

Building Communication Resilience at Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust



Spectralink multi-charger with S35 handsets

Healthcare organizations are under increasing pressure to ensure that critical communications remain available during major incidents, cyberattacks, network disruptions, and other operational challenges. As NHS Trusts continue modernizing their communications environments, resilience has become just as important as functionality.

Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust launched a pilot of Spectralink's IP-DECT solution to evaluate whether a standalone, resilient voice platform could strengthen business continuity while integrating with existing communications infrastructure.

The Changing NHS Communications Landscape

For NHS Trusts, communications resilience has evolved from an IT consideration into an operational priority. EPRR Domain 9 requires Trusts to demonstrate that communications can continue independently of primary infrastructure during major incidents. At the same time, increasing cyber threats, growing adoption of Microsoft Teams, evolving business continuity requirements, and greater executive oversight have prompted Trusts to reassess how clinical voice communications are delivered. Rather than relying on a single technology stack, organizations are seeking resilient communications strategies capable of maintaining clinical operations even when primary systems become unavailable.

Why Sheffield Teaching Hospitals Launched the Pilot

Against this backdrop, Sheffield Teaching Hospitals began evaluating Spectralink not simply as a replacement for existing devices, but as part of a broader communications resilience strategy. The Trust wanted to understand how a standalone communications platform could continue supporting secure two-way voice communications during outages while integrating with existing investments, including PBX infrastructure, Microsoft Teams, Mitel OpenScape, emergency alerting systems, and other clinical communications technologies. The objective was to evaluate whether resilient communications could enhance operational continuity without requiring a disruptive rip-and-replace approach.



Pilot Objectives

The pilot focuses on several key objectives: maintaining two-way voice communications if PBX services, Microsoft Teams, or other primary communications systems become unavailable; supporting emergency alerting and critical messaging; integrating with existing on-premises and cloud communications platforms; validating rapid deployment and ease of management; and determining whether the platform provides a flexible foundation for future communications modernization.



Early Observations

Initial evaluation demonstrated several characteristics that aligned with the Trust's objectives. The solution was configured quickly, with devices communicating within minutes. The evaluation also confirmed the value of resilient standalone voice communications that continue operating independently of broader collaboration platforms. Equally important, the platform integrates with existing communications infrastructure rather than replacing it, allowing the Trust to preserve previous technology investments while strengthening resilience. Rugged healthcare-ready devices, secure encrypted voice communications, and support for emergency alerting further reinforced the platform's suitability for demanding clinical environments.



Technology Supporting Operations

One theme consistently emerged: communications technology should enable clinical care rather than demand attention. Tom Boyle, Head of Telecoms, responsible for the Trust's voice and communications infrastructure, described the importance of resilient communications infrastructure. He explained, it is key that the system continues to operate independently of wider systems, providing confidence that staff can communicate even if the wider network, PBX, or collaboration environment experiences disruption. Nicola Fields, Assistant Chief Operating Officer, reinforced the operational perspective, explaining that when technology teams can rely on resilient communications, operational leaders can focus on running the hospital and clinicians can focus on caring for patients.



Looking Ahead

This pilot is evaluating far more than a new communications platform. It is assessing whether resilient communications can provide an independent layer of clinical voice communications capable of supporting operational continuity, business continuity planning, emergency preparedness, and future digital transformation. As the evaluation progresses, Sheffield Teaching Hospitals will continue validating how resilient communications, including Spectralink's IP-DECT solutions, support, patient care, strengthen organizational confidence, and provide a future-ready communications strategy for one of the United Kingdom's largest NHS trusts.



“If Tom and his team are looking after the technological side of things, I can maintain the operational side of things...ultimately our consultants can look after our patients.”

— Nicola Fields
Assistant Chief
Operating Officer

About Spectralink

As an award winner in mobile technology, Spectralink has been transforming the way our customers work and communicate for 35 years. Through our determination to do extraordinary things, we enable mobile workforces and empower our customers and partners to explore what's next, what's possible. With our enterprise grade, best-in-class mobile solutions, we are with our customers wherever they work, however they need us. Our people, commitment to innovation and our passion are our foundation for success.

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