

ICONS - Integrated Communications Network Services

ICONS: the largest converged data and voice network in Europe.

Description of Improvements

The ICONS programme is part of a two-year DWP IT Transformation programme which is designed to support the delivery of welfare reform to the public by driving more value from IT. This involves reducing IT costs while improving service levels through the medium of standardisation of infrastructure and services.

Two separate ageing networks will be replaced by the most modern telephony and data network in the country. A single Voice-Over-IP (internet protocol) network will carry data, voice and video. IP (internet protocol) is the standard, powerful but simple protocol used by the internet to carry digital information. Converged IP networks use the same principles to carry both data and voice – analogue voice transmissions are turned into digital data and carried over the same network.

Front line staff will be able to manage their current workflow more effectively, completing their work with less manual effort and reducing the time it takes to access data to support caller enquiries. The new network will make office moves easier and improve desktop access to new systems. It will help improve collaboration and teamwork through videoconferencing and more integrated communications across e-mail, voice, instant messaging and video. There will also be greater opportunity for flexibility in organising work, the potential to link call centres and enable home and mobile working.

The direct benefits of shared infrastructure are improved service levels, improved resilience, and lower costs.

The rollout of the new network to DWP is being done in increments, starting with initial pilots.

By the end of the programme, staff will have received new telephone handsets (or in call centres handsets and headsets); the option of a 'follow me' facility (phone number follows you around when you log in with your PIN); a single dialling approach for the whole estate - which means short codes work across all DWP sites - improved performance and line availability; and managed support services, including telephony services, data services, equipment room management, cable management, video and mobiles.

Indication of Scale & Complexity

The programme is the largest deployment of a converged data and voice network in Europe, and will be rolled out within 15 months. (Call Centres will continue until 2008).

In addition BT will be undergoing an extensive transformation programme of its own service delivery capability - and co-ordinating all its activities with the DWP's other large supplier, EDS, who is standardising all other IT services. Both DWP and its suppliers are adopting world-class best practice standards in service management through the deployment of ITIL (IT Infrastructure Library) processes. (See Annex A) These will improve the efficiency, consistency and quality of the service, and will involve specialist training.

Solution

Central to the solution is the implementation of BT's 21st Century Network, which brings the latest in technological solutions and business efficiency techniques by offering communications from anywhere to any device. An end-to-end IP-based network, 21CN will consolidate BT's complex network and systems infrastructure to ensure that the delivery of the next generation of converged services is faster, more efficient and more cost-effective than ever before.

For DWP this will mean:-

- 58 new service lines
- 130,000 IP phones
- 3,000 LAN (Local Area Network) switches
- 1,500 routers
- 1,500 analogue converters
- 25,000 contact centre seats
- 1,300 sites
- 450 operator consoles
- 248 video conferencing seats
- In the region of 50 site cabling upgrades

Facts & Figures on the difference made to date

The ICONS Transformation has currently delivered:

- Standardisation of the legacy voice networks onto a single standard. This is an important step in the move to Voice Over IP.
- Delivery of Wide Area Network (WAN) and Local Area Network (LAN) upgrades to 320 - over a quarter of the DWP sites
- The first 1000 IP telephones being installed in the first Jobcentre Plus site. The Internet protocol Telephony (IPT) pilot will involve installing IP (internet protocol) telephones and some operator consoles at 54 DWP sites across the country during October and November 2006.
- To date all price point and service level adjustments have been delivered to schedule and the programme is being delivered with minimal disruption to the business.
- Two contracted price adjustments, with a combined value of £874,590 towards the ongoing stepped reductions in BT's fixed services charges.
- The Programme remains on course to deliver, on schedule, the remaining fourteen price adjustments which will deliver further effective total savings of £4,414,322 on the fixed service charge over the two-year IT transformation period.

Client expectations

BT has to

- Work with the department and other third party providers to deliver a successful programme
- Deliver the new technology with minimal disruption to the business
- Comply with the DWP's governance processes and internal strategies
- Be flexible and innovative in identifying the appropriate solution for individual business needs
- Deliver the benefits of the project, such as cost savings and increased service levels, on time.

The pilot projects to date, which were designed to identify any issues around the rollout process and ability to meet volumes, have strengthened the approach without disrupting staff.

