

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board

Connecting Wales flattens peak for emergency units.

As the coronavirus pandemic reached its peak in Wales, an urgent primary care service was required which encouraged patients to access the right service at the right time. Using the existing Cardiff and Vale University Health Board's out-of-hours service as a template, a 365 day per year remote clinical assessment service – CAV 24/7 – was introduced which helps patients choose the right service for their needs, including managed time slots in the Emergency Unit for patients requiring urgent care. This telephony service sits on the Connecting Wales platform.



Ease Pressures
On A&E Units



Safe, Socially
Distanced
Treatment



New Service
Easily Established



Hosted
Managed Service



High Level
Functionality



Secure, Resilient
System



Call
Recording



Free Of
Charge Upgrades

Background

Initially, when COVID-19 struck, a drop in emergency unit attendances were seen. A telephone triage, front-ended by a call-handling service, was considered for Cardiff and Vale University Health Board to ensure patients were still receiving advice about their conditions and signposted to the right service for their need. This led to discussions with A&E staff, who were concerned that workloads and peaks and troughs in non-emergency attendances be managed. The result was CAV 24/7 - the first service of its kind in Wales - providing a 365 day per year call-handling service.



Solutions

Initial call routing is handled by Connecting Wales through FourNet's telephony solution, with non-clinical agents taking patient details and, working through a clinical template. These staff are able to rule out any patient emergencies. The call is then passed into a queue for call-back by a clinician, thus ensuring workloads are manageable. The Connecting Wales service is shortly to be extended to also include telephony call-backs from clinicians within Cardiff Royal Infirmary, which is currently conducted through health board telephony services.

Because an out-of-hours service for Cardiff and Vale Health Board was already in existence and on the Connecting Wales platform, it was simple to scale-up a highly resilient and secure CAV 24/7 service on the existing telephony platform. Recruitment of staff was an initial challenge.

Costs are based on the Connecting Wales framework agreement, which ensures easy and affordable procurement for public sector bodies. Thanks to the framework agreement, the solution required no additional call charges for outbound call-backs from clinicians.

Due to the nature of the cloud-based platform, call handlers and clinicians can potentially work from home in the future. It's a triage-system being considered by other health boards and is likely to be a feature of healthcare even after the pandemic ends to better manage workloads.

