

C2K ANNUAL REPORT 2011-12



DELIVERING TECHNOLOGY FOR LEARNING



**INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE**

C2k

C2k is managed by the Western Education and Library Board, on behalf of the five education and library boards, and funded by the Department of Education to help schools in Northern Ireland achieve new standards in teaching and learning through the effective use of Education Technology. It is one of the largest and most comprehensive educational ICT initiatives implemented in the UK and has made a major contribution to the transformation of education in Northern Ireland.

It has successfully provided schools with a comprehensive managed ICT service, which delivers, inter-alia:

- a Local Area Network (LAN) in each school, with access to a Northern Ireland Wide Area Network (WAN) through dedicated broadband connections
- administration and management systems for schools, connected to the eSchools warehouse
- access to a managed learning environment (LearningNI), and, through it, filtered access to the internet and e-mail
- a secure videoconferencing service called the Virtual Classroom
- full service support via the C2k help desk

C2k is delivered through a number of Public Private Partnership contracts which enable services for schools to be procured from specialist ICT providers. The contracts (known as lots) are generally for a 5-year period, with options for extension.

The current contracts are for schools' equipment and internal networks (Lot 3 for post-primary and special schools, Lot 6 for primary schools) and a wide area network (Lot 5) which links all schools and provides them with access to the internet and a virtual learning environment (LearningNI). There is also a contract to provide schools with a management information system known as SIMS.net.

These managed service contracts expired in 2009 and have since been extended until a new contract is procured to renew the Department of Education's centrally funded educational technology provision. The procurement process for the new contract commenced in the summer of 2010 and was well underway by the end of the financial year. The contract was awarded in March 2012 with the new service provider taking responsibility for the delivery of the new service on 1st April 2012.

The new service will provide a single education network for Northern Ireland and will be called the C2k Education Network for Northern Ireland.

C2k Education Network (ni) will deliver to all grant-aided schools an integrated suite of technologies that will have the potential to engage learners, enhancing achievement and extend learning opportunities across local and global communities. At the heart of C2k Education Network(ni) the personalised learning (My-School) and working environment, for pupils and teachers, will integrate tools, applications and services across both local area networks in schools and the regional, wide area service and will support the personal and professional learning, teaching and management needs of the schools' education community in Northern

Ireland. Technical, data and content interoperability will be key to ensuring that this solution offers its users the most efficient means of achieving their goals. At the heart of this vision is the requirement for a modular, flexible and standards-based interoperable solution that maximises the possibilities offered by current and emerging technologies.

C2K SERVICE DEVELOPMENTS 2011 – 2012

During the year C2k developed the following enhancements and additions to its service:

Primary Schools

C2k continued with visits to all primary schools to promote best ICT practice and to help schools to maximise the use of their C2k systems.

Post Primary and Special Schools

In response to schools' requests and curriculum demands additional local area network storage has been installed in post primary schools to provide staff and pupils with extra storage space. The new Storage Area Network (SAN) server has been sized to provide an average of 2 GB for teaching staff users, 1GB for non-teaching staff users, 2 GB for KS4 students and 1 GB for KS3 students.

C2k Exchange

C2k Exchange has evolved from being a support document library for school staff into C2k's core communications platform.

The use of Alerts, Announcements, Document Centre, My School, Emails for C2k, RSS feeds, Zones for Video conference, Filtering and Internet Safety Zone and the along with Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and feedback links have change how C2k works and interacts with target staff audiences in schools. With granularity, the number of target groups has increased. Audiences for FMS Users, Assessment Co-ordinators, Data Analysts have all been recently added.

Information is communicated to schools and surveys conducted via C2k Exchange on behalf of all C2k's educational partners and stakeholders, including the Department of Education, CCEA, NI Assembly and Education Library Boards. Using the School Notice Board, schools and partners can submit notices which are of interest to the wide education community.

The use of on-line forms reduces the administration burden by providing a simple process to request changes to school roles, enabling schools to make software enquires and to register and search for a video conference partner. The use of forms has facilitated tracking of schools requests and improved response times. Online course evaluation forms have improved the quality of attendees' feedback which contributes to C2k's course planning.

The partner site on C2k Exchange continues to enable C2k and its private sector partners to share and contribute to the provision of correct, precise and efficient information during critical consultation, delivery and maintenance phases of C2k services.

eLearning

C2k's current online platform is LearningNI which is a flexible online learning environment developed for teachers and pupils in Northern Ireland schools and educational support organisations. It provides access to a library of digital resources licensed from educational publishers and customised to the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum. It facilitates collaboration through online courses, email, discussions and video conferencing using the Virtual Classroom. As part of the new C2k Education Network managed service, LearningNI will be replaced by Fronter. This new robust online learning platform is being used by students across the world and has a wide range of choice with extra functionality and tools which can be selected as required.

Development and uptake of eLearning has continued following the introduction of wikis, Blogs, SCORM functionality and Flexible Permissions.

The LearningNI accreditation programme continues and to date 337 teachers have achieved the LearningNI User Award, 28 teachers have achieved the LearningNI Leader Award and 11 teachers have achieved the LearningNI Expert Award.

The LearningNI Expert Award was set up in 2010 and was developed by C2k to provide teachers with the skills and knowledge to integrate use of the LearningNI platform across subject areas at a whole-school level. The Expert Award has been developed to link with GTCNI Competencies 14, 20, 24, 11 and 6 to reflect on the process of course preparation, creation and implementation, and it takes about one year to complete.

