

Consultant Connect replaces bleep system for rheumatology at Salford Royal Hospital

In April 2022, the rheumatology department at Salford Royal Hospital, part of the Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust, implemented Consultant Connect Telephone Advice & Guidance (A&G) as a replacement service for their bleep system. Five months on, we caught up with **Tania Woolley, Senior Manager for Tertiary Medicine**, to find out how Consultant Connect has affected clinicians' ways of working.

How did implementing Telephone A&G as a replacement for the bleep system come about?

The issues with the bleep system centre around the fact that this data cannot be captured and incorporated into day-to-day job plans. We've wanted to be able to quantify the data that comes from the bleep system for years, but this hasn't been something we've been able to deliver until now.

Initially, we undertook a 4-week audit to understand the types of queries coming through the bleep system and whether it would be suitable to move onto the Consultant Connect service.

The audit was successful, and following this, Patrick Keys, our Account Manager at Consultant Connect, organised some training sessions with the wider team and me to understand how the new process would work. **It was straightforward** and has been **extremely successful for all in the department**.

How does Telephone A&G compare with the previous bleep system?

Telephone A&G automatically records statistics from all calls in real time and in a secure way. **It's extremely useful** in that if we need to, we can pull the data to pinpoint problems and patterns and see where they have come from.

Whereas with the bleep system, there was no data or statistics. If we needed to carry out an audit, for example, on the number of calls to the bleep system, it would have had to be done manually. Clinicians would have to remember to record their calls in between seeing patients in the clinic.

What feedback have you received from the clinicians regarding the new system?

Telephone A&G has been well-received, with **positive feedback from the clinicians**. Currently, the average wait time for an initial appointment in rheumatology is 42 weeks. **37% of all Telephone A&G calls via Consultant Connect result in a referral avoided**, so this is **freeing up appointment slots for those who really need them**, as well as **easing appointment pressures in the long term**.

What advice would you give to colleagues who are thinking of using Telephone A&G but are unsure?

The activity is already being delivered, just not captured, so there's no additional resource required. Telephone A&G also **helps towards recovery** because you can count it in your activity plans. After the successful uptake in rheumatology, we're rolling out Telephone A&G in haematology, as **the clinicians are very keen after the previous success**.



If you have any questions about this service, please get in touch at hello@consultantconnect.org.uk or on 01865 261467.