



CASE STUDY

NHS Highland – Argyll & Bute Health & Social Care Partnership

A modern, reliable voice service now supports mainland and island practices, improving call handling, with the Maintel transition completed in half the planned time.

Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) provides all health and social care services across a large geographical area in the west of Scotland. GPs, hospitals, health workers and social care staff work side-by-side in a coordinated approach to service delivery.



At a glance

The issue

The legacy telephony system had been in place for many years and had developed known issues. Though it was a significant financial overhead, it was unable to support the integration of new technologies and was no longer providing value for money.

The project

In a new hybrid working environment, 2,500 staff across 8 community hospitals and selected GP practices needed Maintel's telephony solution to provide reliability and resilience, and patients needed accessible, user-friendly phone contact.

The outcome

A modern, reliable and fully interlinked voice service across mainland and island practices supports IP phones with secure connectivity, and improved reporting has revolutionised call handling. The transition to the Maintel platform took just 3 months instead of the scheduled 6.

Their Background

With a mission to deliver services that help local people to live longer, healthier, happier and independent lives, Argyll & Bute Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP) are also committed to evaluating the best value use of public funding within their hospitals and practices.

When their antiquated telephony system began to cause issues that impacted staff and patient experiences, reliability, return on investment and ability to support a new hybrid working model were key considerations when evaluating a potential replacement.

Maintel designed and delivered a versatile solution that supported agile working and improved communication across this closely integrated but geographically dispersed Council and NHS team.

The Challenge

Argyll and Bute HSCP's unique management structure closely integrates NHS and Council employees in inter-disciplinary teams, which makes clear, consistent communication critical to improving patient satisfaction and outcomes.

The legacy telephony platform was outdated and increasing unreliable, with known issues which had developed over a period of several years. This expensive business communications system was not providing value for money, and was preventing the organisation from expanding, updating, upgrading or futureproofing services.

Having invested in Microsoft 365 and Teams when Covid forced many of the 2,500 staff across 8 hospitals to work from home, Argyll and Bute HSCP wanted to be able to integrate their existing services into any new telephony system, and position themselves to make the most of additional new technology to support their future aspirations as the solution - and organisation - evolved. And importantly, they needed to ensure best use of public funding when they did so.

In this new post-Covid world of hybrid working, Argyll and Bute HSCP wanted to facilitate staff to work smarter and more efficiently. Along with an accelerated and expanded rollout of a mobile solution, each staff member would still require a hospital base and desk extension in order to provide an outstanding experience and deliver high quality care.

The Solution

Maintel's customer success manager worked closely with the Argyll & Bute HSCP team to provide a state-of-the-art, future-ready telephony solution within the 8 hospital environments, which also went on to benefit a small collection of GPs in the Oban area.

As the largest practice within the HSCP, 18,000 patients including the 3 practices on the Island of Mull benefited from the new network system, as well as old analogue phones being replaced with modern user-friendly voice over IP handsets, and the introduction of Maintel ICON services. The challenge of connecting these remote locations was primarily getting reliable internal and external infrastructure in place. This was overcome by using Mitel Streamline POE switches to run full IP phones over the existing internal infrastructure, and a combination of business class broadband and Mitel Teleworker Server to provide secure IP phone connectivity over the internet.

Once the system was in place, Maintel's ICON Portal provided improved control of the network and complete visibility of incoming and outgoing call traffic.

The 2 teams worked closely before, during and post implementation, with weekly meetings, regular progress reports and realistic timelines. The transition to the new Maintel platform went so smoothly that it took only 3 months of the possible 6 month window.

What are the benefits?

Along with reliability, resilience and cost-effectiveness, the new telephony system's backend reporting has been transformational. From a legacy system with little to no reporting capabilities, the new system delivers crucial call data so they can understand, measure and track call volumes, peak times, and traffic routes.

That key information is now being utilised to forecast requirements, dictate staffing and identify associated resource, and this analysis has enabled the team to look strategically at how they structure the organisation going forward.

Issues with dropped calls and patients receiving an engaged tone which had previously been invisible became instantly apparent. An IVR solution was installed, and the same reporting quickly indicated the scale of the benefit it delivered. Calls were now being queued and answered instead of frustrated patients abandoning calls following a poor contact experience.

Patients can easily connect to their chosen practice, and the team has the autonomy to make real time changes to the set-up configuration to overflow or divert calls between practices when staff are unavailable.

The billing mechanism has been greatly simplified saving time and resource, and Maintel's ICON Portal provides improved visibility when any issues arise, allowing the team to closely monitor the response.

What does the future hold?

The modernised system provided by Maintel has already begun to revolutionise how Argyll & Bude HSCP do business, and is a solid foundation for them to take further advantage of existing and emerging technologies in the future.

The organisation is currently considering further extending their capabilities by implementing other services, including Mitel Assistant to integrate telephony within Teams, and Mitel Revolution which delivers alerts and notifications across a range of channels and devices which could potentially replace legacy pager equipment. Following the transformational success of IVR services, its use could be extended within hospitals and some GP practices, and other possible future additions include a contact centre solution.

Having already improved patient communications, Argyll & Bude HSCP is now perfectly positioned to reap more benefits from the system with additional integrations, which will help them to achieve maximum value from their investment while also improving the lives of the local community



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