



CASE STUDY

Sparks

Full IT
Support



Unified
Communications



Cloud



Security &
Compliance



Network &
Infrastructure



REQUIREMENT: IT AND TELEPHONY INFRASTRUCTURE



GCI was tasked by children's charity Sparks to provide a secure and reliable, best-of-breed infrastructure that would support the charity's current demands and growth plans.

THE CLIENT

Sparks is a children's medical research charity, funding projects across a breadth of serious childhood illnesses and disabilities. Since 1991, Sparks has funded more than 275 research projects in over 80 hospitals, universities and research institutions across the UK and overseas. It carries out a vast range of pioneering projects and groundbreaking research into childhood conditions, and in February 2017 it partnered with Great Ormond Street Hospital's (GOSH) Charity, merging their national research funds and making up to an extra £2 million available. Demand for the charity's research and development expertise was increasing and its team was expanding, and as a result Sparks needed to move its operation to a new, larger location in Westminster.

The office move presented the opportunity for Sparks to completely overhaul and update its IT and communications systems. The charity was using a number of servers, equipment and applications from numerous suppliers that were unsupported, poorly maintained and out of date. Therefore, the charity required a sustainable IT infrastructure that could support its growing organisation and increasing demand on the network. Sparks turned to GCI as its trusted partner for the complex relocation project, tasking the Converged ICT Services Provider with designing, deploying and managing the new IT infrastructure whilst ensuring minimum impact on the day-to-day running of the organisation.



TECHNICAL SOLUTION

GCI designed a complete restructuring of the IT and telephony infrastructure at Sparks, focusing on improving the charity's legacy technology systems and increasing data protection reliability. This included a new IP telephony system to make the internal and external phone infrastructure easier to synchronise and secure, while providing a platform for rich Unified Communications and Collaboration applications in the future. The LAN network system and Firewall were also upgraded to improve internal online communications across a far more secure network, with a centre-point for wireless connectivity. Full training on the new IT system was given to Sparks' IT team so they could see first-hand how to maximise the benefits of the new infrastructure and how to externally manage the desktops and IT infrastructure.

Following the deployment, GCI was also appointed by Sparks to provide a Fully-Managed Service for its desktops and IT infrastructure, which includes a complete remote backup of all IT services to ensure business continuity in the event of a future office move, loss of data or damage to existing systems.

SUCCESS AND COMPANY BENEFITS

The IT transformation project and ongoing managed services are delivering a number of benefits to Sparks. The upgraded network and move to IP telephony has provided a fit-for-purpose, future-proof IT and communications infrastructure that has been designed to grow with the charity. It offers a flexible platform to manage increasing bandwidth demand and the need for new applications and tools, such as Unified Communications. The remote backup and Managed Support Services also guarantees business continuity for Sparks; existing data servers and systems don't need to be changed or recovered as all files and applications are backed up remotely and secured, with ongoing support and management ensuring day-to-day IT issues do not manifest within the network. Finally, GCI has delivered total protection of the large amount of highly-valuable research data and personal information, whilst enabling Sparks' employees to securely access, organise and manage this information across the organisation.

Ken Biney, Financial Director at Sparks, said: *"The new GCI IT infrastructure has ensured we can not only handle the demands of expansion, but also work more efficiently and securely. The complex relocation project was managed smoothly, with continuous support services that ensured no loss of data from servers or applications. By selecting GCI, we have a trusted IT partner that can provide strategic insight and technical expertise that will support our IT requirements both now and in the future."*

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