



NHS patients come first with Ascom and ISDN

Ascom and ISDN improve communications, resulting in reduced overheads and improved patient care within NHS.

Prior to the recent NHS structural changes in Berkshire, The West Berkshire Priority Care Service NHS Trust was responsible for the majority of West Berkshire's NHS clinics, hospitals and administration centres. Across their region a number of diverse communications systems were installed which proved inefficient, difficult to manage and support. Several sites were not able to cope efficiently with the demand and volume of calls. When some clinics were relocated, the NHS opened a competitive tender to find a cost effective, reliable and efficient telephone systems provider to supply appropriate solutions throughout eleven key sites in the region.



Dellwood Hospital, Reading

Ascom Communication Systems Division (CSD) won the contract on its ability to meet the diverse set of telecommunication requirements across the region. Its ability to provide centralised and local system management, thereby reducing the ongoing operational costs, and optimise line usage via ISDN was imperative.

Looking carefully at the NHS Trust's current and ongoing requirements, Ascom proposed the Ascotel range of ISDN systems that offered the various NHS Trust departments the ability to develop and expand the system to suit their immediate and ongoing needs. New telephone systems have been installed throughout the various clinics within the County to benefit patient care and to improve overall internal and external communications.

DECT Cordless comfort – patient care

At Dellwood Hospital in Reading, patients are provided with bedside DECT cordless phones for the duration of their stay. Helping them feel more comfortable in their surroundings, patients have the ability to make and receive calls anytime, anywhere and stay in touch with relatives and friends with ease. These digital cordless handsets offer greater freedom and

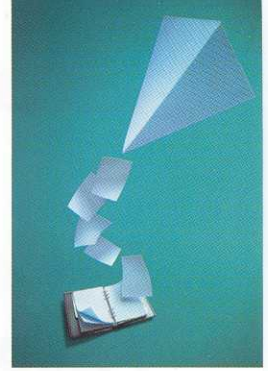
flexibility for both staff and patients and do not interfere with hospital equipment nor do they need awkward wiring changes each time a person wishes to use the phone.

Direct access to key staff and departments with DDI

DDI (Direct Dialling In) has improved communication significantly. Departments and individuals can be reached directly; either from externally, without having to be switched through an operator or internally from desk to desk. This has also reduced the number of callbacks and messages that were left therefore improving efficiency, productivity and customer service. By incorporating Ascotel Office keyphones in various departments, multiple calls can be handled, held and transferred quickly and very easily to the appropriate members of staff.

Integrated call management software within each Ascotel telephone system also provides greater cost control for each unit. The software enables the NHS Trust to keep track of costs and to attribute expenditure to the appropriate cost centres.





Voice processing improves Patient Services

Voicemail was a necessity at most of the units. Ascom was required to provide a solution to the problems associated with the large numbers of answering machines that provided variable quality recording and continual problems with reliability. The Ascotel system offers each department total flexibility, providing a range of appropriate outgoing messages and important information for certain departments, such as the IT Help Desk centre in Reading. Each voicemail system provides useful departmental patient information and message facility, which can be set by time of day and number called and provides key staff with their own personal mailbox to receive messages. These messages can be picked up on site or remotely 24 hours a day.

Complete System Management

"One major concern to the Trust was the difficulty it had in maintaining and administering their existing systems with regular name and extension number changes," said Steve Buxton, head of IT for Berkshire Shared Services. "Previously, administrators at Dellwood Hospital and three other clinics found it impossible to make extension changes."

"Ascom CSD ensured that each administrator was thoroughly trained to be able to carry out day-to-day changes with ease using the AIMS software package (Ascotel Information System Management)," said Mike Ballantine, business development manager, Ascom CSD. "More complex changes such as user groups can now be handled quickly and remotely very easily via ISDN."

Reducing costs with ISDN

"With the installation of the Ascotel systems throughout the Trust in the West Berkshire region, significant costs savings have been made as ISDN has replaced the large number of individual and separate analogue lines," adds Ballantine. "These lines were originally used for voice, fax and modem links. ISDN now optimises their overall line usage and reduces the high line rental charges."



All the various Ascotel systems have been set up with the ability to add 'Premicell' type devices, so calls between each NHS centre and staff mobile phones can be made at mobile-to-mobile call rates therefore reducing overall call costs.

Future proofing with VoIP. A flexible solution

Looking to the future the NHS was keen to take advantage of voice and data over its own network. Voice over IP was a key option that can be implemented as and when spare capacity allows which will also reduce internal call charges within the NHS.

Steve Buxton said, "I am highly delighted with the flexibility the Ascotel system provides. I welcome the ability to programme the system to meet the specific requirements of each individual operating unit whilst retaining a common system interface at all locations. This improves overall management, all of which can be done remotely by Ascom. It is also very important for us to take full advantage of the built in technology options available to us such as Voice over IP and DECT cordless."

"Ever mindful of helping organisations to cut ongoing costs, whilst increasing productivity, Ascom CSD have provided a system that will serve the NHS units in West Berkshire now and well into the future," said Ballantine. "Flexibility within the Ascotel system allows room for new technologies to be embraced easily without any disruption to current services."

A summary of the benefits

- DECT cordless handsets provide patient comfort and mobility
- Voice processing provides important patient information
- DDI enables patients and staff to contact individuals and departments directly
- Improved patient service and more efficient internal communications
- Significantly reduced line rental with ISDN
- Ascotel system offers future proofing with VoIP

