

Unified Communications

Integrated Care 24 delivers urgent response to remote work with Webex

The Webex Suite provides IC24 hybrid working solutions for collaborative healthcare. As this critical part of the UK health infrastructure was responding to a global pandemic, resilience helped it to meet its immediate needs of increasing demand and remote work.

Customer Summary

Customer name
Integrated Care 24

Industry
Urgent Healthcare

Category
Ashford, Kent UK

Number of employees
1,200



Challenge

Enable seamless, secure remote work for contact center teams supporting critical health service

Collaborate across the organization in remote work environment



Solution

Cisco Packaged Contact Center Enterprise allows agents to work remotely in supporting the NHS 111 phone service

Calling, meeting, and messaging in the Webex App supports organization-wide collaboration and hybrid work



Results

Accommodate 400% increase in health services demand with hybrid work

Customer satisfaction scores before and after the pandemic increased 11% on average for IC24, while national scores decreased 2%

6M+

patients

400%

increased demand

Coordination is critical for NHS

The global pandemic placed unprecedented strain on healthcare systems. Integrated Care 24 (IC24) is a vital piece of the UK health service infrastructure. It provides urgent care services, 24/7, in the south and east of England, and from its own centers, including mobile home visiting services.

In response to the pandemic, IC24 has reimagined its workstyle to create a flexible, mobile, and integrated primary care service. Its work is built on the Webex Suite of collaboration solutions.

The IC24 NHS 111 telephone service is arguably its most well-known service. This helps prioritize medical responses, coordinating patient workflows across local GPs, emergency departments, and specialists. In 2019, the IC24 contact centers received 1,060,127 calls, and handled 565,016 cases outside of business hours.

“The Webex Suite is the collaboration solution that unites us all. We’ve been able to bring people together, wherever their location.”

—James Howes, Head of Infrastructure & Telephony, IC24



“We make sure the patient gets the right care at the right place at the right time,” says CIO, David Brown. “We can help reduce the strain on other parts of the healthcare system.”

The NHS 111 service operated by IC24 runs three call centers. For call center agents, the task is to quickly determine the status of the caller and to funnel calls to appropriate experts to ensure the patient is seen by the right clinician at the right time. IC24 has a team of multi-skilled clinicians on call—ranging from doctors and nurses to paramedics and pharmacists—who can escalate a call to an emergency ambulance response. All communication must be securely tracked, recorded, and integrated with the patient’s healthcare file.

The pandemic threatened to disrupt this finely tuned system. While the need for the NHS 111 service was never greater, social distancing and employee welfare meant the call centers could not operate as normal.

“We needed to immediately support remote work,” says Brown. “And, for teams collaborating on one patient journey, we needed features such as screen sharing and continuous communication.”

A consistent remote work experience

IC24 was fortunate it was not coming at this from a zero start. The organization had already begun working with local technology partner Tesrex several years earlier. Tesrex is a Premier Cisco Partner with numerous accreditations, including security and collaboration. The IC24 team worked closely with Tesrex to evaluate platforms and the desired business outcomes for an end-to-end solution.

Tesrex helped IC24 orchestrate a seamless transition to Webex by Cisco as a replacement for a previous telephony system. Cisco Unified Communications Manager (UCM), the Webex App, and Cisco Packaged Contact Center Enterprise now sit at the center of IC24’s operations. With the Webex App, IC24 can create secure virtual workspaces for everything from management meetings to patient referrals. Call starts are instant, they include the option of high-quality video, and screen-sharing is available at the touch of a button. The platform is integrated with third party file storage, calendars, and CRM.

Following the initial Webex deployment, Tesrex made recommendations for added efficiencies including Webex Room Kits and Boards at the Ashford head office. This helps improve the hybrid experience for all employees, whether physically in a meeting room or joining remotely via a Webex App. Drawings on the touchscreen board can be saved and shared seamlessly after the call.



The business conducted its annual general meeting via Webex, which included some 100 participants. Ongoing management meetings are now on Webex as well.

