The consultant discussed interim treatment options whilst genetic testing could be explored**, including febuxostat as an alternative.

Dr Afiz subsequently contacted the local genetics service, updated the patient, and agreed a treatment plan.

'Being able to discuss the case with a consultant meant the patient's treatment didn't have to wait for a written A&G reply or separate specialist appointment.'

'This was a good learning outcome. I updated the patient with the plan, and we started febuxostat, which would offer similar or the same treatment effects to allopurinol, but was much safer.

'Being able to discuss the case with a consultant meant the patient's treatment didn't have to wait for a written A&G reply or separate specialist appointment.'

For both Dr Afiz and Debbie, **rapid access to specialist advice is ultimately about improving what happens next for the patient** – whether that means providing treatment whilst they wait for an ambulance, identifying a complication sooner, starting treatment in primary care, or gaining reassurance before making a difficult decision.

'As soon as I've spoken with the specialist, I can advise the patient on the plan and how we move forward. It's done within a day, and the patients love it.'

- Dr Afiz

'Consultant Connect really speeds up the patient care process and keeps care moving in an environment where every delay can have an impact.'

- Debbie

*Data from August 2025 – August 2026

