



The Bridge Academy Hammersmith and Fulham

The customer

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. Of the remainder, most attend the main site but others engage in college courses or specialist individual provision. The Childerley is a satellite organisation that provides short-term intervention for mainstream learners at risk of permanent exclusion and those with fixed term exclusions.

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. One-to-one teaching is also provided in exceptional circumstances at the Cobbs Hall site where The Bridge Academy maintains a permanent classroom.

The challenge

When first approached, The Bridge Academy was simply looking for a back-up solution in case the school fibre link was damaged because the road in the surrounding area was frequently being dug up.

However, when UK Broadband met and discussed the overall needs of the Academy, it quickly became clear that whilst this issue was easily addressed, the additional benefits wireless communications could deliver were far wider.

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.

Highlights

Objectives and usage

Digital inclusion and education

Location

London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham

Solution

4G desktop modems, placed in learners' homes, transmitting over UK Broadband's licensed 4G wireless spectrum from our local base station

Key benefits

- High capacity, secure service
- Reduced cost vs fixed line rental
- Ease of redeployment when learners move
- Reduced IT resource requirements

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.

The Bridge Academy Case Study

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.

This was compounded by the supplier taking the default position that any problem must be the customer's, so every time there was a fault, the IT department had to run several time consuming tests before the supplier would send an engineer out to fix the problem causing a huge resource issue for the department.

The solution

It was quickly determined that UK Broadband could address the back-up needs immediately by installing a 4G wireless base station to link directly to the school's fibre link, which could also enable the Academy to get connectivity to London's Grid for Learning to meet the filtering needs.

However, in addition UK Broadband could also address the issue of providing connectivity to the learners at home by providing wireless desktop modems and wireless connectivity from the same base station, which also enabled 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, as was Ian Barnwell, Director of Technology at the nearby William Morris School.

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 WiMAX 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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Andre Bailey – Assistant Head of e-Learning



the bridge **academy**

The potential

When discussing the potential of the trial Andre went on to say “The most exciting point of this trial is the future possibilities it has opened up, including the ability to deliver an extended wireless campus.

“This solution can deliver seamless, secure and reliable connectivity from your home, through your journey and into your school or workplace. For learners and staff alike, it removes the need for infrastructure at individual establishments, instead allowing users to access the resources they need wherever they go.”

Whilst this is one small trial, with over 9,000 children of school age in Hammersmith and Fulham alone, the addition of just 10 base stations could enable every child in this area to have secure Internet access making it a highly scalable and cost-effective solution which could help meet the needs of social inclusion too.

Extend this vision to allow other public services and workers such as social care, district nursing, fire, ambulance and police to use the exact same network and the potential savings are huge for this borough and any others ready to embrace the future of secure 4G Wireless technology, which is available today from UK Broadband.



About us

UK Broadband is the UK's largest holder of national radio spectrum suitable for 4G mobile services and fixed wireless solutions.

We provide wireless data capacity, equipment, services and solutions to the telecoms industry, service providers, channel partners and the public sector.

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