

## Building stronger communities powered by cloud IT

*How not-for-profit Locality has transformed its IT operations with cloud services from FOS*



### Strong neighbourhoods, fairer society

Strong, successful and vibrant local communities are the key to creating a fairer society. That is the principle behind Locality, a not-for-profit that provides support to local community organisations across England. Locality provides its member organisations with skills development, connection with peer groups, specialist advice, project support and influencing policy-makers and funders to prioritise local communities.

As a national organisation, supporting hundreds of members and thousands of projects, Locality depends heavily on its IT systems in order to be efficient, productive and collaborative.

### Moving IT to the cloud

IT was originally managed in-house - Locality had their own on-premise server with support provided by a dedicated member of staff. This worked but they recognised the risks this arrangement posed; it meant that all their technical know-how was inside one head, who wasn't around when he was on holiday and struggled to support users when dealing with technical issues. It was costly too, maintaining an in-house server, with offsite back up and disaster recovery.

Locality made a strategic decision to move their IT to the cloud and have it managed by a specialist outside provider. They researched the market, issued a tender and selected FOS as their IT partner.

"We chose FOS because not only did they have the skills we needed, but importantly, they were on our wavelength", says Sheila Kenny, Facilities and HR Manager at Locality. "They specialise in smaller organisations and in not-for-profits."

Locality also particularly liked FOS' inclusion of a half-day site visits once a month; "It gives us a chance to ask all our questions and pick the experts' brains", explains Sheila.

## FOS.net approach

As the first step, FOS provided email and document support in the cloud, through Office 365 and SharePoint. This meant that staff could collaborate and communicate effectively, no matter where they were working. Locality had always had remote staff based outside London, but during the pandemic, remote working became standard for almost all staff.

“Working through the pandemic would have been a lot harder without cloud-based IT from FOS”, confirms Sheila. “Our staff were able to access the all information they required, and FOS were really responsive with support when it was needed. They kept our team working productively, regardless of location.”

The next stage was that FOS provided Microsoft’s cloud-based security system, enabling Locality to make better use of permissions and enforce policies. They also implemented Teams, to increase collaboration and productivity.

## Increased focus on the business

Selecting FOS to provide their IT support has been a very positive decision for Locality. “I can focus on the business”, says Sheila, “knowing that our IT platforms are taken care of. They make recommendations on best practice and provide really valuable advice. It’s great knowing I can simply leave all the IT to them.”

A recent project has seen FOS help Locality through their annual cyber essentials program. This is a Government accreditation, essential for bidding to run Government programs. “We tried to do it on our own last year”, says Sheila, “and failed the first time, meaning we had to pay to take it again. With FOS’ help and preparation, this year we passed first time!”

## Valuable support

“The half day a month of service is so useful - for example, when we got new laptops with Windows 10, we wanted to upgrade some of the old ones to use as a backup. FOS did the upgrades as that month’s service.”

“They’ve helped us with setting up a backup data line, and they’ve supported our users with everything from password resets to machines running slow, to batteries not charging. They even helped with an issue with our cloud-based phone system, which isn’t provided by them - they talked to the phone company on our behalf and helped us to get the issue resolved.”

“They provide useful guidance for our processes and policies - like our IT starter process, which ensures new employees’ IT and equipment is set up for the individual needs, and our leavers’ policy which ensures that IT rights are altered or removed when someone leaves.”

“They understand the ins and outs of licencing too, and made sure we took advantage of Microsoft’s special pricing rates for charities.”

Sheila isn’t alone when it comes to being delighted with FOS’ service; “We survey our staff to find out what they think of our IT support. The feedback was tremendous. Our staff find FOS very receptive and responsive, and very helpful on the phone. There’s no such thing as a ‘silly question’ and nothing is too much trouble.”

## A trusted partner

“If I had to sum up the best things about choosing FOS”, says Sheila, “I’d say it’s knowing I can rely 100% on them; the way that they are proactive and always thinking about what’s best for us; and their outstanding customer service.”

For Locality, supporting their members is their top priority. With their IT in the cloud, provided and supported by FOS, they can put all their efforts into supporting programs that build stronger communities and a fairer society.