



Llansamlet Surgery

using Engage Consult to ease
the pressure on GPs

CASE STUDY | DEC 2021



During the Covid-19 outbreak, Swansea-based practice, **Llansamlet Surgery** reviewed the way it works to protect patients and ease pressure on GPs. To become better connected and engaged with patients during the pandemic, it implemented sophisticated online consultation platform, **Engage Consult**, managing increased patient demand more effectively.

background

Llansamlet Surgery in Swansea looks after **11,000 patients, with a predominately younger demographic**. There are currently five GP partners who work together with other doctors, nurse practitioners, registrars, a physiotherapist, and other staff.

The Surgery belongs to the Cwmtawe Cluster – a group of practices that work together to share services and improve care in the wider community including Cwmtawe Medical Group and Strawberry Place Surgery; together **the cluster provides care for around 44,000 people** in the Clydach, Morriston and Llansamlet areas of Swansea.



challenges

Llansamlet Surgery had been using **telephone triage for many years**, and in response to the push for online services, initially chose to use a competitor online consultation platform as Dr Chris Jones explains, “At the time we selected a free solution, but the reality was it only took 30 minutes for us to recognise that **it was completely wrong for our surgery**, largely because it didn’t allow enough control. We like to run a tight ship as we have a rather large demand, and the limitation of the competitor’s system did not help us meet the needs of our patients.”

The surgery also faced challenges in terms of **managing capacity efficiently** and the knock-on issues this led to such as increased waiting times and **escalating workload for clinicians**. Patients continued to spend needless amounts of time on the phone booking appointments, and made unnecessary journeys to the surgery to submit routine requests, creating workforce inefficiencies and causing inconvenience to patients.

As well as accentuating existing issues, **Covid-19 brought additional pressures** for patients and staff, resulting in soaring demand and the immediate need for remote consultations.

Eager to overcome these issues and reduce the workload for GPs so that they can support everyone who needed help, Llansamlet Surgery sought a **simple, effective, and flexible digital approach** to manage patient workflow.

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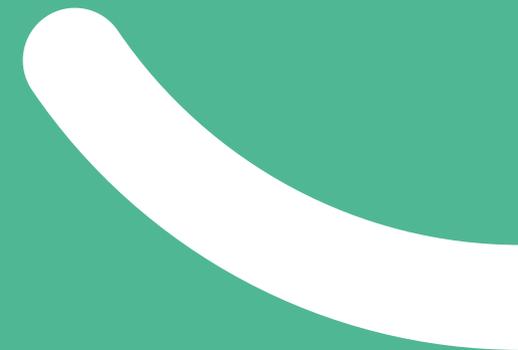
solution

Llansamlet Surgery implemented **innovative patient engagement solution, Engage Consult**, for its outstanding features over and above other options on the market. As a user-friendly solution, Engage Consult makes patients and clinicians lives easier, safely and securely as Dr Jones explains, **“Engage Consult provides control**, it integrates well with our clinical system, and is slicker than other options; I tried other solutions, and nothing came close to the functionality of Engage Consult.”

Prior to the implementation of Engage Consult **patients telephoned a request** and a member of staff had to locate relevant information, sometimes putting the patient on hold or arranging a call back. By enabling patients to access Engage Consult directly from the practice website, **it eliminates this issue in several ways**. It allows patients to contact the surgery at a convenient time, rather than being limited to the time restrictions of a telephone service. Furthermore, by enabling the sharing of images, documents, and test results at anytime during the patient journey, **clinicians have the data needed for efficient decision-making**.

Implementation has been a smooth, and ongoing process. **“The manner in which Engage Consult has been utilised has been fluid,”** enthuses Dr Jones. Despite the need to limit the use of Engage Consult due to reduced clinician numbers in light of Covid, sickness, annual leave and reduced GP numbers, the Surgery is now emerging from this reduction and continues to expand the use of the solution, which **provides total triage with online and video consultation**.

“I tried other solutions, and **nothing came close to the functionality of Engage Consult.**”



benefits

The ability to streamline processes at Llansamlet Surgery helps to **save time, money, resources, and even alleviates emotional pressures**. For example, the Engage Consult admin queries have proved very beneficial for patients and staff, allowing staff time to obtain necessary information and/or seek advice before replying to patients; **creating more efficient interactions and reduced telephone time**.

Engage Consult has also **helped the Surgery identify reasons for usage**, with the two most common being anxiety and depression. This has proved invaluable for several reasons. "Patients often have difficulty explaining symptoms which can add to patient anxiety and cause frustration to clinicians trying to identify key features and risk assess accordingly; resulting in longer consultations. **Engage Consult provides a free text aspect for patients** to record their concerns as well as a branching logic questionnaire which covers the key features.

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Engage Consult benefits

- **Improves** patient to practice communication
- **Streamlines** practice processes
Increases patient engagement
- **Provides** patients with access to more accessible resources
- **Improves** patient experience
- **Effectively** manages increased patient demand
- **Facilitates** safe and secure online communication
- **Enables** the sharing of images, documents, & test results



benefits cont...

These features **help patients to express themselves** and aids our clinicians in seeking out key features,” states Dr Jones. Decision making is further enhanced through branching logic. For instance, when the patient submits a query, **Engage Consult uses branching logic** to explore the history. This has several benefits including, but not limited to, providing detailed histories to the clinician, automatically calculated scoring systems appropriate to the individual case (e.g. PHQ-9), and case-specific signposting to relevant resources with links readily available to patients. **These tools aid clinical decision-making** and help to streamline consultations.

Various scoring systems such as PHQ9 or GAD7 allow clinicians to **prioritise cases and address issues in a timely and efficient manner** without the need to spend extensive time on the telephone, providing a more streamlined and efficient consultation service and freeing up time for other patients. “Equally issues can easily be triaged into the physio’s list. This **reduces the workload and burden on GPs**, ensuring patients see the right person at the right time.

“Engage Consult is also used to message patients, such as asking for a urine sample. The benefit here is that **written information minimises any misunderstanding**, it also reduces patients accumulating in the waiting room and minimises the risk of COVID spreading,” continues Dr Jones.

In addition to medical requests and admin queries, Engage Consult **provides a platform for patients to upload data**, such as weight and home BP readings, which can then be uploaded to the medical record, and request sick notes which are subsequently sent by email. The latter has **proven vital, reducing call loads on reception**, helping clear telephone lines for other uses, and ensuring appointments are more available.

“This **reduces the workload and burden on GPs**, ensuring patients see the **right person at the right time.**”

way forward

A survey undertaken by Llansamlet Surgery reported that **more than 60% of patients considered Engage Consult to be better compared to the previous system**. In addition, more than 65% of patients said that they would recommend the service.

With such compelling benefits and positive patient feedback secured, **Llansamlet Surgery plan to use Engage Consult to an even greater extent** as Dr Jones concludes, “We intend to up our game with Engage Consult, and I am keen to see it as a more universally used service across the practice.

The intention is to **surpass previous usage and extend its availability** as more appointments become available through recovery from sickness, relaxation of Covid rules, and increased GP numbers.”

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