

Case Study: Blue Light Sector

Instant Talk (PTT) Service: Heathrow Air Ambulance Service (HAAS)



“The turnaround time, the delivery, the product, the service. All have been great. In less than a week InTechnology has achieved something our previous supplier failed to do in over three months. Our ambulance crews and our control centre are very happy.”

Colin Walker-White, Operations Manager, HAAS Control Centre

Heathrow Air Ambulance Service (HAAS) operates a 24-hour service from its control centre based at Heathrow airport. Working daily with partners across the UK and Europe, it provides medical transport, liaises with NHS professionals, and repatriates seriously ill or injured people. It added InTechnology's Instant Communications services for its ground ambulance crews, and is now benefiting from wider connectivity, improved control centre coordination and reduced costs.

Challenges:

When HAAS wanted to add to its original two-way UHF radios in order to achieve coverage outside the airport perimeter, they decided to move to a Push To Talk (PTT) system. Although the technology did work on their new handsets, there were several problems with the actual equipment and service they received from their supplier.

The handsets were delayed and, when they did arrive, didn't function because of poor connectivity – over a two-week period, an average of only 1 in 20 tracks was successful. And the problems didn't end there. Colin Walker-White, Operations Manager at the HAAS control centre, explains, “Unfortunately, as soon as we took the handsets inside a building, we couldn't hear the people at the other end!” The last straw was that Bluetooth speakers designed to resolve the problem were never delivered: “After three months, we were still waiting for the system to be fixed and of course were paying the network provider for a service we couldn't use.”

HAAS was looking to solve three main challenges:

- Acceptable audio quality on Push To Talk handsets in any environment, inside or outside
- Constant connectivity allowing crews to talk to each other, the Emergency Air Team and the control centre
- The ability to centrally monitor and manage the crews' location.



Provided by

inTechnology

“It’s not overstating it to say that thanks to InTechnology the speed with which I can now locate and talk to my crews can make the difference between life and death to the people we’re helping.”

Colin Walker-White, Operations Manager, HAAS Control Centre

How InTechnology helped

At this point, HAAS turned to an InTechnology partner who recommended InTechnology’s Instant Communications services. These have enabled HAAS to use the Push To Talk technology it wanted but this time with Instant Talk, it has a business-grade solution that uses 2G over a number of networks to ensure an unbroken service. Although the service is available on normal mobile phones, HAAS chose to use InTechnology’s own “ruggedised” handsets which not only incorporate mobile phone technology but are also robust, waterproof and dustproof. HAAS is now benefiting from the full suite of services shown below.



Instant communication either on a one-to-one or group basis.



Adds a layer of security to fast response lone workers attending an incident.



Allowing the control centre to locate and deploy the nearest crew.

The Benefits:

HAAS is seeing many benefits from using Instant Communications. The crews can now talk to each other, the group and the control centre easily and instantly, wherever they are. They can also use the same handset to alert hospital staff to incoming patients, shaving important time off patient assessment on arrival. Costs have fallen as one handset acts as both a mobile phone and a two-way Push To Talk handset. Colin Walker-White says that HAAS is seeing benefits across several areas:

- **Improved efficiency.** Colin can see where the crews are instantly and allocate the appropriate crew to an incident, significantly cutting the time spent locating and coordinating crews.
- **Improved communications.** A consistently high level of connectivity and excellent audio quality enables the crew to talk to each other, the Emergency Air Team, the control centre and hospitals.
- **Improved patient care.** At the same time as calling the control centre and from the same handset, crews can phone hospitals or other partner services immediately they reach a patient, in advance of the actual handover, shaving critical minutes off the recovery process.
- **Improved crew safety.** Potentially vulnerable, fast-response staff working on their own can simply press the alert button on the handset which will silently communicate with the control centre which can listen in, locate and send help if necessary.
- **Improved administration.** Incoming calls can be prioritised and queued and records of all files can be downloaded from the Instant Communications Manager Client and saved for compliance or legal purposes.

All of this adds up to a more efficient and cost-effective service. So happy is HAAS with the InTechnology Instant Communications services that Colin is hoping to persuade some of the major companies they work with across the country to take it up, enabling them to join the chat room, and improving efficiency even further.

Technical Info

Instant Communications Services:

- Instant Talk
- Instant Alert
- Instant Locate
- 1 BB3G handset per crew
- Central PC-based Instant Communications Manager Client
- Mobile phone using 2G over several networks