Video Conferencing

C2k continued to enhance the video conferencing service and its use by schools. C2k has worked with its managed service provider to provide Elluminate as the core product for desktop videoconferencing and collaboration. Without the need for scheduling sessions, all teachers now have access to their very own permanent virtual classroom. Teachers can invite other members of the C2k network, as well as external guests, to participate in a video conferencing session whenever they wish. A specially designed portal page has been developed and can be accessed, via LearningNI, to enable teachers to manage their Virtual Classroom sessions.

In addition C2k has extended the use of the Tandberg video conferencing gateway and recording infrastructure, in its data centre, by providing a MOVI video conferencing license to all schools. Using a web camera and audio devices, MOVI allows a desktop or a laptop within a school to become a high quality video conferencing device. This gives all schools additional opportunity to take part in group sessions scheduled between schools and with external content providers.

Schools continued to use video conferencing to support school work within Northern Ireland and beyond. Among some of the projects utilising this on a regular basis are Comenius, EMU and Dissolving Boundaries projects.

C2k have continued to showcase the potential of video conferencing over the past year. Events have included video conferences in support of CCEA's Stemworks, the anniversary of the Titanic, the Olympics and Hate Crimes.

InCAS

The requirement for all Primary 4 to 7 pupils to complete InCAS assessments in the autumn term was again facilitated by C2k. The InCAS Assessment Software, as specified by CCEA, was installed on every C2k computer and laptop in all primary, preparatory and MLD special schools prior to September 2011 to enable assessments to be completed and reports prepared for parents throughout the term.

Schools Management Information Systems (SIMS)

Throughout 2011, Service Delivery teams continued to support, by Help Desk, remote support and school visits, the wide range of software provided by C2k for the administration and management of all of Northern Ireland's schools. The provision of new functionality within the following modules necessitated appropriate training in:

- VC – Elluminate online training
- SIMS.net - Admissions, Housekeeping and Reporting
- Assessment – Data input and Analysis (Primary schools)
- Assessment - Pupil Tracking and Performance Analysis (Post primary Schools)

Further training to accommodate new school staff was provided in:

- NovaT Timetabling
- FMS (Financial Management System)
- Personnel
- Examinations
- Reporting to parents

C2k worked closely with CCEA in the continued support of Assessment and Profiles software for annual reporting to parents. Collaboration with, and training of, CASS colleagues continued in 2011 in a number of areas, namely Behaviour Management, Pupil Tracking in Assessment Manager, SEN and Video Conferencing. Support for ETI in the inspection process led to further developments in the method of data transfer which is now more streamlined and in providing school support for Follow-up Inspections. Support for the October Census Return by all schools to the Statistics Branch in DE maintained the year on year improvement in this annual process. An additional Performance Summary report was required in September 2011 from all post primary schools. This was successfully supported and DE reported high levels of satisfaction with the quality of data provided.

Support for managers in both post primary and primary schools in making more effective use of data to inform their decision-making further developed during 2011. C2k staff updated a range of Pupil tracking packs in Assessment Manager for Key Stages 2, 3, 4 and Post 16. These have greatly facilitated target setting and the

monitoring of pupil performance in primary and post primary schools, in support of Every School a Good School and Count, Read, Succeed. All of these developments have been introduced whilst keeping the associated workload of teachers to a minimum.

eSchools

In November 2011, the eSchools data warehouse solution went fully live with the achievement of the Contract Performance Point contractual milestone.

eSchools continues to provide stakeholders, including schools and DE/ELB representatives with monthly report packs, to support ongoing school improvement activities. To date, there is almost 3 years of data available within the warehouse to support trend analysis. Weekly validation reports also continue to be issued to schools, improving the overall quality of data.

In June 2011 and March 2012, examination performance reports were released to schools. These reports contain key indicators, enabling schools to compare their performance against schools of a similar type, within the same free school meal band.

In October 2011, 89 schools (Voluntary Grammar and GMI) participated in an eSchools pilot which enabled them to submit school meals census data to DE Statistics Branch via an online form.

Stakeholder workshops took place throughout December 2011, to identify future exam reporting requirements. These workshops were attended by representatives from DE Inspectorate, DE Statistics, ELBs and Post Primary Schools. Enhancements to existing exam reports have been identified and these are being progressed.

The Department of Education committed to making available to schools and employing authorities, on a quarterly basis, new absence reports detailing headline rates of absence, the associated substitution costs and the main reasons for permanent teacher absence. In January 2012, eSchools developed a mechanism to distribute these reports to schools on behalf of DE.

eSchools has commenced development of a new level of functionality which will deliver advanced analytic capabilities. This is a pilot exercise and will give eSchools Power Users the ability to perform advanced analysis on Examination Results.

eSchools will continue to evolve to meet stakeholder requirements and to support school improvement.

Wide Area Network

Regional Broadband Consortia - C2k continued its collaboration with the Regional Broadband Consortia across the UK by providing access to the National Education

Network (NEN) teaching and learning resources for all schools. Representation is maintained at the NEN technical strategy group, esafety group, communications group and the content group.

A2C - C2k worked with CCEA to facilitate the first stage of the A2C Project to package deploy and support the migration application to transfer EDI files between Examination Centres and awarding organisations.

User Management Service – During 2011 C2k was improved to provide enhances reporting on staff roles.

Internet Filtering Service - The managed service continues to upgrade the filtering infrastructure in line with industry recommended changes.

Shibboleth Access – Access to additional school purchased content was provided through the Shibboleth Infrastructure

ESAIT – In 2001, C2k continued to be involved in the planning and implementation of corporate IT services in readiness for the introduction of the Education and skills Agency (ESA). C2k has representation on the ESAIT Manager Group, Domain Admin Group; Network administration group, Intranet Group and Service Desk Group.

Changes to Schools' Estates

During 2011, C2K managed the transfer of C2k services for 6 school moves, which included 3 large post primary relocations; 2 mergers; 9 closures; and one new school.