

CHASE Hospice Care for Children



Established in 1994, CHASE Hospice Care for Children provides care and support for over 300 families of children who are not expected to reach their 19th birthday. Operating on a budget of £3 million per year it relies solely on donations and fundraising events, in the absence of any government funding for children's hospices.

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Central Services Director at CHASE Hospice Care for Children, Bill Davis

Providing a huge difference to the people it cares for, CHASE offers its services free of charge to families across South West London, Surrey and most of West Sussex.

The budgetary pressures and commitment involved in caring for these families means that the vast majority of budget is allocated to the CHASE care services, including its purpose built children's hospice - 'Christopher's'. Yet with a team of 75 employees and 150 volunteers working across two sites, the IT requirements to keep the charity running efficiently are as demanding as any SME.

Central Services Director at CHASE, Bill Davis explains; *"We cannot afford to employ a full time IT manager and must rely on each member of the backroom team having a secondary role.*

We have an IT Coordinator who is highly effective across a number of areas and who manages our two key databases for us, however there are many other IT areas for which we need leading edge IT professional support." It was recognised that CHASE needed to implement a long-term IT strategy as well as remove the burden of day-to-day hardware and software support from its staff, at its head office in the Loseley Park Estate.

At the heart of the CHASE IT operations lies two databases that were developed in-house. The first database is a highly confidential file concerning information about the families involved with CHASE. The second is a donation database that stores information about those who have given money to support the charity.

"It is absolutely critical that all of our data is 100% secure and efficiently maintained, we needed to be confident that the company chosen to manage our entire IT function could be trusted implicitly and have extensive database expertise," explains Davis.

"From the first meeting it was clear that ramsac had an understanding of what we needed our IT systems to achieve and we had an instant rapport with the team."

Implementing an IT Upgrade Plan

As CHASE had grown over the last eleven years, the supporting IT infrastructure had become a mixture of old and new hardware and software with PCs on the network running different operating systems, causing integration problems.

Davis explains, *"With such a variety of PCs and peripherals there was always a grey area of what we should allocate budget to and when."*

IT outsourcing specialists, ramsac, were quick to react and implemented a realistic hardware replacement and software update plan, that will make the available budget go as far as possible, deliver

harmony across the network and ensure reliability of the systems that are vital to the day-to-day running of CHASE.

Bringing both sites together

Another important issue was improving communications between the two sites.

The head office was using an ISDN line for email retrieval and Internet access. The initial plan was to move to a VPN (virtual private network) and establish ADSL links between the two sites. However it was soon discovered that the head office was too far away from the exchange and it would not be possible. An alternative solution would need to be found.

Undeterred, ramsac found the solution in an unpublicised service from BT.

Technical Consultant at ramsac, Paul Mew explains; *"If two sites are on the same telephone exchange, you can have a private pair of wires linking both sites together, providing a 2MB connection for only £400 per year."*

This connection enables CHASE staff to share files and information across both sites, improving both communication and efficiency

across the organisation. Further savings have been made as the head office can access the new ADSL Internet connection at the Christopher's building. Mew states; *"CHASE is conservatively saving 20k per year using the service we have now implemented."*

Remote Access for the Community Care Team

Looking to the future, CHASE in conjunction with ramsac, is striving towards remote working with the aim of providing its Community Care Team with secure access to the database via basic PCs and a Citrix connection, negating the need for them to visit the head office to update the database.

Davis concludes; *"ramsac has a practical and honest approach to our IT requirements. They listen to our needs and are adept at explaining technology in simple terms. Overall the service and customer service that we receive from ramsac is exceptional."*

For more information about the work being done by CHASE Hospice Care for Children please visit: <http://www.chasecare.org.uk/>