

## Regional Collaboration Fund (RCF) grant based intervention Impact study template

RCF Project title	<b>Video Conferencing for Learner Reviews, collaboration and staff development</b>
Name of lead contact	John Couzins / Rohan Slaughter, Beaumont College.
Consortium members	<p>Beaumont College, Derwen College, Henshaws College, Royal National College, Treloar College, National Star College</p> <p><i>Please note that this project report has been collated from direct submissions from each College that has taken part, each section attributes the College that made the specific contributions. The report has been drawn together by Beaumont College, as project managers of the overall project.</i></p>
Other contributing organisations (if any)	

### The project

What problem or issue you were trying to resolve or improve with this project	<p>The original bid document laid out the following aims for this project:</p> <p>This project seeks to harness technology to virtually bring together all the key people in a young person's life so that they can jointly support him/her to reach their potential.</p> <p>The project will impact in the following areas, all of which are more fully detailed in the following sections.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Resources – creating a Video Conference Facility in each College</li> <li>2. student progress and achievement</li> <li>3. staff development</li> <li>4. enhance value for money</li> <li>5. enhance curriculum</li> </ol> <p><i>National Star College perspective:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Learners at a residential college may be living a long way from their home</li> </ol>
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	<p>area meaning maintaining regular links with key professionals can be challenging to provide updates on their progress and hold face to face discussion during transition planning. Formal reports are sent to the relevant professionals and dialogue is held through email and letters, but this is generally not easily accessible by learners and they have limited opportunities to contribute properly to the discussions. The purpose of this project was to engage external professionals who may be unable or unwilling to travel to regular learner reviews to participate over Video Conference, with learners becoming familiar with using the technology to share their progress and discuss their future plans.</p> <p>2. Staff at Specialist Colleges have a huge variety of teaching and learning delivery and technical skills but often lack the opportunities to share and discuss their knowledge with colleagues in other organisations due to time and travel constraints. A Video Conference facility would allow staff to collaborate with colleagues at other colleges for short ad-hoc meetings or longer shared CPD events. This could also be extended to curriculum links with learners sharing experiences and ideas on how their college is run.</p> <p><i>Treloar College perspective:</i></p> <p>The original focus of the project was on improving the review process. We undertook three review meetings with three different counties: Essex, Devon and Yorkshire and do plan further reviews.</p> <p><i>Royal National College perspective:</i></p> <p>At the start of the project we had a dedicated video conferencing device running on the JANET video conferencing system. This equipment was used occasionally for governors’ meetings as well as being made available to external customers. The quality wasn’t particularly good and the equipment not very portable.</p>
<p>What was your solution</p>	<p>Ultimately we chose the ‘GoToMeeting’ solution over all other technical solutions, for the following reasons:</p> <p><i>Beaumont College perspective:</i></p> <p>Before the evaluation of the software Beaumont purchased three pieces of hardware to enable a sufficient room conference solution.</p> <p>The ClearOne Chat 150 USB unit is an audio conference solution that has three microphones and a speaker built in. This picks up 360 degree audio from the room and also offers noise and echo Cancellation.</p> <p>For the video we purchased a Logitech C920 HD Webcam and a Joby</p>

Gorillapod Flexible Tripod. This offers a high quality video stream and flexible positioning. This hardware coupled together with using the 3 Year Subscription to GoToMeeting offers high quality video calling that are equivalent, if not better than full room systems such as the VSX 7000 which is over £4000.

*National Star College perspective:*

To research, test and implement the best Video Conference facility and affordable hardware solutions to meet a variety of requirements for internal and external stakeholders. By working collaboratively with other Independent Specialist Colleges knowledge of technical specifications and how to implement with learners with a wide range of disabilities and learning difficulties would be available.

