

# The True Cost Healthcare

Cellnex UK shines a light on the overlooked cost of poor digital infrastructure on the UK healthcare system.

The Indoor Coverage Experts

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# FOREWORD

## Gianluca Landolina – CEO of Cellnex UK

Healthcare is built on people - but it runs on connectivity. And when that connection breaks down, the effects ripple far beyond computer and phone screens.


At Cellnex UK, we commissioned **The True Cost** to better understand how digital connectivity is shaping the everyday experience of healthcare professionals. We go beyond assumptions and hear directly from those on the front line - the people navigating the pressures, the delays and the challenges that poor Wi-Fi and mobile connectivity creates.

What we found is both revealing and

urgent. From lost time and delayed communication to rising stress and retention risks, the impact of unreliable communications infrastructure is real and growing. These insights are here to help you, our partners and clients see where the gaps are and where the opportunities lie.

We know the challenges facing the healthcare sector are complex. But improving mobile connectivity is one area where meaningful progress is possible.

When we strengthen the systems that support care, we strengthen the people who deliver it.

A portrait of Gianluca Landolina, CEO of Cellnex UK, smiling. He is a middle-aged man with short, graying hair, wearing a light-colored button-down shirt. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be an office setting with shelves and papers.

Gianluca Landolina  
CEO, Cellnex UK

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In today's digitally enabled healthcare system, staying connected is essential. Yet across the UK, healthcare settings, from hospitals to outpatient services, are facing persistent connectivity issues that disrupt care, drain time and add pressure to already significant workloads.

This isn't just a technical inconvenience, it's a growing operational challenge. Poor connectivity is part of the everyday healthcare experience, slowing access to patient records, delaying clinical decisions and forcing staff to rely on time-consuming workarounds. On average, according to our research, healthcare workers are losing 31 minutes each day to these issues - the equivalent of 17 working days a year\*.

This disconnection and lack of reliable mobile coverage is contributing to rising levels of stress in three-in-five healthcare professionals in the UK (58%), isolation in over a third (35%) and burnout for a quarter (25%). Nearly a quarter of hospital (24%) and GP staff (25%) have even considered leaving their roles due to ongoing tech and connectivity problems.

The message is clear: digital infrastructure is no longer a background concern. It's central to how care is delivered, how staff are supported and how the healthcare sector can meet its productivity goals.

\*Calculations are based on the average UK working week of 36.5 hours / 7.3 hours a day, as reported by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), Q1 2025.

# Introduction: CARE DISCONNECTED

Despite major investment pledges from Government, many frontline healthcare workers are still facing daily disruption caused by poor mobile signal and legacy systems.

Recent national productivity figures highlight a persistent challenge in the healthcare sector, with output still 18.5% below pre-pandemic levels<sup>1</sup>. While issues such as workforce shortages, rising patient demand and funding pressures are often cited as factors, this report brings attention to a less visible but critical contributor: digital infrastructure.

We explore how connectivity gaps are quietly eroding efficiency, innovation and the delivery of frontline care. We also examine how seemingly minor digital disruptions throughout the working day can accumulate, compounding stress and inefficiency for healthcare professionals.

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<sup>1</sup> [ONS, Public service productivity, quarterly, UK: July to September 2024](#)



