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Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Bae Abertawe
Swansea Bay University
Health Board



Meeting Date	24 November 2020	Agenda Item	3.6
Report Title	Consultant Connect		
Report Author	Sharon Penhale, Appraisal and Revalidation Manager Consultant Connect Project Lead		
Report Sponsor	Alastair Rieves, Interim Deputy Medical Director		
Presented by	Richard Evans, Executive Medical Director		
Freedom of Information	Open		
Purpose of the Report	This report is to inform the Quality and Safety Committee of the progress of implementation of <i>Consultant Connect</i> Project		
Key Issues	<p>Welsh Government require assurance that necessary measures to support medical professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic to access professional to professional advice is made available.</p> <p>Promote engagement of Consultant Connect project and collaborative working.</p>		
Specific Action Required <i>(please choose one only)</i>	Information	Discussion	Assurance
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Recommendations	Members are asked to note the contents of the report		

CONSULTANT CONNECT

1. INTRODUCTION

In response to COVID-19 in April 2020 *Consultant Connect* was offered to all health boards (including WAST) within Wales as part of the response to manage COVID-19 pandemic. This has been resourced by Welsh Government but procured by NWSSP for 12 months (costs absorbed by Welsh Government)

The implementation of *Consultant Connect* across Wales was to:

- Support primary care providers with immediate concerns and condition management by providing access to clinically appropriate advice and guidance from their colleagues across healthcare organisations
- Facilitate timely communications between primary, secondary and mental health providers in management of elective referrals
- Reduce the number of referrals to secondary care for patients who can be appropriately managed through primary care.
- Support community teams to provide shared-care to patients who would previously have been managed by secondary care clinicians.
- Prevent unnecessary conveyances to hospitals, reducing the risk of COVID-19 spread.
- Facilitate timely communications between primary, secondary and mental health providers in management of COVID-19 and emergency care.

2. BACKGROUND

SBUHB was the first Welsh health board to launch on 10 April 2020, in just 72 hours which was a UK national record time for *Consultant Connect* (normally 6 weeks) implementation – see Appendix 1 for further information including a ‘good news’ story following its usage.

Working through an app for mobile phones, *Consultant Connect* provides a phone line for professional to professional advice in real time. As well as telephone advice, the Consultant Connect system is able to support photo-messaging for advice on areas such as dermatology, cardiac ECG / Echo reports, and diabetic podiatry.

Consultant Connect has been rolled out in SBUHB within the following areas where the advice lines are in use:

- Acute Medicine (AGPU) – admissions and advice
- COVID-19 Hospital Helpline
- Emergency Medicine
- Community Services Single Point of Access
- Diabetes – Consultant Advice
- Endocrinology
- ENT
- Gastroenterology
- Geriatric Medicine
- Haematology

- Mental Health Single Point of Access
- Palliative Care
- Renal Medicine
- Intensive Care Unit (on-call) – secondary care only

Demonstrations (Webinars) of *Consultant Connect* have been given to several specialties and continue to promote this as meetings such as Clinical Cabinet, Consultant and departmental meetings, and the GP Cluster Lead meetings. There have also been webinars for the GPs and secondary care.

Initially the drive for Consultant Connect was for primary care to gain quick access to secondary care advice. Since the launch and COVID-19 situation continuing the Welsh Government are encouraging health boards to consider how this resource can be utilised within both acute and planned care and as part of the winter/unscheduled care planning framework. There are also opportunities to offer the resources to link services within secondary care and support junior doctors and other health care professionals. Some SBUHB regional services (e.g. Renal) have already adopted the Consultant Connect to offer advice regionally to colleagues from other health boards.

SBUHB also pioneered the use of *Consultant Connect* for WAST paramedics, and again SBUHB was the first health board to grant paramedics access to a selected range of on-call specialists via *Consultant Connect* 24 hours a day.

A work stream has recently been established for Consultant Connect with the support of the Transformation Team to ensure continued engagement and collaborative working. Monthly reports (**Appendix 1**) providing the data captured are shared with various groups within primary and secondary care.

