

# Information pack

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# **The role of Kent Connects**

“To tackle the barriers to the joining up and sharing of public services.”

## **Kent Connects’ vision**

“To lead this transformation through the application of leading edge technology.”

# What is Kent Connects?

Kent Connects is a countywide partnership of organisations that uses technology to improve public sector services.

The not-for-profit partnership of all Kent and Medway councils, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, Kent Police and the NHS in Kent was established in 2001 with the original goal of providing more online services.

It has since grown into the county's foremost technology partnership helping remove traditional service boundaries, employ economy of scales in areas like procurement and deliver improved customer services.

Its role is to tackle barriers to joining up and sharing of public services and its vision is to provide a strategic and collaborative framework for delivering shared core ICT services which enable customer access, value-for-money and business change.

The Kent Connects Partnership Portal allows nearly 3,000 users to collaborate on a day-to-day basis.

Kent Connects has an ongoing commitment to focus on how technology can practically improve customers' lives and this has seen it shortlisted for a number of national awards.

The Kent Connects partners pay a subscription fee to belong to Kent Connects and benefit from a range of IT services delivered in a variety of different ways. Some of the services are core membership benefits; others can be purchased at a cost. It enables its members to join together to benefit from IT solutions in a cost-effective way, as well as to share good practice, knowledge and access to services.

Some member organisations have formed their own alliances with others to deliver their technology requirements – such as MKIP and EK Services (see pages 12 and 13 for more details), while others, such as Shepway District Council, use Steria – an outsourced ICT managed service provider.

# Membership

Kent Connects is a partnership of the following organisations:

- Ashford Borough Council
- Canterbury City Council
- Dartford Borough Council
- Dover District Council
- Gravesham Borough Council
- Kent County Council
- Kent Fire & Rescue Service
- Kent Police
- Kent and Medway Commissioning Support Unit (representing the NHS CCGs in Kent and Medway)
- Maidstone Borough Council
- Medway Council
- Sevenoaks District Council
- Shepway District Council
- Swale Borough Council
- Thanet District Council
- Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

# Membership benefits

Partners pay an annual subscription of £20,000 which entitles them to use the core services provided by Kent Connects. The work of the partnership is funded from these subscriptions. Once the costs of providing these services has been met, the surplus is put into a development fund which can be used for projects which will benefit at least two of the partners and support the aims of the *Public Service ICT Strategy and Action Plan*.

The return on investment for partners is detailed in the document *Return on Investment for Kent Connects Partners*. This shows most partners get at least 100 per cent return on their subscription cost through the Kent Public Service Network alone which provides a physical connection between all of the partners and core services, offering a secure internet and email network. Partners typically save £13,000 for a basic internet service, around £2,000 for spam filtering, between £5,000 and £10,000 for remote access and up to £10,000 for content filtering.

Kent Fire & Rescue Service saves around £100,000 per annum by using Kent Connects, and the NHS in Kent saves around £170,000 for remote access alone.

In addition, Kent Connects typically offers a service with greater resilience, a better service level agreement and a more secure environment than other competitively priced options.

# What does Kent Connects do?

Kent Connects is the lead technology partnership for Kent and Medway.

It has already invested in a single, countywide IT infrastructure (both technology and people) to enable its partners to join up and share their service delivery mechanisms in a secure, robust and cost-effective environment.

Kent Connects is an extremely effective and productive strategic partnership enabling partner projects by providing advice and sharing best practice and resources.

It finds cost-effective technology-based solutions to help its public sector member organisations to deliver services well and for less money.

Members share good practice and expertise and learning, to enable partnership working to function at its best.

Kent residents have come to expect a range of effective, integrated and high quality public services. Kent leaders have set out clear ambitions for the future in a range of plans and strategies including the *Vision for Kent*, *Bold Steps for Kent* and the *Customer Services Strategy*. Kent Connects uses technology to help its partners support these ambitions.

The *Public Sector ICT Strategy* and *Action Plan* detail how this is being achieved.

Kent Connects helps public sector organisations across the county tackle the challenges associated with rising public expectations and significantly reduced resources through ICT. It helps public services to drive technology-based solutions within their own organisations, and enables them to work together collaboratively and share services.

Its priorities are:

- Public service delivery redesign
- Customer service innovation
- Supporting value for money and flexibility
- Influence through advocacy.

