Case study

Claranet checks-in to the Priory to underpin patient confidentiality

About the Priory Group

The Priory Group is dedicated to helping people improve their health and wellbeing, offering a broad range of services and facilities to help people achieve high quality clinical and educational outcomes that meet their specific needs.

First established in 1980, the Group has grown rapidly both organically and by acquisition, expanding the Priory's services and specialisms. Though best known for their addiction rehabilitation services, they constitute just a small part of the Priory's operations. The Priory treats more than 70 different conditions through a nationwide network of over 275 facilities that support a wide range of needs, including specialist schools and colleges, mental healthcare clinics and care homes for older people.

The challenge

The Priory has been a customer of Claranet for eight years, initially taking a straightforward ADSL connection between a handful of sites. During this time, however, the Group has witnessed significant structural changes and significant growth.

Faced with changing requirements, as a result of acquisitions, changing company direction, and organic growth, the Priory's network has been expanded over the years, with a large number of sites being incorporated. What started as a relatively simple, albeit large-scale, networking solution has grown with the business to meet the Priory's changing requirements.

In 2008, the IT department at the Priory Group was given a mandate to migrate all IT services to an integrated in-house platform and to upgrade the Group's IT systems to be 'best in class'. Accordingly, the IT department undertook a comprehensive business systems strategy review, assessing all existing systems and platforms across the business to see where improvements and efficiencies could be made.

Tina Walton, CIO at the Priory Group, explained "The business had changed significantly since Claranet initially implemented our network, and while it was meeting our requirements well, we were keen to find out what we could do to improve it in terms of efficiency, cost and security. Confidentiality is key in our line of business and we have a responsibility to protect all information, both at rest, and on transit via our networks.

"The culmination of our IT systems' review was a strategic decision to replace our existing operations systems with new integrated solutions for patient records, income processing, staff costing and business intelligence systems, all of which needed to be accounted for in our network provision," she continued.

• • •

For more information :
claranet.co.uk - twitter.com/claranet
To book an appointment or to discuss our Managed networks services :
Call us : 0845 355 2000 - Email us : business@claranet.co.uk

Claranet checks-in to the Priory to underpin patient confidentiality

With a brief to improve network efficiencies and security, Claranet designed a bespoke, innovative networking solution to satisfy these requirements. Given the sensitive nature of the Priory's business, privacy and confidentiality sit at the heart of the Group's operations, which needed to be accounted for in the ultimate solution.

The solution

With this in mind, Claranet recommended and implemented a dual MPLS strategy, part of which included an assured separation element. This meant that two distinct networks were installed over the top of the Priory's existing connections. Separating the network in this way allows the two key lines of business, the administration network and the education network, to share the same physical infrastructure while operating independently and securely. The solution promised to save resources, ease management issues and reduce costs, satisfying the requirements set by the brief.

Here Claranet uses encryption to underpin the separation of services and the virtual separation of the networks. The two networks provide a platform for building resource-assured VPNs, and support multiple control systems by partitioning resources.

Moreover, separating the administration network from the education network at root ensures confidentiality and data integrity, and allows for the effective use of sophisticated, but commercially available, encryption techniques.

Disaster recovery also features in the upgraded solution. The Priory operates its own large data centre, which they manage in-house, but now replicate everything in Claranet's data centre as a back-up. Should something go wrong in their data centre, the network switches seamlessly over to Claranet's as a failover, ensuring the delivery of line-of-business applications.

The benefits

While the new strategy took the Priory Group into unchartered territory, their faith in Claranet was repaid in full. Tina Walton explained: "When Claranet first introduced the concept of the combined dual MPLS and assured separation solution, it wasn't something that we had previously encountered. It's highly innovative, and there were few real-life examples that we could look to. But having worked with Claranet for a good amount of time, and built up a strong relationship with them, we decided to move forward on the project. Fortunately the solution has proved to be a brilliant success. If it's any measure, if we were to build another data centre tomorrow, we wouldn't hesitate to install the solution again.

> *We need to deploy critical onsite applications, and Claranet's solution has allowed us to do that safely and securely. Installing entirely distinct networks for our administrational and educational streams means that we've been able to bolster our encryption techniques and minimise the risks of a data breach."*
>
> **Tina Walton** - CIO at the Priory Group

A big benefit of the project has been its cost-effectiveness. The new network configuration meant that the Group needed only to maintain the access connections it had for each site, rather than investing in additional infrastructure. With the number of sites on the network approaching 300, this meant significant cost savings. In addition, though the solution has evolved since the initial implementation, Claranet's original network remains in place, representing a sound investment.

"We have been a Claranet customer for over eight years now and during that time the Group has experienced rapid growth, largely by acquisition. From the point of view of our networks, this might have posed significant integration problems, but at every turn, Claranet has been fast to react, and have evolved the solution to meet our often-complex requirements.

"The most important thing I can say about the solution is that it works. We shouldn't and, importantly, don't have to intervene with the network. We have the confidence that our networks will support us, which in turn allows us to concentrate on building the business," Tina Walton concluded. ■

For more information about Claranet services, and the benefits these deliver, go to: www.claranet.co.uk

claranet
www.claranet.co.uk

For more information :
claranet.co.uk - twitter.com/claranet
To book an appointment or to discuss our Managed networks services :
Call us : 0845 355 2000 - Email us : business@claranet.co.uk