There are various specialties and areas we are continuing to engage with and the work stream will help to understand where Consultant Connect will be able to support key priorities and pressures.

Specialties which will be added to Consultant Connect shortly are:

- Urology
- NPT Learning Disabilities
- Medicines Information
- Cardiology (secondary to tertiary care)

Currently in discussion with:

- Ophthalmology
- Orthopaedics
- Microbiology
- Neurology
- Burns & Plastics
- Mental Health Sub-Specialities
- Obstetrics and Gynaecology

- Paediatrics
- Radiology
- Rheumatology

3. GOVERNANCE AND RISK ISSUES

The benefits of Consultant Connect is that it gives governance, assurance and data for all calls made through the service. Allowing GPs instant advice to help prevent unnecessary hospital admissions, unnecessary referrals and effective patient care.

All calls are recorded without data being left on the phone, and recordings are accessible to the clinician who initiates the call should there ever be an incident relating to the call. Furthermore each clinician is prompted to record the outcome of the call so the effectiveness of the advice line can be determined. Metrics for each call are automatically recorded and available to the health board and any clinical managers who request it to monitor their service provision (see appendix 11).

The SBUHB Information Governance team have accepted *Consultant Connect* for use in the area under The Health Service (Control of Patient Information) Regulations 2002 during the pandemic.

Initially there have been challenges with engagement of the project with some secondary care clinicians fearing increased workloads and distraction. As shown in the dashboard in Appendix 1, these concerns have not been borne out. Indeed most clinicians have absorbed the calls into their existing work patterns without any amendment to job plans or rotas.

There are some issues identified with WiFi drop out within hospitals but this has been reported are currently looking at a resolution.

All Wales level meetings (Appendix 2) are held to provide updates to Welsh Government and monitor progress within health boards and WAST, as this has now been fully rolled out. In order for continuity the contract is currently being review for 2021 and would be procured at an All Wales levels for the cost to then be absorbed by the relevant health board.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Consultant Connect Project is currently funded by Welsh Government for 12 months. There is minimal financial implications currently but these are supported by the outpatient transformation funding.

5. RECOMMENDATION

That the Quality and Safety Committee are asked to note good progress and development of the *Consultant Connect* project since launch.

Governance and Assurance		
Link to Enabling Objectives <i>(please choose)</i>	Supporting better health and wellbeing by actively promoting and empowering people to live well in resilient communities	
	Partnerships for Improving Health and Wellbeing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Co-Production and Health Literacy	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Digitally Enabled Health and Wellbeing	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Deliver better care through excellent health and care services achieving the outcomes that matter most to people	
	Best Value Outcomes and High Quality Care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Partnerships for Care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Excellent Staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Digitally Enabled Care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Outstanding Research, Innovation, Education and Learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Health and Care Standards		
<i>(please choose)</i>	Staying Healthy	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Safe Care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Effective Care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Dignified Care	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Timely Care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Individual Care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Staff and Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Quality, Safety and Patient Experience		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in the Specialist Advice and Guidance All Wales Implementation Group to share practice and review effectiveness of national implementation. • Reporting progress to Outpatient Clinical Redesign and Recovery Group. • Assurance that effective patient care is provided and available to access quick professional advice preventing inappropriate admissions, referrals, etc. • Data collection provides information of demand and outputs. 		
Financial Implications		
Currently funded by Welsh Government. Financial implications for set up of some advice lines will be supported by the Outpatient Transformation budget.		
Legal Implications (including equality and diversity assessment)		
The SBUHB Information Governance team have accepted <i>Consultant Connect</i> for use in the area under The Health Service (Control of Patient Information) Regulations 2002 during the pandemic.		
Staffing Implications		
There are no staffing implications		
Long Term Implications (including the impact of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015)		
This intervention demonstrates prudent health care by providing a simple and sustainable intervention to reduce preventable and avoidable admissions, supporting primary care to care for patients without resort to admissions and reducing barriers to collaboration between different sectors of the health service.		

Report History	N/A
Appendices	Appendix 1: Consultant Connect – October 2020 Report Appendix 2 Terms of Reference for Specialist Advice & Guidance – All Wales Implementation Group