# Services for partners

Kent Connects offers partners a number of benefits. These are achieved through economies of scale and collaboration and include:

- Strategic development – ensuring ICT investment meets long-term needs
- Buying power – improved specifications and cost savings
- Joint ICT infrastructure – making shared services possible
- Preferential rates – for services offered or procured by the Partnership Office
- Potential income stream – from selling ICT and support services to each other
- Professional network – events, information and support
- Professional standards – research, training and toolkits
- Opportunities for partners to shape the future of the partnership and its services including task and finish groups (currently Enterprise, Architecture and Commissioning Model panels), a partner survey and various workshops and other events
- Improved links to the health sector with Kent and Medway NHS Cluster (now KMCS) joining the partnership in 2012
- A new higher education partnership with the University of Kent, the University of Greenwich and Canterbury Christ Church University- Kent IT Alliance.



## Services provided

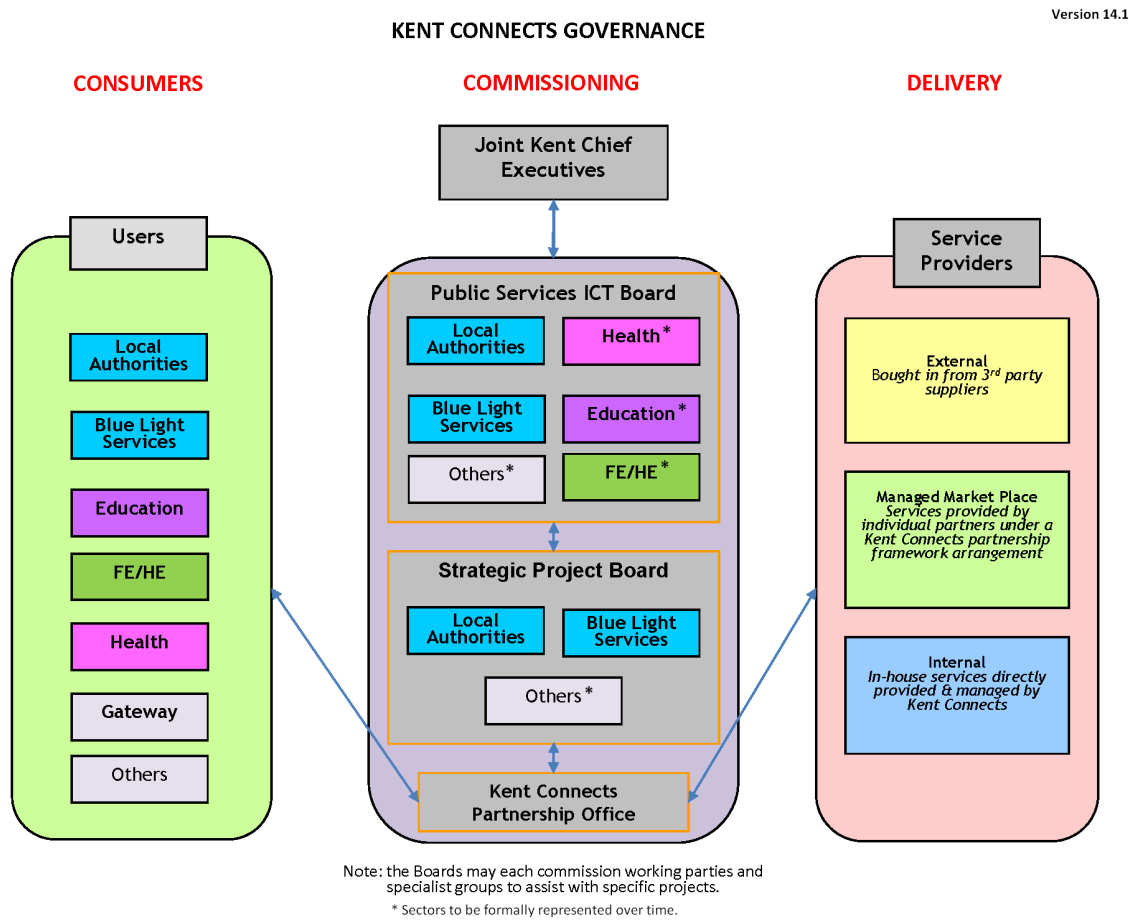
Services	Information	Core/fee paying
Kent Public Service Network (KPSN)	This provides a physical connection between all of the partners and the core services, offering a secure internet and email network with managed support and administration.	Core and fee paying - one link free and additional links at partner preferential rates.
Spam filtering, remote services and content filtering	Includes Juniper tokens supplied to enable secure remote access.	Core
Managed Market Place (MMP)	An online framework for partners to offer and procure ICT and support services on behalf of the partnership while maintaining quality and value for money.	Core
Broadband monitoring	Every broadband connection is monitored 24/7.	Core part of Kent Public Services Network
N3 Aggregation	N3 is the national broadband network for the NHS which is due to go live this year.	Fee paying
APR Metatagging	A service which makes it easy to access and retrieve information from partners' websites – currently looking at other options to enhance this service.	Core
Disaster recovery	A brand new service currently being designed to safeguard availability of business systems 24/7.	Fee paying
Regional data centres	These are situated in Chatham and Maidstone and offer server hosting and disaster recovery back-up for partners.	Fee paying at preferential partner rates
Two-factor Employee Authentication Service (EAS)	This provides partners with a greater level of protection for their systems by giving users a password and authentication code.	Fee paying at preferential partner rates
Firewall Services	Providing extra IT security.	Fee
Partnership Portals Branded for Specific Network Groups	Online facilities which support the administration, facilitation and communication of multi-agency groups.	Core

