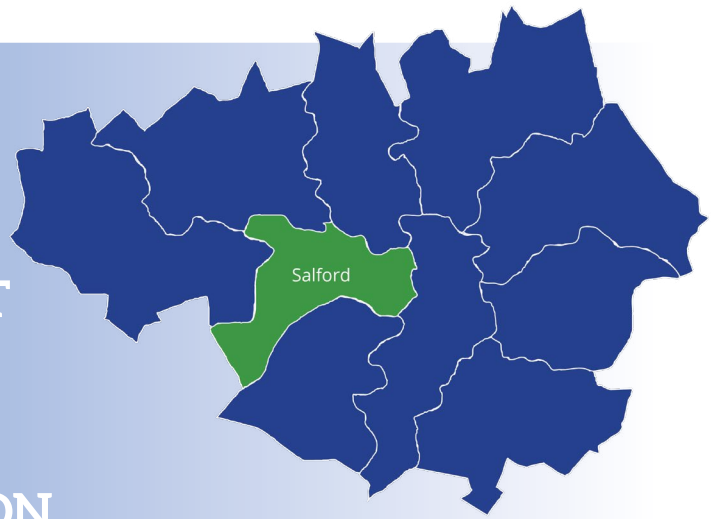


CASE STUDY: HOW CONSULTANT CONNECT IS OPERATING IN SALFORD CARE ORGANISATION



In November 2020, Salford Care Organisation needed a way of providing same-day urgent advice to clinicians in Primary Care whilst reducing unnecessary hospital admissions and referrals. As a result, Enhanced Telephone Advice & Guidance (A&G) provided by Consultant Connect was implemented to provide an IG-secure single point of access that quickly connects healthcare professionals with local specialists across multiple specialties.

‘One of the things we like about Consultant Connect is that it is very flexible in how it’s configured. We have a mixture of consultants and registrars taking phone calls, depending on the specialty. Call handling and outcome data have been huge benefits of having Consultant Connect; we simply didn’t have any visibility of this before. We don’t see Consultant Connect just in isolation – it’s providing a system-wide benefit to both primary and secondary care.’

**Ben Colman, Senior Project Manager, Integrated Care Division,
Salford Care Organisation, Northern Care Alliance (NCA).**

‘The ease of having access to Consultant Connect is like having specialist advice at your fingertips. It’s a really effective way of preventing patients from being sent to wait in A&E or referring a patient unnecessarily or to the incorrect specialty. The patients are grateful for this and the fact that communication between Primary and Secondary Care is positive and cohesive. Conversations conducted in this way are good examples of working together to ensure the smoothest journey for patients.’

Dr Suzannah Carrier, GP in Salford.

Two years later, in April 2022, the rheumatology department at Salford Royal, part of the NCA, moved their bleep system to Consultant Connect, adding it to the service as a new Telephone A&G line, allowing data to be captured and incorporated into daily job plans. The service automatically and securely records call statistics in real time so that data can be pulled to pinpoint problems and patterns to identify where they come from. In the last year, **more than 1,000 calls to rheumatology have been made by Secondary Care clinicians**, ensuring patients are cared for by the most appropriate specialty team.

Additionally, the rheumatology department set up a Patient-Initiated Follow-Up (PIFU) line via Consultant Connect, allowing patients to start virtual consultations with a specialist clinician. For patients, **this reduces unnecessary hospital visits and waiting times**, and releases specialists to see the patients they need to see in a more timely manner.

'Telephone A&G via Consultant Connect has been well-received, with positive feedback from clinicians. There are long wait times for an initial appointment in rheumatology, so providing advice in this way is freeing up appointment slots for those who really need them, as well as easing appointment pressures in the long term.'

Tania Woolley, Senior Manager for Tertiary Medicine at NCA.

More recently, in December 2023, the Home First team became available locally via Consultant Connect, providing the short-term care and support needed for patients to recover in the comfort of their secure and familiar surroundings. Since then, more than 2,500 calls have been received via the service, with **queries answered within 25 seconds** on average.

'It's great to work on a project that is so exciting and innovative, and with people who embrace Consultant Connect to look for further ways it can create additional value. Whether it's the implementation of pan-NCA services, the utilisation of A&G to support virtual wards, or using our IG-secure clinical photography feature, PhotoSAF, to take images to attach to 2WW dermatology referrals, the team are always enthusiastic and willing to enhance their ways of working.'

Patrick Keys, Account Manager at Consultant Connect.

To date, across Salford, **47% of calls to urgent care services have resulted in patients avoiding unnecessary hospital visits**, ensuring they receive the right care in the right place, the first time, whilst reducing avoidable pressures on secondary care services.

If you would like to discuss setting up an Advice & Guidance line, please email hello@consultantconnect.org.uk or call us on 01865 261467.

*Data correct as of March 2024.

For more information:

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