

Pulsant supports Witherslack Group with private cloud

The Witherslack Group is a leading provider of specialist education and care for children and young people with social, emotional and mental health needs, communication difficulties, ADHD and complex learning needs.

The organisation is headquartered in Cumbria with a network of schools, children's homes and integrated learning centres across the country.

The Challenge

Five years ago, the group was seeking an efficient, safe and streamlined way of hosting data across all its sites. This was driven by poor performance of its existing platform and the fact that several schools experienced server issues and downtime, which impacted on operations.

As a provider of specialist education and care, the Witherslack Group had specific security and compliance requirements around the data it held. In addition to education records, individual schools and care homes are also responsible for storing medical information. Pulsant worked with the Witherslack Group's IT team to refine the project's requirements and find a solution that met the need for resilience, performance and availability.

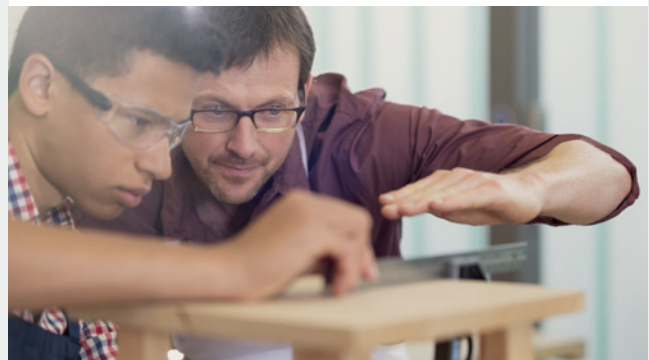
The Pulsant team designed, developed and implemented a private cloud solution for Witherslack and the relationship has flourished ever since.

Client:
Witherslack Group

Sector:
Specialist Education

Solutions:
Private cloud
Networking
Security

Outcomes:
Improved service
Mitigated risk
Enhanced security



The Solution

“Pulsant is very solutions focused, finding ways to help us overcome our IT challenges, while offering excellent levels of consultancy, from the account management team, to the technical team,” explained Stephen Hall, IT director at Witherslack Group.

Based on these requirements, Pulsant delivered a hosted private cloud platform for the education group that enables the organisation to manage and support all IT needs from a centralised location. In addition, with an installed wide-area network (WAN), individual sites have better access to the data they need. This is especially important given that some sites, such as the children’s homes, run 24 hours a day.

“Due to the types of data that the schools and children’s homes have access to, nothing could be hosted in public cloud. We worked closely with the team at Witherslack to design and deploy a solution that not only met the requirements for compliance, but also delivered the overall benefits of cloud to users, such as reliability, flexibility and availability,” explained Darren Semple, senior account manager at Pulsant.

As the relationship between the two organisations progressed, Pulsant offered more support services around the private cloud itself, as well as network support, taking over from an incumbent provider that wasn’t able to meet Witherslack’s requirements.

The Pulsant team also worked with Stephen Hall and his team to develop a hybrid email solution as the group had significant outages of Microsoft Exchange in the past. In addition to resilience, the email solution needed to include significant storage and archiving functionality.

“The Pulsant team is an extension of our own IT team,” said Stephen Hall. “They’re responsive and receptive, really helping us get the best from our IT investment. Which is why we engaged them to help us with an email storage and archiving solution.”

As an independent provider of specialist care and education, regulations state that Witherslack needs to store many communications for a period of 75 years.

The result was a Mimecast solution that specialises in cloud-based email management for Microsoft Exchange. This includes security, archiving and business continuity for emails. The solution works across two servers and Mimecast, making it resilient, with guaranteed accessibility.

“We haven’t experienced an email outage since the solution was implemented, which is exactly what the end users were demanding. In addition, staff find the encrypted portal and the ease of encrypting external emails very beneficial. Mimecast has also massively reduced our spam and ensured we have remained secure against malware.”

Moving forward

The relationship between Witherslack Group and Pulsant is ongoing, with the cloud provider assisting in an overall hardware refresh, as well as continuing to deliver support and provide expert consultancy.

This is especially relevant in an evolving education environment where traditional teaching methods have changed in the last few years and new solutions have had to be implemented to adjust to the shifting demands. A case in point is the recent rise in the use of video in education. Witherslack Group worked with Pulsant to ensure it had the right infrastructure in place to support video streaming, and the solutions to support these operational changes.

“As a centralised IT team, we deal with over 45 sites in the group and our needs are constantly evolving. From offering us support on making sure our private cloud is delivering the performance it needs to, to offering wider support around networking and other solutions that can help streamline our organisation, Pulsant plays an invaluable role, as both an extension of our own team and in the innovative and creative solutions they come up with. The account management is exceptional,” concludes Stephen Hall.

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Find out how we can help your organisation,
call **0345 119 9911** or visit **www.pulsant.com**

