

# BROADBAND AND NETWORK INSTALLATION

At the time of the Circuit Rider Project Health check in January 2003, Waltham Forest Mencap had 6 standalone PCs of varying ages and levels of reliability along with a single dial up *Internet* connection. They had already identified that their IT resources needed to be examined seriously and quickly because there were two important deadlines looming - three new staff were to be taken on and the management committee had said that money had to be spent before the end of the financial year in March.

Contact had already been made with a local telecoms supplier for a planned upgrade of the phone systems and they had made suggestions for wireless networking three crucial PCs so they could share a 500K *broadband* connection. Given the budget that WF Mencap had this made sense in the short term, but as the Health check also identified that Internet access and personal email addresses for all staff was desirable, a higher financial outlay now would result in lower costs over time. So, after discussion with the telecoms specialist, a quote was obtained for a cabled solution which would be more cost effective and allow all PCs to be networked.

Working with Lisa Flood, the Activities Co-ordinator and Project contact at Mencap, the circuit rider identified the key items of expenditure which would enable Mencap to:

- install a cabled peer-to-peer *network*;
- upgrade existing PCs with extra memory and network cards;
- buy some new PCs;
- standardise the Office *software*;
- purchase anti-virus software; and

- install broadband Internet.

Budgets were put together for three options:

- Cabled peer-to-peer networking and Internet access for all PCs
- Cabled networking infrastructure but only 3 PCs having Internet access
- *Wireless* networking but only 3 PCs having Internet access

Lasa also put together an accompanying briefing for the management committee explaining the advantages of the full cabled solutions against the limited wireless network. The MC met to discuss it and the go ahead was given for the cabled solution, with a budget of around £9,000 with the proviso that the money was spent within 6 weeks before the end of March.

Using Mencap's membership of NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations) to full advantage, quotes for Compaq PCs and extended 3 years warranties at discounted prices and a hub were obtained from Icon, and Office and Antivirus licenses from Phoenix Software. The telecoms supplier, Nucleus Solutions (020 8504 5860), also helped out by providing a Cisco broadband *router* at no cost because it had been obtained for another client who then didn't need it.

Coming in under budget, orders were placed and the work began. Lasa prepared the way for the network by helping source memory and network cards and installing them. Two PCs were donated by Outward Housing and these were upgraded and software installed. The cablers arrived and after a day or two of minor disruption the broadband connection was in and staff were happily emailing away.

By the start of April Mencap's network was up and running. It wasn't all plain sailing - the wrong disks arrived for the Office software but were quickly replaced. Then a Compaq PC hard drive died and although Compaq initially offered to allow us time to attempt to recover the data, when they turned up they denied this and took the disk away. There was also some confusion over the system disks supplied with the PCs which were correct but which the support engineer swore were the wrong ones. This meant that they didn't fully install all the drivers for the network card, graphics, sound card etc. - so more work for the *circuit rider*!

Having the network meant that Mencap were able to think about consolidating data and also needed a solution to backing up their Quickbooks accounts which was taking over 4 *floppy disks* to do. An external CD writer was purchased from Icon and shared folders were set up on the finance PC so that it would act as a file server. Questions over security of data using passwords were still ongoing but now data is being backed up regularly and anti-ivirus software has been set to update on a weekly basis.

Source: <http://www.ictknowledgebase.org.uk/networkcasestudy2>