# How is Kent Connects run?

Kent Connects reports to the Joint Kent Chiefs Group which includes chief executives from public sector organisations in Kent.

The Joint Kent Chiefs Group, Public Services ICT Board and the Strategic Project Board are responsible for Kent Connects . The Public Services ICT Board is currently chaired by William Benson, Chief Executive of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council – governance procedures for the partnership are set out below. Further details on governance and the terms of reference for these groups can be found in the *Kent Connects Partnership Agreement*.

Kent Connects continues to adapt to the needs of its partners. It produces reports on return on investment showing the savings its partners are achieving. It also has a *Public Services ICT Strategy and Action Plan* which look forward to 2018.



# Priorities

Kent Connects has the following priorities:

## Public service delivery redesign

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- Use ICT to deliver savings
- Remove blockages to public service redesign
- Support the shift towards public service commissioning
- Identify, develop and deploy technology standards
- Make the most of the resources, skills and infrastructure to support transformation
- Support the roll-out of broadband across the county
- Identify, agree and disseminate good practice.

## Customer service innovation

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- Develop a single view of the customer
- Improve knowledge and understanding of service users
- Facilitate a seamless user experience
- Enable citizen channel shift and increase inclusion and choice
- Boost the personalisation of customer services
- Promote a coherent approach to transparency and the open data agenda.

## Supporting value for money and flexibility

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- Rationalisation and alignment of software, hardware and ICT resources to support and deliver savings through the Managed Market Place
- Support shared services
- Enable greater flexible and remote working
- Promote resilience and agility to respond to emerging opportunities.

## Influence through advocacy

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- Use the status of the PSICT Board to influence and shape national initiatives and standards
- Increase access to national and European funding streams
- Enable other public services, partnerships and partners to participate in the successful delivery of the PSICT Strategy including the South East 7 group, health, education and others.

# Aims

The following aims drive the policy of Kent Connects.

## **Investment maximisation**

Maximising leverage from public sector investment in ICT and digital services to improve efficiencies and increase value for money by working collaboratively.

## **Open public services**

Encouraging greater transparency and thereby enabling the shift towards a commissioning culture.

## **Digital by default**

Increasing access to online channels to improve social inclusion.

## **ICT innovations**

Exploiting the benefits that emerging technologies will bring.

## **Public service redesign**

Dissemination of good practice.

## **Digital infrastructure**

Fully utilising the benefits of the roll-out of the broadband agenda.

# What partners want

Partners join Kent Connects for a number of reasons. They see the benefits of working together not only in terms of sharing knowledge and solutions, but saving money.

By the sheer nature of the partnership, many of the public sector organisations subscribing to Kent Connects face similar issues. By collaborating under the umbrella of Kent Connects, finding solutions is easier and more cost-effective.

The following case studies detail just some of the reasons organisations join Kent Connects.

## Case study: saving money

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Kent and Medway Commissioning Support Unit (KMCS) provides support for the eight clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) across Kent and Medway that were formed when the NHS restructured in April 2013.

Prior to that, the primary care trusts were grouped together under the banner NHS Kent and Medway.

NHS Kent and Medway, and subsequently Kent and Medway Commissioning Support Unit, have enjoyed membership benefits of Kent Connects beyond their expectations. In the last year, as a result of being part of Kent Connects, the creation of the regional data centre has reduced costs for network connectivity significantly.

Mark Gray, Partner, Corporate Services, KMCS, said: "This in turn saves taxpayers' money – something we are always keen to do, so that there is more money available to invest in patient care."

## Case study: working together

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As well as being members of Kent Connects, some of the councils in Kent are also working closely together with shared service projects.