Derwen College Perspective:

Technology:

Through the process of the colleges exploring video conferencing software Derwen explored Skype Premium at a more in depth level. We trailed this through in college test calls, multi college test calls and external meetings such as Natspec Skills competition meetings. Ultimately we chose to add GotoMeeting to our platform of Skype and JVCS. This was explored by Beaumont College and findings shared with the group. We chose this as we are able to document share for reviews, the quality was good and multiple users could join a meeting. Thus Skype premium was not purchased over a longer period as group calling was the function we explored when testing this software.

*OUTCOME: If we had not tested out various platforms to video link we would not have added GotoMeeting to our platform.*

On the 20.2.13 two reviews were carried out using Web Ex (requested from North Yorkshire LA), this request came about as a result of the initial survey of stakeholders that we carried out. A team leader for a careers advisor team in North Yorkshire contacted Derwen after the survey had closed (in December 2012). They were not able to complete the survey, however this had sparked an interest in video linking into reviews as they did not have a budget to stay locally (as Derwen is some distance from Yorkshire and the reviews were scheduled for the afternoon), thus video linking allowed them to attend the reviews even with these constraints.

*OUTCOME: If we had not sent out the survey as part of this project these key individuals for these reviews would not have been fully aware of video linking*

	<p><i>in and may have not been able to contribute.</i></p> <p><i>Royal National College perspective:</i></p> <p>Chosen solution: One solution stood out from the tests we had done, specifically in its ease of use, ability to traverse firewalls and the quality of audio and video. As a result, the group purchased licences for GoToMeeting.</p> <p>Equipment and software purchased: In addition to the software licences for GoToMeeting, members of the group purchased and trialled various video conferencing hardware. RNC purchased a Logitech BCC950 conference cam, which includes a motorised HD camera and a noise cancelling microphone/loudspeaker. We also purchased a small laptop to go with it. This equipment is ideal for a small room and the camera runs happily on even quite modest computers.</p> <p>Additionally, we purchased a number of USB headsets to send to remote users or for use where individuals already have a webcam. We were unable to connect the existing JANET system to GoToMeeting, and the system will be sold off at some point in the future.</p>
<p>Describe what you did and what happened</p>	<p><i>National Star College perspective:</i></p> <p>The initial research was completed by producing a survey and making it available online for Local Authorities to complete. The link to this was distributed to areas where learners are from by each partner to get national coverage, with 120 different Authorities contacted, including most of the London Boroughs, out of the 152 current Authorities in England. Responses were completed by 45.</p> <p>The basis of the survey was to establish;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would the Authority use Video Conferencing, if they didn't already?</li> <li>• If they would consider using it, what were the technical considerations for security, speed and hardware?</li> <li>• To establish a contact in an Authority who had received suggestions of the benefits of using Video Conferencing and may act as a champion encouraging progression and usage?</li> </ul> <p>In general, collation of the results showed only a small number of Authorities were currently using Video Conferencing, but most said they would like to and were positively excited about the idea. An associated outcome of this project is where we have evidence of at least two authorities who subsequently put in their own systems following their trials with us. Technical barriers would have to be overcome as no Authorities allowed downloading of any software by</p>

staff apart from IT support and some said they had slow connections at outlying locations. Some IT support teams refused to allow any software to be downloaded or additional ports opened, even by themselves, and where they would it was usual to require at least 7 days' notice. This meant whatever system was used it would not require system administration rights for the user.

The next phase was to test systems that may meet the requirements and this was where the collaboration and willingness of the consortium partners to support each other really paid off. Given the experience some members already had of systems led to a shortlist of 5 being selected. It also led to good collaboration on hardware solutions, researching both high end and much cheaper solutions for cameras and audio equipment and sharing results. In testing a camera costing around £100 was found to provide as good a result for general use than much more expensive solutions such as the Polycom units which cost around ~£1250 - £5,000.

