

Customer Story

Education Industry

South Gloucestershire Council delivers innovative IT services to over 100 schools



“As time has passed, it has become more and more obvious to us that we made the right decision in selecting Ericom, who support whatever we want to deliver, in the multitude of different ways we want to deliver it.”

Andreas Burt
ICT Strategy Manager
South Gloucestershire Council



Innovative and flexible IT systems are important for all organisations, but in education, they are absolutely essential. Government education initiatives and inspirational teachers seek new ways to raise standards in teaching and learning, and they look to IT for support.

South Gloucestershire Council has deployed Ericom products enabling it to deliver a wide range of IT services for 115 schools across the county. Highly flexible, Ericom's technology allows the council to support the latest Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) strategies and roll out services to a new generation of mobile devices. As the demands of government and the needs of teachers and pupils evolve, the council can utilise its existing investment to adapt and expand its services without compromising security.

INDUSTRY

Education

CUSTOMER

South Gloucestershire Council

PRODUCT

Ericom® Remote Access

CHALLENGES

- Centralise IT services, file storage and applications for 115 schools over 130 sites
- Ensure consistent, high performance for up to 48,000 users
- Deliver remote access to centralised systems
- Allow access to the SIMS management information system via mobile devices
- Enable pupils to access applications and files from home

SOLUTION

- Deploy Ericom centrally managed access solution
- Centrally deliver applications and data to schools across the county

BENEFITS

- Cost savings from the centralisation of software, hardware and services
- A consistently reliable service, even during unforeseeable disasters like floods
- Flexible remote access for teachers from any device, encompassing BYOD
- Mobile access to SIMS management information system
- A secure platform for home-based learning

Flexible Mobile Access to SIMS Management System – from anywhere, any device

Even in large organisations, most IT departments only deliver IT services for hundreds or a couple of thousand employees. The Education Services team at South Gloucestershire Council has to meet the IT requirements of a staggering 48,000 end users.

A COST EFFECTIVE IT STRATEGY

Across the county of South Gloucestershire there are 115 schools, of which 96 are in the primary sector. Many of the smaller schools were finding it increasingly hard to develop, maintain and fund the IT systems they needed to support the curriculum. South Gloucestershire Council therefore took the strategic decision to offer centralised IT services to all the schools across the county.

The primary goal of this approach was to improve the quality of the IT provision at each school, while reducing overall IT costs. Initially, the council aimed to make it possible for pupils and teachers at any school to log in securely to the council's systems and access a wide range of learning resources, software applications, email services and file storage. However, it wanted the flexibility to be able to adapt to the changing needs of the education sector over time.

After a period of evaluation and testing, South Gloucestershire Council selected Ericom. The council considered a number of alternative technologies, including products from Microsoft and Citrix, but it felt that these solutions were more geared up to the corporate market, both in terms of functionality and price. "Ericom has a good model for the education market, which is also more cost-effective than the alternatives," says Andreas Burt, ICT Strategy Manager at South Gloucestershire Council.

RELIABLE AND RESILIENT IT SERVICES

In the first phase of deploying Ericom, South Gloucestershire Council made it possible for teachers, members of staff and pupils to access IT services from any PC within any of the county's schools. Files, resources and applications are stored and backed-up centrally, and schools have access to them over a wide

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area network (WAN). This consolidation led to cost savings, as fewer software licenses were required across the county, and IT hardware at the council head office could be fully optimised.

From the outset, Ericom delivered the availability and high performance that schools needed. Teachers can use IT in the delivery of lessons, create and save work and communicate with colleagues, while pupils can make use of a range of educational applications during the school day. "Ericom performs exactly as we expect it to and delivers a good experience for end users," says Andreas Burt.

Over recent years, there have been a few instances when schools have had to close unexpectedly following incidents such as floods or fire. In

these emergency situations, the schools have relocated to other buildings and even co-located other school premises. However, throughout all this disruption, teachers were still able to access their work and resources. "Ericom gives us the flexibility to deliver educational IT services wherever we need to," says Burt. "It gives us proven resilience to unexpected disasters."

BYOD AND FLEXIBLE REMOTE ACCESS FOR TEACHERS

In the second phase of the Ericom deployment, South Gloucestershire Council introduced a remote access service for school staff, enabling teachers to work from home and use their own devices, including smart phones, tablet computers and laptops, at work. Andreas Burt says: "Ericom allows us to provide safe, secure access to all our centralised IT services from any device."

When the new remote access service was introduced, the reaction was extremely positive. "Initially, we rolled out the capability for head teachers," explains Andreas Burt. "Over 50% of them came straight back to us asking us to make it available to all their staff too."

Using Ericom's flexible access solution, head teachers and other members of staff can now gain remote access to all the applications they need, including SIMS, a management information system from Capita Education Services. Teachers no longer have to be in school to use SIMS to track pupils'





progress and attendance and, consequently, they can respond to issues more quickly. There is no risk of data loss, because sensitive pupil information is not retained on the laptop or mobile device once the user has logged out.

HOME-BASED LEARNING FOR PUPILS

In the next phase of deploying Ericom, South Gloucestershire Council intends to make it possible for pupils to access the centralised IT services and resources from home. In preparation for this, it is currently working on the development of a library of resources that will benefit pupils in different year groups. "We plan to provide a toolkit of applications that pupils can use at home," Andreas Burt says. "Ericom's

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The IT team at South Gloucestershire Council finds it relatively easy to deploy new services using Ericom. What is more, on a day-to-day basis, the solution requires minimal support and maintenance. Just 16 members of staff manage the entire IT

infrastructure for education services, a system that can be accessed by up to 45,000 pupils and 3,000 staff over 130 sites. Andreas Burt says: "Ericom is very easy to set up, very easy to deploy and very easy to manage. That's the joy of it really."

Over time, the council will continue to expand and develop its education IT services to meet the needs of schools and families in South Gloucestershire. With Ericom, it has the flexible platform that it needs to continue to keep pace with IT trends and new educational initiatives. "As time has passed, it has become more and more obvious to us that we made the right decision," Andreas Burt says. "Ericom supports whatever we want to deliver, in the multitude of different ways we want to deliver it."

ERICOM – ACCESS DONE RIGHT

Ericom® Software is a leading global provider of Application Access, Virtualisation and RDP Acceleration Solutions. Since 1993, Ericom has been helping users access enterprise mission-critical applications running on a broad range of Microsoft Windows Terminal Servers, Virtual Desktops, legacy hosts and other systems. Ericom has offices in the United States, United Kingdom and EMEA. Ericom also has an extensive network of distributors and partners throughout North America, Europe, Asia, the Far East and Africa. Our expanding customer base is more than 30 thousand strong, with over 8 million users. For more information about Ericom and its products, please visit <http://www.ericom.com>



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