The Mid Kent Improvement Partnership (MKIP) was created in 2008 to improve or maintain service quality and resilience while delivering savings and improved efficiency and value-for-money.

The development of a shared ICT service was identified as a key building block to the development of this partnership and in April 2012 formal agreement for MKIP ICT was given.

This is a shared service providing a range of operational and strategic ICT services to Maidstone Borough Council, Swale Borough Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, working in collaboration with Kent County Council.

The MKIP authorities commissioned the development of a shared system to focus on three key areas:

- To reduce risk through ensuring the widespread and consistent use of current best practice and ensuring appropriate policies for security and continuity are in place
- To improve the quality of service by ensuring that service delivery remains focused on business outcomes
- To reduce cost through better utilisation of resources, improving efficiency by sharing capability across the partnership and the reduction in the duplication of services.

The *Shared ICT Strategy* seeks to rationalise information and information systems and strives to ensure that any proposed developments or enhancements will result in the partnership authorities moving closer together in terms of software, hardware, infrastructure and service delivery processes.

EK Services has seen Canterbury City Council, Dover District Council and Thanet District Council join together under a shared service agreement. The services shared by the three councils include customer services, ICT, revenues and benefits and brought 360 staff under the agreement.

EK services deals with:

- 2,130 PCs across all three councils
- 140 different software systems
- Collection of £167m of Council Tax
- Administration of £175m of benefit spend
- 600,000 telephone calls.

Donna Reed, Director of Shared Services for EK Services, says: “The aim was to reduce costs (savings of 24 per cent in year four) and maintain the same level of service to each council.

“A large piece of work has also been done on sharing best practice, standardising processes and procedures. A centralised service desk was established early in the process, enabling our customers to have one point of contact. We have put our staff through a detailed training programme to enable them to resolve 90 per cent of problems at the first point of contact.”

EK Services’ ICT strategy *Sharing the Gain* is approved by each authority and is helping the councils develop the work plan and direct resources over the next three years. The National Audit Office is happy with the work of EK Services, reporting: “EK Services represent a very good example of what can be achieved quickly and with minimal investment.”

## Case study: training for staff

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Kent Connects has established a joint training programme that supports the development of IT and related skills. Members benefit directly from staff completing the Shared Services Training.

Sharing services is difficult as it requires individuals, organisations, and partnerships to work together in new ways. It requires high levels of mutual trust and a clear shared vision.

The training programme up-skills staff to enable them to work with partners and deliver shared services faster.

Carol Patrick, Head of ICT Partnerships for Kent Connects, said: “Virtually all local authorities are now looking at shared services as a way of saving money. The programme we’ve been running since 2012 has helped us to lead the way in working closely together and developing shared services.”

In addition, some staff at Kent Connects’ partner organisations are taking a Postgraduate Certificate in Shared Services with Canterbury Christ Church University, funded by Kent Connects.

Dave Lindsay, Head of IT at Maidstone Borough Council and Chief Information Officer for Mid Kent ICT Services, said: “The Post Graduate Certificate in Shared Services Architecture provides a roadmap for shared services, from the strategy to the vision to developing the business case. It provides a wealth of information and knowledge, backed by case studies and academic research; perhaps most importantly it provides a wide range of tools and techniques that can be plugged in at every stage of the process to ensure a successful outcome.

“On a personal level it also provides a qualification which will increasingly become a requisite benchmark in the public sector.”

Other opportunities offered to staff have included the ITIL Foundation Certificate in IT Service Management, ITIL Training Course, VMWare and Windows Server training.

## Case study: working with others - Kent IT Alliance

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The Kent IT Alliance (KITA) is a new (2013) agreement between three Kent universities and Kent Connects to help promote IT innovation and knowledge transfer across Kent.

It supports collaboration and provides opportunities for knowledge transfer, joint funding, research and development, and the exchange of innovative practices through the use of technology.

KITA offers students from the universities of Kent, Greenwich and Canterbury Christ Church the opportunity to undertake IT placements and student projects for Kent Connects’ organisations.

Students are given an opportunity to work on projects such as developing apps, cybercrime, mobile working and information governance. Placements are made available for up to one year and also include work on data sharing initiatives, co-creation of prototypes, authentication and security.

Both Kent Connects and the universities believe students will benefit greatly from the work-based experience and Kent Connects partners will gain from the students' expertise.

Carol Patrick, Head of ICT Partnerships for Kent Connects said: "Technology changes so quickly we want to make sure we keep abreast of latest thinking and skills. Young people will bring vibrancy to the work we do and will help us to develop solutions while gaining valuable experience in the workplace. This is a win/win partnership."

