

Kent Connects - A Partnership Success Story

Case Study - Providing Network Security

At A Glance:

Projects

(1) Aggregated GCSX Connection and
(2) Aggregated Secure Remote Access (ARA)

Implementation Partners

Kent and Medway local authorities, central government departments and others.

Key Challenges

Safeguarding ICT systems and data security whilst at the same time enabling (1) organisations to exchange information and (2) staff to work remotely.

Solution and Services

Authorities signed up to aggregated solutions via the newly launched Kent Public Service Network (KPSN) to meet strict compliance standards whilst broadening access.

Implementation Highlights

Joint project management saved time and money. Aggregation through KPSN ensured standardisation across the partnership. Shared infrastructure simplified joint working. Kent Connects was announced winner of the national e-government award for shared services.



Key Benefits

- Fast, secure exchange of personal and confidential data between government agencies
- Improved ICT infrastructure to support flexible, remote and mobile working
- £1m savings achieved through economies of scale
- Better environmental sustainability.

“Kent Connects partners faced conflicting priorities: to widen ICT access whilst upgrading security and minimising public expenditure. By working together they improved capacity and achieved savings of £1m. Their pioneering approach is now being adopted elsewhere.”

*Antony Parker,
Business Implementation Manager, Kent Connects*

Peace of Mind

ICT security is high on the list for any public sector organisation. Legislation safeguards citizens' rights to data protection and there are significant financial penalties, as well as the risk to reputation, for any authority found to have breached requirements. At the same time, organisational data, including personal and confidential records, is increasingly likely to be held on centralised systems and to be shared with other agencies to help deliver more 'seamless' services. Systems are also being opened up for employees and customers to access from any PC or device at any location. All this needs to be achieved without compromising security.

Here we look at two innovative projects where Kent Connects partners collaborated to solve these problems.

Secure Data Transfer between Government Agencies - Aggregated Gateway to GCSX

In 2009 the government imposed a deadline for all UK councils to join up to its secure extranet – then called the Government Connect Secure eXtranet (GCSX) – for the safe exchange of data between central and local government departments. Joining up required adherence to a strict Code of Compliance (CoCo), representing considerable investment for each individual organisation.



Kent Connects partners already had experience of developing and procuring shared technological solutions. They elected to collaborate again, deploying a programme manager to oversee development of an 'aggregated gateway' to GCSX. The gateway was delivered via the newly launched Kent Public Service Network (KPSN), itself a Kent Connects initiative, to provide partners with a common broadband infrastructure. Shared investment meant each partner could benefit from a higher specification for less cost. Having a standard solution simplifies the joining up of ICT and public services.

Aggregated Remote Secure Access (ARA) – Opening up Access to Staff and Customers

ARA is a subsequent initiative, also delivered via KPSN and also adhering to stringent compliance standards – in this case GCSX CoCo FIPS (Federal Information Processing Standard). Partners can provide access to their own secure local area networks from any location via the World Wide Web. The service allows partners to replace existing solutions and save on future procurement, licence and maintenance costs. Unisys – KPSN’s network supplier – also assists users with the work to switch over their current remote access traffic into the solution.

Substantial Cost Savings and Other Benefits

The GCSX gateway saved more than £0.33m on set-up, including typical savings of £10K per location on central government installation costs. Network services costs were also reduced, typically by 25% per partner per year. Centralised project management saved officer time equivalent to approximately £560K across the partnership.

The scale of savings with ARA is smaller. East Kent Services has just reported a saving of £2.5K but more typically the cost of procuring a replacement remote access service would be in the region of £12K for an equivalent specification.

Strategically, by working on standard solutions delivered via KPSN, the partners are moving towards the goals of shared ICT services delivered over a common infrastructure. This minimises the quantity of circuits and cabling required, which reduces carbon footprint, the digging up of roads and the associated disruption to traffic.

Connecting People

Kent Connects is a founder member of the GCSX Aggregated Solutions Group (ASG) together with LPSN (London), PSBA (Wales) and the Essex Online Partnership. There are also representatives from Lincolnshire, South Derbyshire, North East Derbyshire, South Yorkshire, and North Devon authorities.

Existing partners are extending their use of the GCSX gateway, for example to reduce fraud, streamline court action and support the Gateway network of multi-agency, one-stop shops in Kent’s town centres. Kent Connects is encouraging take-up of ARA and we are now looking to work with KPSN to offer it as a key service to other users.

“ARA offers us operational and commercial benefits. Firstly the service has a level of resilience we could not have afforded on our own. Secondly maintenance is centralised but we maintain local control: the best of both worlds. Thirdly the licence supports business continuity by allowing us to temporarily scale up the number of remote users at short notice. This means that, in periods of heavy snow for example, staff can work from home and help maintain customer services.”

*Timo Bayford,
Technical Systems Manager, East Kent Services*

Kent Connects is an award-winning partnership of all the Kent and Medway authorities, Kent Fire & Rescue Service and Kent Police, a powerful alliance of public service providers. Together we tackle the technological barriers to the joining up and sharing of public services. We do this through co-ordinated research and development, commissioning and procurement and networking and training events. We also provide a number of partnership services.

Further Information:

for further information, please visit www.kentconnects.gov.uk
or email the Kent Connects Partnership Office at enquire@kentconnects.gov.uk.