

4G Education - Bridge Academy



The Bridge Academy, Hammersmith and Fulham, is a pupil referral unit, set up to deal with the educational needs of children deemed unable to attend school.

The reasons for attendance vary from learners who have been excluded to ones that cannot face the social interaction of a mainstream school, for example due to bullying or personal home circumstances. The Bridge Academy caters for up to 175 learners, up to 30 of whom work exclusively from home. This provision ensures that children excluded from school for more than six days are cared for, and that the government requirement to make sure no child goes without access to education for a period longer than six days is met.

The challenge

The Bridge Academy's curriculum is designed for all learners to spend a percentage of their week learning online. To this end all learners are provided with computer hardware and a fixed Internet line. To meet the needs of all the learners, The Bridge Academy needed filtered connectivity from a third party supplier.

3G speeds were not sufficiently reliable for the applications and usage needs and 3G access proved difficult to filter and maintain Internet security. They had to buy fixed business ADSL lines for each learner, which involved a minimum 12-month contract, a minimum two-week delivery timeframe (often longer) and a considerable amount of the Academy's valuable IT resource time to ensure everything was set up and working correctly.

Due to the nature of the school, many of the learners referred to the Academy move home frequently within the academic year, because they are often fostered or have disrupted home situations. Last year alone there were 15 moves across the organisation, some moving 2-3 times within that one year.

Each time a learner was moved it would mean a cancellation charge and move, another 2 week delay for the learner, who would be unable to get online access during that timeframe, and yet more expensive IT resource

to set the solution back up.

The solution

UK Broadband has addressed the issue of providing connectivity to the learners at home by providing wireless desktop modems and wireless connectivity enabling pupils and staff to stay connected when moving around anywhere within the footprint of the base station.

UK Broadband provided a live trial from their 4G base station on Charing Cross Hospital to demonstrate the solution using their own licensed frequency and providing 20 wireless desktop modems for new learners as they joined or existing learners when they moved. The IT staff were also supplied with 4G wireless dongles. The Bridge Academy is recognised as a technology pioneer in education, so the purpose of the trial was not only to demonstrate how UK Broadband could meet the needs of the Academy, but also to act as a showcase to other authorities and departments.

The benefits

The trial commenced in March 2010, and initially ran for four months to the end of the 09/10 academic year. It was so successful that The Bridge Academy requested that the trial be extended to cover the 10/11 academic year.

UK Broadband's 4G wireless solution has already provided the Academy with significant cost savings due to the reduction in cancellation fees and IT resource time. The learners have suffered no loss of connectivity due to moves that would previously disrupt their education; they simply take the wireless modem to the new address ? no re-install time/resource.

The connectivity is fast, reliable and secure because it uses LTE over licensed frequencies and to date there has been no loss of service, with the network providing 100% availability even at peak usage times. ?Since the trial commenced we have had no issues with connectivity at all over the wireless network,? stated Andre Bailey, Assistant Head of e-Learning at The Bridge Academy. ?It has provided 100% coverage right up to the edge of the defined coverage area and you know that when you establish the connection it will work and it will be fast.?

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- [Bridge Academy case study](#) PDF Download (0.57 MB)

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