

Mersey Regional Ambulance Service

Supporting an Emergency Services network



Paul Lucock – Head of IT for MRAS

Running an ambulance service that works out of 35 stations requires a substantial communications infrastructure. Aside from its daily mission critical demands, Mersey Regional Ambulance Service NHS Trust (MRAS) made a commitment to implement a cutting-edge network that would offer better ways of working.

“We have strict new targets to meet, including a requirement for all staff to be given access to email and our intranet”

That would not necessarily be a problem for a single site operation, but rolling out a network that covers 35 ambulance stations across two counties, ten additional locations from Southport to Crewe, and involves more than

1,200 staff, posed a considerable challenge.

For the ambulance sector, finding ways of improving cost effectiveness without compromising service quality is a constant challenge. With such a large transformation in hand, MRAS took the opportunity to look at how savings could be made on its telephone network. A survey revealed that some 40% of its phone calls were made to people within the organisation. By arranging for these calls to be carried over the new IPVPN network, internal calls are now free of charge, resulting in considerable savings.

According to Paul Lucock, “This is probably the first implementation of its scale within the ambulance service. Now all our staff have to do, is pick up the phone, dial a four-digit number and they’re connected.”

Name:

Mersey Regional Ambulance Service

Industry sector:

Health and Emergency Services

Location:

Merseyside

Business challenge:

To put in place a network that covers 35 ambulance stations across two counties

Solution:

An organisation-wide IPVPN carrying voice and data over high bandwidth IP connections

Products:

ntl:Telewest Business IPVPN

Business benefits:

Access to online training material and better inter-station communication



After several major suppliers submitted proposals, Telewest Business – in partnership with enterprise network specialist Omnetica – won the contract. “It provided the best solution for our needs,” adds Paul Lucock.

Based in Hemel Hempstead with over 1,000 staff across the UK, France and New York, Omnetica are recognised as experts in enterprise networks and have partnered Telewest Business on many large-scale projects.

Implementation discussions got underway in late 2002 and were swiftly followed by the introduction of an organisation-wide IPVPN – a Virtual Private Network carrying voice and data over high bandwidth IP connections. The delivery deadline was tight, driven by NHS Information Authority funding timescales, however full roll-out was completed in May 2003.

The Service was able to draw on the expertise of the Public Sector division of Telewest Business. This specialist group, comprising Local and Central Government, Education, Health and Emergency Service teams, was developed by Telewest Business to help public sector organisations reach government electronic service delivery targets.

“The Telewest systems have given us the opportunity to improve the way we run the administrative part of the business”

Paul Lucock,
Head of IT

Understanding the challenges,
terminology and prescribed targets

has helped Telewest Business to better support and implement appropriate solutions. For Mersey Regional Ambulance Service this specialist support was critical. Implementing such a large-scale project meant that their IT department would be heavily burdened and resources were not available to appoint a full-time project manager. Telewest Business worked hand in hand with the Service, providing dedicated account management, advice, technical support and face to face project meetings throughout.

The Wide Area Network capabilities of the IPVPN solution, not only fulfil the targets of the NHS Information Authority, i.e. access to email and the NHS Net, but implements better ways of working and develops new processes through the Service’s intranet.

Some of the benefits Paul Lucock expects to see are access to online training material and better inter-station communication. One way in which the Service has already benefited from the new infrastructure is through the implementation of a rostering system, which allows managers to allocate resources as required and manage shift patterns; an operation that was previously far more complicated and involved numerous telephone calls. In the future, other possible opportunities include patient record access and CCTV.

To find out more:

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