



Breaking the sound barrier of safety screens

Safety screens put in place during the Covid-19 pandemic to limit the spread of infection made communication more challenging, but the use of window intercom systems can make sound crystal clear.

Contacta's window intercom systems have been selected by a number of NHS trusts including University Hospitals Bristol, Nottingham University Hospitals and Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation. In busy hospital reception areas where noise levels are high, quality speakers and microphones ensure speech is clear and sound is directed to the patient or staff member and not across the seating area for everyone to hear.

Chase Farm Hospital in Enfield installed five window intercom systems in reception areas throughout the site.

Following the installation of screens in their patient reception areas in early 2021, staff reported difficulties to hear patients clearly. The front-of-house reception staff were struggling as they both wore hearing aids.

“We knew we needed a solution for our front-of-house team that would help them, and our patients, to hear better through the screens,” said Assistant Operations Manager, Paul Fletcher.

“Contacta had previously installed a hearing loop in our audiology department so, after a procurement process, we were able to go back to them to discuss options for our reception areas.”

Infection control measures meant Contacta’s consultation was carried out remotely using photographs of the five reception areas with the highest footfall – the main reception, day surgery, endoscopy, pre-assessment, and urgent treatment.

Contacta’s design team planned the job ahead of installation, which was completed in one day.

“The engineer was very good, very thorough, and took time to show staff how the systems worked,” added Paul. “The window intercoms are making a big difference. Overall, we’re very happy.”

Receptionist, Jennie Dunstan, agrees.

“It’s a wonderful piece of equipment! The reception area echoes and it was very difficult to hear, especially if we had a lot of people in here. Now we can hear perfectly. The intercom is on all the time when we’re busy, so regular conversation is much easier and patients aren’t getting frustrated.”

Hearing loops, which give clear sound to hearing aid wearers, are built into the intercom systems. By switching to the T-coil position on their hearing devices, users receive sound wirelessly direct from the microphone, cutting out distracting background noise.



It’s a feature that’s making a big difference for patients and staff at Chase Farm.

Amplifiers are tucked neatly under the staff desks and the patient microphones are mounted in the glass to keep the limited surface space clear. Compact speakers sit just beneath the glass screens and hands-free use further limits the spread of infection.

“I can hear patients perfectly now,” said Jennie. “People see the hearing loop sign and they’re all using it too. They know not to come right up to the screen; the sign shows them where to stand. The whole system has made our service much smoother and faster.”

