

Circle Anglia gets connected



About Circle Anglia

One of the UK's leading providers of affordable housing, Circle Anglia is made up of seven housing associations, a specialist support and care provider, a commercial services division and a telecare organisation. With a dedicated team of more than 1,600 staff, Circle Anglia provides care and support services to 180,000 people across the UK. The seven housing associations or Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) manage 46,000 homes in areas which include London, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Kent, Surrey and Essex.

The majority of Circle Anglia's stock is general needs housing, but it also offers a significant portfolio of sheltered and supported housing, together with key worker accommodation, shared ownership, market rent and private sale properties.

The challenge

Circle Anglia was formed when Circle 33 housing group merged with Anglia housing group in July 2005, and as a result it acquired numerous legacy network connections from different suppliers that weren't integrated with the corporate network running from the main offices. These connections ranged from basic dial-ups to Virtual Private Networks (VPNs). In addition smaller satellite offices, responsible for providing housing assistance to elderly people in 3,374 properties, were not connected to the network.

Circle Anglia saw increased requirements from employees and resident scheme managers to have access to central information that would enable them to be more productive with their time. It was recognised that increased functionality and network performance would positively impact the business.

An integrated, simple and secure solution from one provider which would connect all the offices with the corporate network at high-speed was needed. Among other things, this would improve connectivity at the small offices and shelter schemes, simplify network management and dramatically reduce the number of suppliers and contracts the Group needed to manage.

The solution

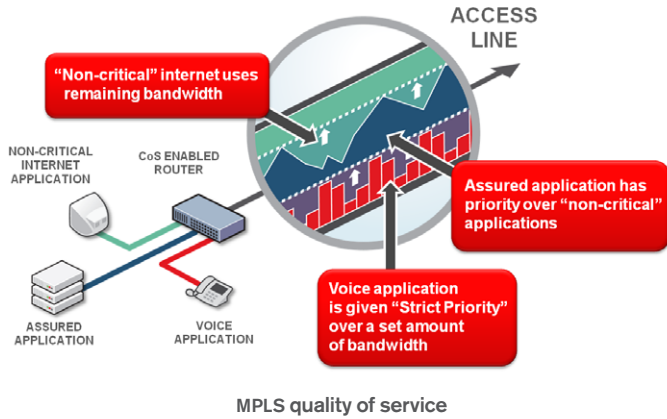
In early 2006, when Circle Anglia set out to find a solution that would solve the challenge of its connectivity, it approached a number of providers including Claranet. Following a full review and assessment of each provider, Claranet was chosen for a number of reasons, including its particularly innovative and cost-effective approach to connecting each of the small satellite offices to a single network.



Claranet's next generation Multi-Protocol Label Switching (MPLS) solution provided Circle Anglia with a highly flexible platform on which the company could base its networks. As the Circle Anglia group continues to grow by acquisition, this solution can be easily scaled up to meet its increasingly complex requirements. Claranet also streamlined and simplified the process of connecting each of the satellite sites with the main network by giving each office an easy to install, pre-configured router. This involved minimal technical knowledge from the user, reducing the time Circle Anglia's engineers spent at each office and ensuring a rapid roll-out.

The result

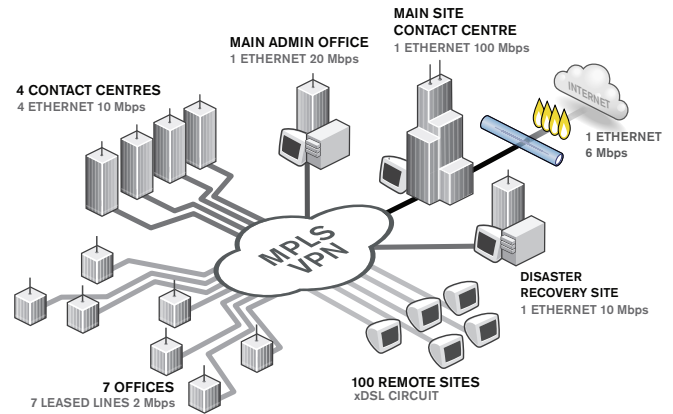
Thanks to the enhanced performance of the new network, Circle Anglia now makes extensive use of IP-based video conferencing, reducing the need to travel. This has led to lower costs and reduction of the company's carbon footprint.



Ultimately, by simplifying this process and providing high levels of support, Claranet gives Circle Anglia's IT department the freedom to focus on core development activities rather than fire-fighting installation and support problems. When new sites need to be brought onto the network, an order is simply placed with Claranet and they can rest assured that the site will be brought onto network in a hassle-free manner.

"The Claranet solution came with remote support and simplified log-in and effectively gave us the equivalent of a LAN port in each of the smaller offices," said John Paul, Director of IT at Circle Anglia. "It has revolutionised the way our resident scheme managers carry out their day-to-day tasks. Also, the simplicity of the set-up means that whenever new Registered Social Landlords join the organisation, they can easily and seamlessly connect any number of small offices at the touch of a button."

The servers at Circle Anglia's headquarters in Islington were connected in July 2006, after which Claranet proceeded to connect all the smaller sites including Norwich, Dorking, Bishops Stortford, March and Kent. Within the first six months of implementation, Claranet had ensured that all sites were upgraded to the fastest ADSL connection possible, and was supporting reliable, remote access to the corporate network and applications such as email and the internet via Citrix. This gave resident scheme managers quick and easy access to customer records, significantly reducing the time taken to resolve resident queries.



The network has also supported a strategic shift of back office functions from London to Norwich, reducing costs by 20%. It makes it possible for people to work at any office, increasing flexibility and supporting the company's hot desking policy.

John Paul concluded: "It was clear from the start that Claranet could provide Circle Anglia with the solution we were looking for. Its flexible price structure and extensive experience of connecting large networks made them the right choice for us. The team at Claranet are very supportive of the important services that the resident scheme managers provide through sheltered housing projects."

For further information, please visit :
www.clara.net