

## Hospital Services Limited congratulates the Western Health and Social Care Trust antenatal diabetes team recognised for Innovation in Gestational Diabetes Patient Care

The team at the Western Health and Social Care Trust's Gestational Diabetes Pathway at Altnagelvin Area Hospital in Derry / Londonderry have been recognised for partnership working with service users and innovation in quality improvement. They redesigned their diabetes antenatal service by enabling an exceptional level of telehealth care in an ever-changing health and social care environment by roll-out of simplified video communications implemented in partnership with Northern Ireland-based specialist distributor of bespoke healthcare IT solutions to health establishments, Hospital Services Limited (HSL). This has become especially relevant due to challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.



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*Commenting on the success of the telehealth solution for answering patients' needs, Dr Athinyaa Thiraviaraj said, "Working in partnership with women who attend our service, we have been able to develop, test, and standardise video-consultations. This has helped our service to continue with minimal interruptions through both the first and second surge of the pandemic. This innovative model of care has made it possible for us to continue our commitment to support expectant mothers at a time of anxiety and concern.*

*Commenting on the special role that video calls have made in maintaining a high level of patient care Dr Thiraviaraj added, "I can't see our service defaulting to phone clinics. It's just not the same when you are engaging in complex conversations like a health care consultation."*

Named as recipients of a prestigious British Medical Journal Award in the category of Innovation in Quality Improvement, the team was commended for their display of adaptability and innovative thinking to preserve a high level of patient care at a worry-filled time for expectant mothers. Begun in January 2019, the partnership between HSL and the Western Trust has seen consultants incorporate a state-of-the-art telehealth (video appointment) solution by Pexip into their daily patient care, helping to maintain and improve patient contact despite limited access due to Covid-19. Led internally by Dr Athinyaa Thiraviaraj, Consultant Physician in Diabetes & Endocrinology, the clinicians at the Western Trust have carried out thousands of consultations via the integrated interface in order to better meet patient needs and gain a more holistic view of the patient's overall condition whilst also keeping patient communications open during a period of time which has seen reduced opportunity for in-person appointments during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Answering the need for the Trust team to closely interact with their patients for accurate diagnostics and treatment, HSL integrated their simplified video communications technologies, or HSL Telehealth, into the Trust's existing patient administration systems (PAS) and electronic patient records (EPR), ensuring the new video call capabilities became part of the existing healthcare workflow. "It is an imperative that whichever technology is adopted by a healthcare team, it must integrate seamlessly with existing systems and processes in order to become highly effective, intuitively used by care providers, if the solution is to gain widespread acceptance and be scalable across the whole spectrum of patients," said Sam McMaster, Director of Telehealth at Hospital Services Limited. "It is for this reason that we made it our priority to ensure our Telehealth service by Pexip was embedded into existing procedures and processes to enable clinicians to utilise this technology without adding to their already large workload. No other service offers this level of integration, and as a result it will increase capacity in the NHS without placing extra stress on its resources. Costs are reduced and clinicians' time better utilised while outpatients avoid the need to travel." The project has seen a proportionally significant impact on the environment, saving about **15,811 miles of travel for 654 appointments. This equates to 4.37 tonnes of Co2.**

The service implemented by HSL at the Western Trust uses tried and tested technology. With the tap of a screen, clinicians can organise a remote and secure outpatient consultation requiring only a webcam, while patients access the sessions via a smartphone, tablet, laptop or PC. The call is generated by software in HSL's network which offers a complete, secure communications platform for health establishments, providing virtual meeting rooms, gateway services, and web applications. Full, constant monitoring and support is guaranteed and the HSL solution is compliant with the network security standards adopted by the NHS and the UK government. On completion of the consultation, the clinician closes the video window, completes an associated outcome form, or writes up the notes in the relevant EPR before moving to the next patient.