William Benson, Chief Executive of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Chair of Kent Connects' Public Services ICT Board, said: "We're keen to help students gain the practical skills they will need when they enter the job market."

"They can roll their sleeves up and get involved in a variety of projects that will contribute to their coursework while partners can deploy students in areas that need both time and research. To offer this to computing students across three Kent-based universities provides a fantastic opportunity not only for the students but also for Kent Connects partners."

"We believe this collaboration with universities will also inject a new way of thinking into the work of the partners of Kent Connects and will support skill development as a two way street. We will be supporting the students, but we very much consider that they will be supporting us in a very valuable way."





# Projects, services and events

## Transformed by you event

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Transformed by you is a regular event and competition to find innovative ways of using technology to improve Kent neighbourhoods which involved more than 250 ideas being submitted in 2013.

The competition is held regularly and attracts entrants with an interest in computing, digital media and with related skills. In 2013, as well as submitting ideas, entrants also took part in an Innovation Day to develop the ideas and help them become reality.

Kent Connects offered £9,000 in prizes in 2013 for the best ideas and prototypes in three categories:

- Helping people to help each other
- Helping people keep fit and stay healthy
- Getting people involved in arts and culture.

Entries included an app to connect people in need with people who can help, a student cookbook app, and a TV-based service which can monitor heart rates via a remote control.

Kent Connects' Carol Patrick, Head of ICT Partnerships says: "The Innovation Day brought together people interested in technology to develop visual and software prototypes of digital tools that tackle local challenges."

The University of Kent IT Clinic and Microsoft supported the competition.

The Kent Developer Forum is taking this event forward and will bring together local public services and local digital agencies to better understand and shape how online services are commissioned and developed, as well as showcase the best of Kent's technology innovation.

## Managed Market Place service

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As part of the original governance work for Kent Connects, it was identified that there was a need for a platform that could enable partners to better share, sell and buy IT services and products in a more cost-effective way.

The Kent Connects Managed Market Place has been described as a brokering service for subscribers to trade products and services. Each partner can be considered an entity and can act as a supplier, purchaser or both. Any trade between a supplier and purchaser is brokered by the Managed Market Place. The actual contract is between the supplier and purchaser. In many respects, at its most basic, the Kent Connects Managed Market Place functions in a similar way to the popular online service Amazon with some elements of eBay. The Managed Market Place was originally devised for Kent Connects partners only, but could be extended in the future.

## Kent and Medway Regional Data Centre service

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Two regional data centres offer partners of Kent Connects, and external clients, a safe and cost-effective solution for shared services server hosting to store data.

The centres, in Chatham and Maidstone, are hosted by partners Medway Council and Kent County Council who are able to offer the servers at preferential rates to other Kent Connects' partners.

The data centres provide:

- 30 per cent cost savings on rack space
- Enhanced data sharing security capacity and disaster recovery at no extra cost
- Capacity to free up premises elsewhere
- Reduced carbon footprint and energy costs
- A facility that makes it easier for partners to share services
- Shared knowledge and working practices between partners.

## Kent Public Services Network (KPSN) service

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KPSN is a single ICT infrastructure for Kent Connects' partners which originated from Kent Connects.

Serving 1,100 sites and 250,000 users, KPSN has increased ICT capacity, resilience and security to deliver faster, more accessible, and better public services to residents. Overcoming technological barriers to collaboration, KPSN has already saved £9m.

Key to KPSN's success is its governance through a partnership structure. All 16 partners have, in KPSN, standardised and joined up their ICT provision. This opens the door to integration and shared services all being progressed. Shared building control, revenues and benefits services, a virtual call centre and the Medway/Kent regional data centre are just four examples.

KPSN's framework and extensive catalogue encompass all future ICT procurement. This joined-up approach maximises buying power to achieve value-for-money. Expressions of interest from authorities elsewhere in the country recognise the benefits of KPSN and the network will also expand to local community organisations and to commercial telecoms providers willing to tackle Kent's digital divide.

KPSN was the first partnership in the country to achieve an aggregated solution to the Government Connect Secure eXtranet (GCSx), saving money and time in meeting exacting compliance standards. Standardisation across the partnership has brought other competitive advantages, not least a Kent and Medway-wide ICT career structure and a more flexible ICT workforce.

**If you would like to find out more about Kent Connects, visit  
our website [www.kentconnects.gov.uk](http://www.kentconnects.gov.uk) or email  
[enquire@kentconnects.gov.uk](mailto:enquire@kentconnects.gov.uk)**