# THE PRODUCTIVITY DRAIN

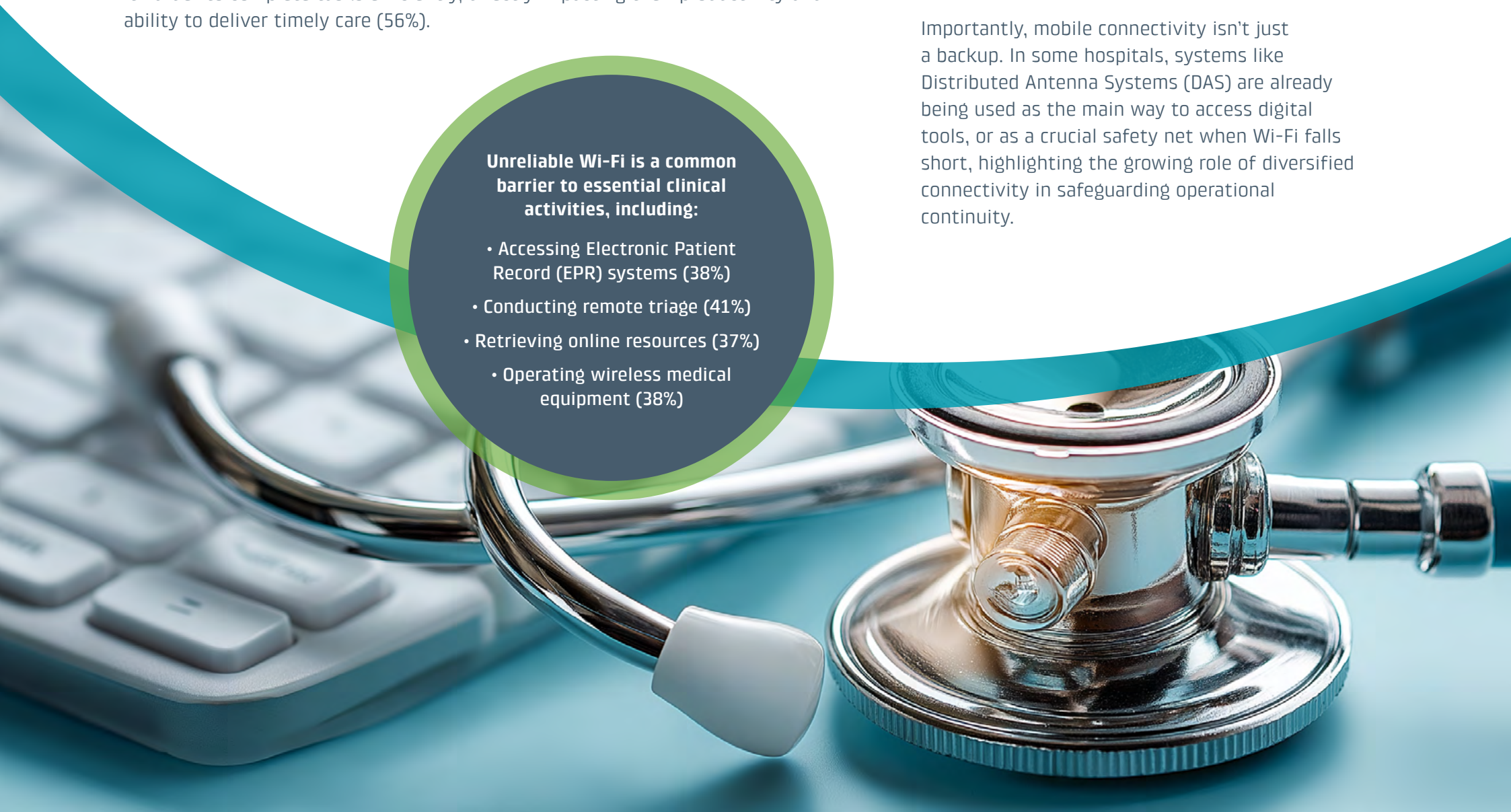
In modern healthcare settings, digital infrastructure should streamline care, not slow it down. Yet 64% of healthcare workers say that connectivity issues make it harder to complete tasks efficiently, directly impacting their productivity and ability to deliver timely care (56%).

**Unreliable Wi-Fi is a common barrier to essential clinical activities, including:**

- Accessing Electronic Patient Record (EPR) systems (38%)
- Conducting remote triage (41%)
- Retrieving online resources (37%)
- Operating wireless medical equipment (38%)

When mobile connectivity solutions - such as 5G - are not integrated into healthcare infrastructure, these challenges can quickly escalate. At crucial moments, care teams risk being disconnected, forced to work around systems intended to support them.

Importantly, mobile connectivity isn't just a backup. In some hospitals, systems like Distributed Antenna Systems (DAS) are already being used as the main way to access digital tools, or as a crucial safety net when Wi-Fi falls short, highlighting the growing role of diversified connectivity in safeguarding operational continuity.





# THE HUMAN COST

It's not just efficiency that suffers when connectivity is unreliable - there's a personal cost too. Our data reveals a growing emotional strain:

**68% of staff say poor mobile signal prevents them from reaching friends and family while at work, leaving them feeling cut off at moments when reassurance or a simple check-in could make all the difference.**

When asked about the impact of this, 58% report heightened stress levels, 35% cited feelings of isolation and 25% reported feelings of burnout. For some, the consequences are deeply personal, with 22% having missed significant life moments.

In a sector already grappling with mental health challenges, retention issues and rising demand, the emotional impact of poor connectivity is a risk that cannot be ignored.



# SATISFACTION AND STABILITY

As digital expectations rise across the healthcare sector, poor communications infrastructure is becoming more than just a technical inconvenience. It's a growing threat to workforce morale and retention. For many staff, the quality of technology shapes both their professional and personal experience and increasingly, their decision to remain in a workplace.

Nearly one-in-four (22%) healthcare workers have considered changing jobs due to issues with connectivity infrastructure, while 60% reported that their workplace still relies on outdated systems. These frustrations are particularly pronounced among hospital workers (24%) and GP staff (25%), where even minor digital delays can intensify stress and disrupt

workflows in already over-stretched teams.

From our findings, healthcare professionals are clear about what needs to change. Their top three priorities include:

- Enhanced 4G/5G coverage (58%)
- Modernised systems and tools (51%)
- Faster access to digital platforms (47%)

With an overwhelming 97% also agreeing that digital communication is essential to the future of UK healthcare, it's clear digital infrastructure is now central to staff experience, performance and ultimately retention.

# REFRAMING CONNECTIVITY AS A WORKFORCE PRIORITY

The findings of **The True Cost** report highlight a growing concern with significant, everyday consequences. Poor connectivity is not just a minor operational hurdle - it's a barrier to productivity, wellbeing and care delivery.

