



“Our flexible working solution from Vodafone is going to play a significant role in Bolton Council, improving services and cutting the costs of computer connectivity by £76,000 a year.”

Ray Crompton, Corporate ICT Business Development Manager, Bolton Council

power to you



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Neil Smithies, ICT Business Support Officer, Bolton Council

Bolton's reputation for making quality products, forged during the boom in textile production following the Industrial Revolution, is alive and well with locally-made steel providing the framework for large parts of the 2012 Olympic Stadium in London.

In common with local authorities nationwide, today's civic leaders on Bolton Council face the challenge of providing the right mix of services for more than a quarter of a million residents, at a time of severe financial constraints.

Its response, the Bolton Plan 2009/2012, was an ambitious strategy document setting out the Council's vision to transform local services, as well as creating more sustainable working practices and reducing operating costs to make the most of stretched budgets.

However, without greater flexible and mobile working, combined with enhanced data security, the Council knew it was unlikely to meet its goals.

Costly office space

Research showed that some of its 15,000 employees were often more productive when they worked from home or delivered support out in the field, rather than from behind a desk. The Council knew that more widespread use of flexible and mobile working would improve services while reducing the need for costly office space and work-related travel.

Given the often sensitive and confidential nature of much of its work, council leaders had to be certain that mobile devices were protected and secure, so that if a device was lost or stolen, sensitive and valuable data wasn't lost or didn't fall into the wrong hands.

The idea of working flexibly wasn't new. Staff already used Wi-Fi, mobile and secure home broadband connections supplied by the Council. Unfortunately, the software that supported remote working didn't provide access to locally installed applications and end users found it complex to operate.

Management costs were increasing too. Ray Crompton, Corporate ICT Business Development Manager at Bolton Council, recalls: “By having to support and maintain security for multiple systems, management costs for flexible working were high. Moreover, as we rolled out more flexible working devices, these costs increased.”

“VSRA ensures that end users get the best internet connection available, wherever they are. This freedom to work remotely will help the Council reduce office space by 25%.”

Ray Crompton, Corporate ICT Business Development Manager, Bolton Council

Secure remote access

The solution was Vodafone Secure Remote Access (VSRA). With VSRA, employees can securely access any application they require when working outside the office. The technology provides fast and secure access to all systems via mobile or home broadband and Wi-Fi. In addition, it protects the Council from viruses and worms and stops hackers using remote devices as gateways into the network.

Ray says: “With VSRA, staff don’t have to think about how they’re connecting to the network, or whether they’re posing a risk. They also avoid a complex logon process. It’s simply a case of clicking an icon on the desktop and the solution establishing a secure connection to our systems.”

With the support of a dedicated Vodafone Project Manager and engineers, the Council launched a Vodafone flexible working pilot programme, which was well received. Joanne Hulme, Information Systems Analyst, at Bolton Council, says: “With our previous flexible solution, locally installed applications weren’t available unless I was working from the office.”

Neil Smithies, ICT Business Support Officer adds: “VSRA helps me to work productively from home and complete tasks using centrally held data. I find the home environment is often less distracting, so I can concentrate better.” The Council now plans to roll out laptops running VSRA to its 60 councillors and to several hundred members of staff.

Transformation Services

Ray is certain that the flexible working solution from Vodafone will enable Bolton Council to transform services and help significantly reduce expenditure. As the pilot programme showed, personnel using the VSRA software can work more productively outside the office safe in the knowledge that data is protected and the network is secure against viruses.

“Our flexible working solution from Vodafone is going to play a significant role in Bolton Council improving services and cutting the costs of computer connectivity by £76,000 a year,” explains Ray.

“VSRA ensures that end users get the best internet connection available wherever they are. This freedom to work remotely will also help the Council to reduce office space by 25%. VSRA will enable us to deliver more services securely in the field – at the point where they’re most effective.”

Significant benefits

- VSRA is playing a key role in Bolton Council improving services and cutting the costs of computer connectivity by £76,000 a year
- Employees are more productive when away from the office as they can reach the Council network from multiple locations and access locally installed applications
- This means that council services are improving as staff are able to devote more time to the needs of residents
- Remote working will help the Council reduce its need for office space by 25%
- If laptops or other devices go missing, Bolton Council can prevent unauthorised people connecting to the Council network
- The Vodafone solution has simplified the day-to-day management and administration of flexible working producing further operational savings
- Remote access to all applications is cutting the number of employee journeys - the drop in work-related travel will help reduce the Council's carbon footprint by a third by 2013

