

# EK Services

**EK Services is an award-winning organisation set up by Canterbury City Council, Dover District Council and Thanet District Council to provide ICT, customer services and revenues and benefits support for the councils.**

Formed in 2011, its 450 employees are spread across various Kent locations and collaborate under the shared services provider to deliver large-scale cost efficiencies that enable the councils to deliver robust local services to citizens.

*“Our ICT teams were spending a considerable amount of time maintaining backups, the old systems were backing up to tape, which was taking so long that sometimes the backups hadn’t even completed before the next cycle was scheduled to start.”*

**Paul Henley**, IT Project Leader

**COOLSPIRiT™**

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## Challenge

To ensure the continuity of council services and safeguard the welfare of local residents, its data must be highly available. “Council tax, housing, benefit and planning data must all be accessible all the time to prevent delays to council services and payments,” explains Paul Henley, Server Support Manager for EK Services. “An outage could impact residents as well as staff productivity.” This means in the event of an incident, such as server failure or flood, the council must be able to recover data quickly and effectively.

Canterbury, Thanet and Dover councils were each running a disparate backup solution, but all three were ageing and unreliable. To protect data and fully realise the benefits of having a shared services provider, they needed to streamline and unify their disaster recovery and backup solutions.

With business-critical data at stake, EK Services started to look for a fast, efficient data protection and management solution with the flexibility to address each council's needs.

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## Solution

EK Services worked with COOLSPIRiT to select and implement a new data protection and management solution. Kent Connect, a local government ICT procurement organisation, was already in partnership with COOLSPIRiT for disaster recovery and backup solutions and recommended the data management expert.

COOLSPIRiT suggested a solution based on Nexsan disk repositories and Arcserve UDP. "COOLSPIRiT recommended that we use the same data management solution as the rest of the county to give us the flexibility to backup to the Kent and Medway datacenters if needed in the future," explains Henley. "The data management expert then negotiated with the vendors on our behalf so we could take advantage of economies of scale."

COOLSPIRiT also organised consultancy services so the solution was rapidly implemented and correctly configured. The new solution includes a disk repository at each of EK Services' three datacenters in Canterbury, Thanet and Dover. Data is backed up from individual council servers to the repository, and then replicated offsite to the other council locations to enable disaster recovery in the event of a localised incident or server outage. In line with legal regulations, data is stored for 120 days.

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## Benefit

Thanks to the end-to-end service from COOLSPIRiT, EK Services now has a reliable and easy-to-manage data protection solution. As Henley explains: "By working with COOLSPIRiT, we were able to take advantage of a wealth of knowledge and experience, as well as competitive pricing." Backup windows have reduced from 24 hours to just five or six hours, and a server of up to two terabytes of data can be restored in two hours. "It would have taken us 16 to 20 hours to restore data before, so the new solution is a massive improvement," confirms Henley.

With greater reliability and automation, the team has reduced the time spent managing backups by 70 per cent. "We're no longer firefighting backup issues every day," adds Henley. "Which means staff can focus on other activities."

Most importantly, though, EK Services can now have confidence in its ability to rapidly recover businesscritical data for three Kent councils, enabling them to safeguard the continuity of public services.