

Background

In February 2006, a decision was made to transfer the Connexions personal advisors (PAs) to the local authority and, at the same time, to place the PAs within schools.

As part of this project, the creation of a new base was required as well as a presence within the Library. The overall objective was to make Connexions PAs and Youth Advisory more accessible to 14–19 year olds, as well as to improve both the quality of meetings and the information gathered during them.

A total of 14 schools were affected by the changes within Hounslow and, in order to achieve a smooth transition, tailored agreements had to be set-up with each school. In conjunction with these agreements, a central support accord ensuring that the deployment of IT did not become a barrier to the success of the project was essential.

A key consideration was the need to ensure that all databases and applications required by PAs would be accessible from any location within the Borough. These included applications such as Coreplus, necessary to adequately support the needs of the clients.

Intervention delivered

In order to meet the objectives, an agreement had to be sought from each individual school as to how PAs would connect to a remote database. Over an initial six week period, Mundial Consulting successfully reached agreements presenting tailor-made solutions for the successful deployment of IT to all PAs within each individual school.

An assessment of the PA's skills was also prepared and, consequently, supporting training was generated. The assessment took into consideration working practices requiring support and how the IT deployment would sustain this.

Finally, a bespoke support agreement was established between the Connexions team and the Council, allowing for the solution to be both transparent and efficient. This included a service level agreement for resolving issues, the benefits of which provided PAs contact to a dedicated helpdesk. This included established technicians with funding to provide on-site support to the schools.

Over a four week period, Mundial Consulting, in conjunction with the council and its partners, successfully deployed more than 45 laptop computers along with a standard desktop environment to all PAs in schools.

Results achieved

Following the implementation, PAs are now working directly in schools with their clients and are actively supporting the needs of 14-19 year-olds. Working from a dedicated area within the school, each PA now has a confidential environment within which they can conduct interviews and meet with their clients.

Within this environment, PAs are now able to work jointly on careers advice, CV creation and other projects which will directly improve the quality of service provided within schools.

As a result of this learning, bases have been established in the east, west and centre of the Borough. This allows PAs to work together out of term-time and provide a focal point of support for 14 –19 year olds at times such as the release of GCSE and A-level results.

The overall results show that the key learning outcomes from this project have served to act as a pilot for other Local Education Authorities (LEAs), along with the proven capabilities to provide an efficient and succinct replication in future projects.