But this challenge also presents a clear opportunity. By investing in robust, future-ready digital infrastructure, healthcare leaders can reduce avoidable friction, support staff wellbeing and unlock new levels of efficiency and resilience across the system.

This report offers a data-led case for action and a clearer understanding of what is at stake. Because when we strengthen the digital backbone of healthcare, we don't just improve systems - we empower the people who rely on them.



# RESILIENT SIGNAL, RELIABLE CARE: Embedding mobile connectivity across healthcare estates

Cellnex UK's In-Building Connectivity Solutions are purpose-built to meet the unique demands of healthcare environments, where every connection counts. These multi-operator, ultra-fast 4G/5G solutions eliminate mobile coverage gaps across complex hospital estates and care facilities - ensuring consistent, secure connectivity from A&E to outpatient clinics.

By embedding solutions such as Distributed Antenna Systems (DAS) within healthcare infrastructure, teams gain uninterrupted access to critical systems, real-time communication tools and digital records - even in traditionally low-signal zones. Designed for both scale and sensitivity, Cellnex in-building solutions integrate seamlessly without disrupting daily operations.

## Key Benefits:

- ➔ **Operational Continuity:** Resilient infrastructure that supports urgent care, efficient workflows and round-the-clock access to digital platforms.
- ➔ **Staff Wellbeing:** Enables contact with family and support networks, reducing isolation and helping to alleviate stress and burnout.
- ➔ **Enhanced Patient Experience:** Facilitates smoother admissions, bedside communication and access to digital services - enhancing the care journey.
- ➔ **Digital Future-Proofing:** Positions healthcare estates to scale with emerging technologies, including remote monitoring and digital triage.



Cellnex UK provides full lifecycle support, from design and installation to proactive maintenance, so healthcare providers can focus on what matters most: delivering care.

# RE-CONNECTING: THE ROAD AHEAD

Our Business Development Manager, **Nick Bagshaw**, shares his perspective on how Cellnex UK's In-Building Connectivity Solutions can transform healthcare connectivity:

"Healthcare environments are some of the most complex and critical spaces when it comes to connectivity. From emergency departments to ambulances and outpatient clinics, every second counts - and every connection matters.

Cellnex UK's advanced In-Building Connectivity Solutions eliminate coverage blackspots and ensure seamless, secure mobile connectivity across entire healthcare estates. Our solutions are tailored to the unique needs of every site, whether it's a large hospital campus or a community health centre.

We work closely with all major UK mobile network operators, simplifying deployment and ensuring consistent, high-quality coverage across 4G and 5G networks. From design and installation to monitoring and maintenance, we provide end-to-end support, so healthcare providers can focus on patients, rather than managing connectivity.

The findings of this report make one thing clear: reliable digital infrastructure is no longer optional. It's essential to building a healthcare system that's not only ready to meet today's demands, but also those of the future."



**Nick Bagshaw**  
Business  
Development  
Manager



# DELVING INTO THE FINDINGS

## The key findings from Cellnex UK's research:

- Healthcare workers lose an average of 31 minutes-a-day due to poor connectivity. Equivalent to over two-and-a-half hours per week, or 122 hours annually – a total of over 17 working days lost per staff member.
- 27% report connectivity issues more than half the working week and a quarter (24%) of hospital staff experience issues daily.
- In GP practices, 76% lose between 20 minutes and an hour daily and 12% lose up to 2 hours a day.
- 68% say poor connectivity negatively impacts their efficiency, while also disrupting:
  - Communication with colleagues and patients (62%)
  - Time available for face-to-face patient interaction (54%)
  - Their ability to deliver urgent patient care (56%)
- Existing Wi-Fi solutions are frequently unreliable for critical tasks, including:
  - Accessing Electronic Patient Record (EPR) systems (38%)
  - Conducting remote triage (41%)
  - Retrieving online resources (37%)
  - Operating wireless medical equipment (38%)
- Nearly one-in-four hospital (24%) and GP staff (25%) have considered leaving their role due to persistent connectivity issues.



# Methodology

About the research: All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from independent research business Censuswide. The total sample comprised 500 UK healthcare professionals, including individuals working in hospitals, general practice, ambulance services and outpatient settings such as community care homes and pharmacies. Fieldwork was carried out in June 2025.

## Contact Us

To find out more and book a meeting with our in-building connectivity experts, get in touch at:

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## Additional resources



Additional resources, including collateral and case studies, can be found in the Cellnex UK resource centre: [www.cellnex.com/gb-en/das-lp](http://www.cellnex.com/gb-en/das-lp)

## The Indoor Coverage Experts



[cellnex.co.uk](http://cellnex.co.uk)

Cellnex plays a key role within the telecoms sector enabling connectivity throughout Europe. In the UK, as the country's leading independent telecoms site partner, Cellnex provides critical national infrastructure & services to telecoms operators, emergency services organisations and many other enterprises.

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