

5 minutes with... a Paramedic in Wales

Marcus Viggers has worked as a Paramedic for the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust (WAST) for nearly 20 years. He primarily works in Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) but at times crosses borders, into Cardiff UHB and Swansea UHB.

Since May 2020, Ambulance staff across WAST have had access to rapid advice, from specialist clinical teams across NHS Wales, via Consultant Connect.

We asked Marcus to tell us about his experience of the service, including benefits for WAST staff and patients.

1 How did you access different specialty/pre alert etc. phone numbers before having Consultant Connect?

'Prior to Consultant Connect, we would either call phone numbers given to us by the locality managers, or we would need to call switchboard and ask to speak to the relevant team. For example, I'd call switchboard, ask to speak to the on-call paediatrician and then they would put us through to the bleep, which could take some time.'

2 How has having access to Consultant Connect improved your access to clinical advice and referral pathways?

'The app is really easy to use, and it's great because all the numbers are in one place. It's safe from an IG aspect as well as it is encrypted, calls are recorded, and they can be accessed easily should there be a need.'

If the patient is seriously ill, then it's the pre alert lines that I would call, and it's just a quick couple of taps on the app to be put through to the receiver ED, who know straight away what to expect when the patient arrives.'

3 Does having access to GP practice bypass numbers benefit you and your patients?

'The bypass numbers, when available, allow us to contact a GP surgery directly and bypass their reception. They are on the app and are of immense use as they are reducing time spent on scene waiting for GP call backs. This means we have time to see more patients, reducing patients' ambulance wait times.'

4 Can you give an example of when using Consultant Connect has helped improve the care of a patient?

'I often use Consultant Connect and I have a lot of examples where using the service has expedited my patients' care.'

One involved an elderly patient with complex needs, she had multiple comorbidities, and her daughter was essentially looking after her, there was no real care package in place. I used the app to speak initially with her GP, then again to speak with one of the consultants in the local hospital.

These conversations enabled us to decide that, given the patient's history, it was best that she remained at home and was looked after from there. Being able to access multiple points of care, ensured a safe referral. We were able to improve care provision within the patient's home and avoided an unnecessary admission. An admission would have been a disruptive and distressing for both the patient's daughter and the patient.'



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