

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 5,600 GP practices and 11,000 specialists, 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.

### 1. How can the service be accessed?

The quickest way to access the service is via the free Consultant Connect App (download on the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#)). Only devices running on an Apple operating system (iOS) of 18 and above or an Android operating system of 13 and above will support the Consultant Connect App. This is to comply with the latest data protection regulations. Within the app, clinicians can make calls, send messages, and take photos at the touch of a button\*. **For locums or clinicians who work across multiple organisations, you can toggle between practices in participating NHS areas under 'Profile'.**

The Consultant Connect App is a cloud-based service; therefore, no patient information is stored on the device or within the app. This includes the safe clinical photography feature – PhotoSAF. Photos taken via the app are stored in an IG-secure and GDPR-compliant cloud, not on the device, meaning photos won't appear on your camera roll or in the recently deleted folder. The photos are automatically sent to your NHS email address. They can also be accessed via [Consultant Connect in your browser](#) from any device by logging in using your credentials for the app. In areas where sharing is enabled, photos and messages can also be sent directly to specialist teams for A&G within the app.

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.

Additionally, Telephone A&G can be accessed by calling your surgery's unique Dial-In Number from any phone. Your Dial-In Number, the specialties you have access to, and their operating hours can be found in your Service Directory. If you do not have your Dial-In Number or Service Directory link, please contact a member of the Consultant Connect Team at [hello@consultantconnect.org.uk](mailto:hello@consultantconnect.org.uk).

The time it takes a clinician to connect to a specialist for Telephone A&G is just 25 seconds (Wales average).



If you are a locum clinician, work within multiple organisations, or have recently changed practice, please email [hello@consultantconnect.org.uk](mailto:hello@consultantconnect.org.uk) for us to provide you with the correct access.

\* Features/specialties available will differ by Health Board 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 access Telephone A&G via your practice's unique Dial-In Number, and 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. 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 on the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#).

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

If using the app on your practice'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.

### 5. Can I still use the service if I have no phone signal or access to Wi-Fi?

#### Telephone A&G:

If you have poor mobile phone signal and cannot use Wi-Fi, you can access Telephone A&G via [Consultant Connect in your browser](#). Once you have logged in using the same credentials you use for the app, select 'Calls' from the main menu and click 'New Call'.

Alternatively, you can use your surgery's unique Dial-In Number from any phone. If you do not know your Dial-In Number, please email [hello@consultantconnect.org.uk](mailto:hello@consultantconnect.org.uk).

#### Messaging A&G:

If you are unable to use Wi-Fi and your mobile signal is poor, you can send messaging queries, including photos, to specialists by logging in to [Consultant Connect in your browser](#). Once you have logged in using the same credentials you



use for the app, select 'Messages' from the main menu. If you have any questions, please email [hello@consultantconnect.org.uk](mailto:hello@consultantconnect.org.uk).

### **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 [Consultant Connect in your browser](#) when you're back online.

### **6. I have forgotten my password; what should I do?**

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

### **7. 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 advice and guidance. Pre-existing routes, such as email and local referral systems, will continue to be available.

### **8. Which specialties can be accessed, and during what hours of the day?**

The specialties available and the hours of operation are agreed upon by the specialty manager, their teams, and the local Health Board. Calls will only be routed to specialists during the agreed hours of operation. Calls will not be routed to specialists outside these agreed hours, and specialists are automatically excluded from rotas during any notified holiday periods. Mobile numbers of those seeking and providing advice and guidance are never shared with users.

As well as the Consultant Connect App showing a complete list of the available specialties and their operating hours, each GP practice has a Service Directory listing this information. The Consultant Connect App and Service Directory are automatically updated whenever changes are made to the service, such as new specialties being added.

### **9. Out-of-area NHS consultants on the National Consultant Network answer calls from my area; how can they provide advice when they don't know our local pathways?**

Whilst out-of-area NHS consultants may not have knowledge of local pathways, they will be able to provide you with advice and guidance relating to your patients. In many instances, local or out-of-area specialist advice is invaluable and can help improve the care of your patients.



Please note that the NCN may not be available in all Health Boards.

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

The clinician seeking the advice remains responsible for deciding what treatment is to be provided following receipt of the guidance and whether a referral or admission is appropriate for the patient.

### 11. 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 GP practices and/or hospital teams should it be necessary as a patient identifier.

If no NHS number is input by the primary care 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 will still be able to 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'.

### 12. Why is providing the outcome important?

Leaving an outcome allows the Welsh Government 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.

### 13. 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.

### 14. Will specialists have access to any patient records?

Specialists are often away from their desks when they take a call, and you should assume they will not have access to patient records. Any advice given will be based entirely on the information you provide to the specialists via telephone/photo/message.



### 15. 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](#) by logging in with your credentials for the app.

Once logged in, click 'Reports' and the sub-category 'Calls'. In the call report, you will see that for any calls you have made, 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 within your browser and **not** via the app.

### 16. 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).

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

Yes, for specialties 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.

### 18. 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.

\* Please see this [step-by-step guide on Patient Initiated Teledermatology](#) or watch this [40-second video](#) for more detail.



### 19. 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.

### 20. 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).

### 21. 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.

### 22. 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 via email at [hello@consultantconnect.org.uk](mailto:hello@consultantconnect.org.uk) or call us on 01865 261467.



## FAQs for primary care



### Useful links for primary care clinicians:

On the [primary 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: [primary care demonstration videos](#).

[Consultant Connect Wales primary 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](#).