“Previously, when everyone was in a conference room people raise their hands to vote on an issue,” Howes says. “This time in Webex, you record the debate, the vote pops up with Slido, and everyone clicks to vote.” The process seems more inclusive than a larger physical meeting with Webex Slido options for polling and response.

The business has also learned the benefits of smaller breakout groups. “When we’ve run some larger sessions, we break out into smaller groups. A group may include 4-5 people who wouldn’t talk in a large session that are now comfortable participating in a small group,” he adds. “Each group will then reconvene and discuss.”

There is even a dedicated Webex space (the Watercooler) for social events. “We know remote work requires a cultural shift,” says Brown. “We’re working hard to ensure people feel connected and included.”

Strengthening business continuity

The adoption of Webex has enabled IC24 to withstand the storm of a pandemic disruption. Having industry-leading technology and a local partner guiding the business-critical aspects of transformation helped IC24 to adapt to both remote working and greater workload. Its three call centers have remained operational throughout. Even when demand surged and calls received nationally doubled, CSAT scores increased 11% on average for IC24, while national satisfaction scores decreased 2%.

“Business resiliency and scalability are absolutely essential for us,” says Brown. “We’re able to link all three call centers. If one should drop, we immediately transition to the other two.”

Of IC24's 1,200 staff, 600 have been equipped to work remotely, including management and clinicians. The call centers have used a blend of home workers and socially distanced staff onsite to manage calls. Workflows are integrated with CLEO, the patient management solution used by IC24.

"The Webex Suite is the collaboration solution that unites us all," says James Howes, Head of Infrastructure & Telephony, IC24. "We've been able to bring people together, wherever their location."

Moreover, says Dr Sanjeev Rana, Regional Medical Director at IC24, Webex underpins a more responsive business: "We all have more information at our disposal – which means we can make more informed decisions, in real-time, leading to better outcomes."

Communication is more direct and more targeted. IC24 has created specialist working groups, Chat leads to more immediacy, says Rana: "I'm quickly kept informed of what's going on, avoiding the need for further meetings."

Embracing Webex has strengthened ties between teams, says Dudley Mountford, Associate Locality Director, IC24: "For many of us, Webex has made it possible to have more face-to-face meetings than we ever did in the office. It's made senior managers more accessible to the team."

Few organizations are making firm predictions about the workplace of the future, but Brown says Webex will have a long-term impact on resources. "We've proven we can bring in experts, regardless of location. Previously our recruitment may have been limited by a candidate's proximity to a call center. That no longer applies," he says. "We have colleagues that may never need to work from an office. We've expanded our resource pool."

This plays to the longer-term trend of business agility, and the means to respond quickly to changing circumstances. With the UK government awarding contracts to run county healthcare services on a five-year basis, service providers will need the ability to scale quickly, especially to expand. Webex provides the collaboration capabilities to add and securely integrate new users.

"Success for us is resilience and connectivity so that we can continue to operate. With Webex, we supported remote work almost overnight."

—David Brown, CIO, IC24

Going forward

The Webex Suite encourages innovation, says Brown. As part of the national healthcare system in the UK, IC24 delivers care according to certain standards and agrees to be consistent with other regional providers, but Brown says there is room to pursue new ideas.

Tesrex continues to work with IC24 in exploring next-generation technologies to help advance healthcare. “We’ve seen a huge shift towards remote services in healthcare,” says Robert Walia, managing director, Tesrex. “When patients and providers all benefit, we’ll see very quickly how innovative technology will help transition healthcare moving forward.”

It is also looking at interactive voice response (IVR), speech recognition, and greater automation in the call center workflow. Any future potential is considered in the service capacity of “the right care at the right place at the right time,” he adds.

“Automation, and integrating already known facts about a patient, could speed up a diagnosis or help bring in experts more quickly,” says Brown. “Human interaction remains at the core, but one of the attractions of Webex by Cisco is the ability to use virtual features and AI to support the patient journey.

“The more we’re able to analyze traffic or key phrases, the better able we are to prompt a proactive response from the healthcare system,” says Brown. “We can better plan resources to meet that demand.”

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