



## Boosting education with better technology

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Andrew Unsworth  
Head of eGovernment  
The City of Edinburgh Council

### The City of Edinburgh Council, in partnership with BT, has overhauled IT in its Children and Families Department to create a more collaborative educational environment

#### Client

A 15-year strategic partnership with BT will help the City of Edinburgh Council revolutionise service delivery, and gain first class networked IT services and associated support services. Equally importantly it will help deliver large-scale transformation projects, such as this one involving the Children and Families Department (the area of the Council that incorporates Education and Social Services).

Paul Deponio, ICT Service Improvement Team Leader in the Children and Families Department, recalls: “By 2005 much of the computing equipment in use in our schools was over five years old, having been provided to meet our target of having internet access in every classroom by the year 2000. Aside from donated new equipment, there had been little investment since. Operating systems were becoming obsolete, servers were proving unreliable, and the infrastructure could no longer support many of today’s applications.”

#### Challenge

Edinburgh’s schools and community centres enjoy a great deal of autonomy so that they are better able to tailor their services to serve their unique learning environment and experience. This autonomy extended to the IT infrastructure, which had inevitably spawned a wide variety of different hardware, software applications, and support arrangements. This somewhat uncontrolled approach had led to a number of performance issues. Compatibility and reliability problems were commonplace and IT support costs were escalating.

The City of Edinburgh Council decided to set up a joint project team involving the Children and Families department, its eGovernment department, and BT. Andrew Unsworth, Head of e-Government at the City of Edinburgh Council, comments: “BT had been very flexible in supporting the legacy IT infrastructure but the situation was not sustainable. Working together we gained approval for a major investment programme over a three-year period across the whole education ICT estate.”

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### The BT Differentiators

As part of its long-term partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council, BT brings substantial skills and resources to bear, including:

- Programme management expertise in major public and private sector national and global projects
- Understanding of the technical and logistical issues involved in major networked IT services programmes
- Proven ability to work across a matrix of multiple third party suppliers, and manage the resulting dependencies

## Case study

# The City of Edinburgh Council Children and Families (C&F)

**“With BT we have a true spirit of partnership, working collaboratively to a common set of goals. Much more quickly than expected we have a modern networked IT services infrastructure that will serve the needs of the Children and Families Department for the foreseeable future.”**

Paul Deponio  
ICT Service Improvement Team Leader  
Children and Families Department  
The City of Edinburgh Council

## Solution

The plan was to replace all computing equipment in Edinburgh’s educational establishments, upgrade the network, and implement a new service model with advanced remote management. The programme was far reaching: involving over 250 different sites, more than 12,000 PCs, and some 55,000 email account holders.

Effective planning and project management would be the cornerstone of a successful transition. Paul Deponio says: “The programme would have three separate phases. The first would deal with the core infrastructure to upgrade the network and establish a centrally managed and supported server infrastructure. Phase two would see the replacement of desktop and laptop PCs. Finally, BT would implement a new email system based on Microsoft Exchange 2007 with Active Directory.”

## Offices worldwide

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One of the biggest challenges was to introduce effective controls over PC build yet allow the flexibility needed in an innovative educational environment. Paul Deponio continues: “In the past people bought their own hardware and loaded whatever applications they wanted, which inevitably led to performance issues. With the new arrangements BT introduced the concept of a standard build. Now if individuals want to load a non-standard application BT will test and verify it to ensure compatibility.”

Communication was also critical to success. Each educational establishment was allocated a BT single point of contact with whom they agreed the asset register of equipment to be replaced and the scheduling of the migration exercise. Each school decided for itself when it was ready for the transition. Andrew Unsworth comments: “BT added a lot of value through the management and communication of change, and by introducing a new service model based on best practice.”

The replacement of the 12,000-odd desktop and laptop computers was completed in just seven months. BT issued regular newsletters, ran open question and answer sessions, established a helpline, and – at the time of the changeover – made sure floorwalkers were on site to provide user assistance.

Andrew Unsworth recalls: “When there were teething problems BT responded magnificently, deploying additional resources to ensure that the vast majority of issues were resolved by the time the schools opened for the new summer term in September 2007.” Old hardware was either scrapped in accordance with environmental best practice or recycled for reuse.

## Value

The £6 million transformation programme has been a huge success. Educational establishments throughout Edinburgh now have a fast, reliable, and consistent IT infrastructure with support services underpinned by clear service level agreements. This is already enabling much more collaborative business models to emerge, with the ability to rapidly share and disseminate important information – such as innovative curricular content and student-centred insights – right across the Children and Families Department.

The implementation of a unified email system across education has standardised addresses and also allows users to securely access their mailboxes remotely over the internet. Calendars and whereabouts are visible, improving people’s ability to co-operate. Wireless access is now commonplace, and the reliability and speed of the network have been substantially enhanced. Students and staff have access to a secure virtual learning environment where files can be shared; and enhanced printing and storage facilities are uniformly available.

Andrew Unsworth observes: “This was a very ambitious programme yet it was delivered on budget and within two years rather than the three that we originally envisaged. BT did a great job, the transition was very smooth, and we now have a fully sustainable service model.”

Customers agree, with independent satisfaction surveys indicating an average score in excess of 80 per cent. Users now have a single point of contact to report IT issues or seek assistance. Over 90 per cent of calls to the service desk are answered within the target of 30 seconds. Around 60 per cent of all issues are resolved remotely, and both incident resolution and change requests are nearing the target of 95 per cent completion within target.

Paul Deponio concludes: “With BT we have a true spirit of partnership, working collaboratively to a common set of goals. Much more quickly than expected we have a modern networked IT services infrastructure that will serve the needs of the Children and Families Department for the foreseeable future.”

## Core BT Services

- Managed networked IT services
- IT hardware and software supply, build, and implementation
- Consultancy, systems integration, and project management