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| <b>Date</b>        | June 2018   |
| <b>Key stages</b>  | All   |
| <b>School type</b> | LA maintained, nursery, primary, secondary, academy, MAT, PVI |
| <b>Themes</b>      | Business services, School budgets, ICT                        |

## Hertfordshire Internet and Connectivity Service (HICS)

### Context

The Herts for Learning (HfL) Hertfordshire Internet and Connectivity Service (HICS) is run in partnership with schools. HICS provides a safe, secure network, which is designed to enable schools to access the internet and education services in a supported environment.

### Brief description

When government funding for school internet connectivity ceased in 2010 Hertfordshire County Council took the opportunity to create a safe, enhanced, value for money internet service for schools. Since the creation of Herts for Learning in 2013, the Company has worked closely with Hertfordshire based schools and academies to develop a high-quality connectivity provision tailored to their specific needs.

As HfL is run with a not-for-profit ethos, it means that any savings and efficiencies are kept and reinvested within the school community for the benefit of school children across Hertfordshire.

### Delivering a tailored service and savings for schools

In 2017, after lengthy research and a full re-procurement exercise, RM were awarded the HICS contract to deliver broadband services to HfL's customers. RM are an education-only Internet Service Provider (ISP) with over 22 years' experience in the sector, providing internet connectivity services to over 3,500 individual schools in the UK. RM's service is tailored to the specific needs of schools as outlined below, alongside free access to regular online and face-to-face CPD to all of their broadband customers. They have partnerships with over 21 Telecoms providers and have guaranteed congestion-free access to all their lines, meaning schools can get a connection that's fast, safe and reliable.

### **Better services**

The new HICS includes a number of enhanced features and benefits for schools, including:

- Safety and security
  - Cloud based web filtering, that is fully customisable to each school's requirements, including at an age-appropriate individual user level. RM's service is fully compliant with Department for Education initiatives such as Keeping Children Safe in Education, Prevent Duty and ongoing updates to Ofsted's Common Inspection Framework
  - Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) and Prevent alerting as standard, together with the ability to create customised web filtering alerts based on individual establishment requirements
  - Industry standard fully-managed firewalls with built in resilience
  - Protection against Antivirus, and Anti Malware through in-line filtering

- Protected against external attacks with DDOS protection and Intrusion prevention services.
- Choice and flexibility
  - Ability to choose from a large variety of connection types around your schools requirements with options for backup connections for added resiliency
  - Ability to have local control of web filtering policies, DNS and Firewall settings.
- High performance
  - Uncongested service with uncapped speeds and unlimited downloads to each school
  - Fully resilient service across multiple data centres with resilient links to ensure maximum uptime
  - Experienced ISP in education with a proven track record to deliver high quality service.
- Support
  - Fully managed service with a market-leading service level agreement
  - Proactive service management – systems can display and highlight issues for resolution before schools are aware of them.
- Additional features
  - A supported VPN solution to enable secure remote access for staff to school-based systems
  - Inter-site connectivity to enable multi-site collaboration with schools and multi-academy trusts to share services with simplicity and ease.

### **Migrated on time**

The complex process of migrating from the old service began at the end of September 2017 and 509 schools were moved from the existing network onto the new one in time for the February 2018 deadline - a process which took only 19 weeks.

### **500+ schools enrolled**

Although schools are free to choose from any providers in the marketplace, there are now over 500 Hertfordshire schools enrolled in HICS service. With this level of loyalty to the network, significant economies of scale have been achieved, with even greater discounts being passed back to schools.

### **Impact**

- **Improved network** - the new HICS has an increased contractual uptime of 99.99% reliability, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- **Improved service** – an enhanced portfolio of services for schools
- **Reduced prices** - as a result of having over 500 schools signed up to the new network, HfL have been able to give schools a reduction in their annual contract costs of at least 15%.

*“I think HICS produce a very responsive, supportive service. They understand schools' issues and the need to resolve issues quickly and successfully.”*

Executive Headteacher, Hertfordshire secondary school

*“It struck me the other day that our broadband provision since migrating to RM has been excellent. I can't recall any downtime of note (hope I haven't cursed this!) and overall we are getting on with projects and teaching without having to worry. Can I just say thank to you and the team for the smooth migration and ongoing service?”*

Deputy Headteacher, Hertfordshire secondary academy school

## **Kevin Crawley – HICS Coordinator**



Kevin Crawley manages the Hertfordshire Internet Connectivity Service on behalf of over 500 Hertfordshire schools and academies and is responsible for the successful delivery of HICS to these sites. Kevin worked very closely on the smooth migration to the new provider alongside Lewis Richardson, HfL's Head of Technology Services.

Kevin and his team monitor the overall delivery of the connectivity service ensuring the service provider meets all parts of the Service Level Agreement. They are responsible for the central web filtering policies and liaise with the eSafety Team to provide a safe but flexible internet experience for the end user. Kevin and his team have regular meetings with Network Managers and train schools to ensure they make the most of the new provision. They produce regular reports on the performance of the HICS service to schools' ICT Strategic Headteacher and Governors Group.

Kevin transferred to Hertfordshire County Council, then to HfL from the original schools' broadband provider, Virgin Media in 2010.

When not at work, Kevin enjoys spending time with his wife and two children, and loves playing and watching football. He is a season ticket holder for 'The Hatters' (Luton Town Football Club) in his home town.

### **Next steps**

HfL aims to continue to deliver a market leading connectivity service to schools, embracing any new technologies whilst maintaining high performance levels.

Schools have initially committed to HfL and RM for three years but if it continues to be successful, there is scope to increase this.

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| <b>Related documents and links:</b> | <a href="http://hics.hertsforlearning.co.uk/">http://hics.hertsforlearning.co.uk/</a>   |