National Star College tested WebEx on a 30 day trial, a solution provided by Cisco, and participated in testing of all the other systems from other partners. An evaluation tool was developed by Beaumont College which was extremely valuable in being able to compare effectively. The tool was easy to use due to the excellent design, and by sharing through the collaborative Wordpress site designed and hosted by Beaumont College results could be easily shared and added to by others who may have experience of the different products on trial. This site was invaluable throughout the project in collaborative sharing of ideas, issues and general updates on activity. At National Star College we picked up how other partners were planning to use Video Conferencing that contributed to our own ideas. Having alerts when items were added or updated was excellent and maintained interest in the site, where in other circumstances it may be easy to forget to keep going back and see posts or update your own. This didn't happen with this site, with regular interesting and informative posts.

Our results of WebEx were that it provided an extremely stable, good quality system that ran well on high and low band width situations including lower quality hardware. It appeared to have no requirements for Administration rights to join meetings and the user interface was intuitive. It had one feature that Cisco confirmed they were unable to alter in the user interface that we didn't like; whoever was speaking had their image brought to the front of all participants' screens. Learners said they found this distracting during testing and preferred the systems that kept the images in one place. Otherwise it met the specification, including running well on mobile devices such as iPads, tablets and smartphones. There was also an issue that Cisco were unable to confirm they weren't routing traffic to non-EU or US areas during calls. They

never responded to the question despite being asked 3 times, which we took to mean it may be routed outside of these areas.

The consortium agreed that Citrix GoTo Meeting was the best match to the criteria and a 3 year contract was negotiated at a significant discount due to the number of colleges taking out the contract at the same time, showing the benefits of collaborative working again.

Since having GoTo Meeting available as a platform the following activity has taken place:

- Familiarisation sessions with learners, including learners taking part in conferencing between themselves at our e-safety day. A game was played where one learner would try and persuade another to tell them something secret, or to hide their identity and pretend to be someone else. An interesting observation of these sessions was some learners had difficulty in understanding the link was live, and not a TV recording of a member of staff they knew. This established the requirement for some learners to take part in further familiarisation before the system would be used in a Review to avoid distress if seeing their parents or a professional they knew on screen.
- To 6/3/13 eight Reviews have been completed using Video Conferencing successfully for external participants. For two of these a Local Authority representative would not have participated without Video Conferencing being available, and would have relied on the hard copy report and action plan for a progress update and transition planning. This way they actively participated in the transition planning.
- A workshop and training materials have been established for staff who will use the facility, alongside a shared calendar to track bookings. The only limitation found in GoTo Meeting is there can only be one organiser account, so it either has to be centrally managed or the account shared with the risk of overbooking. A positive feature to help management of this is the ability to start a meeting as the organiser (eg a PA), hand organiser to another participant and then leave the meeting.
- A curriculum link has been established with Derwen College Hospitality learners and Customer Services learners at National Star College. Learners have discussed their course, what they are learning and how they plan to use their skills in the future. They now want to talk about leisure activities and what's on offer at each college.
- A database of Student Union/Student Council contacts and availability for inter-college meetings is established through the Wordpress

forum. Links are established between colleges and joint meetings are taking place

- A database of staff specialisms is established on the Wordpress site with contact emails. There is the opportunity for staff to link up with colleagues at other colleges and discuss their practice over Video Conference
- Senior Managers are using the Video Conference facility for Peer Review and Development and project meetings, including planning the NATSPEC Skills Competition.
- A call was successfully carried out with a partner school in Kisumu, Kenya, during a recent visit by a member of staff. Learners and staff were able to talk to each other live for the first time and share their cultural experiences. This link will be maintained and regular meetings take place over Video Conference. This facility will improve communication and interaction between the partners significantly.

Learners at Joyland Special School Kisumu, Kenya during a recent Video Conference with National Star College.



*Treloar College perspective:*

During the learning curve with our stakeholders we discovered the following:

- **LEAs' IT department protocols** appeared to support GoToMeeting over Skype, although Skype would likely be most familiar to our parents. More information about the issues for LEA IT governance would be usefully gathered, as the government guidelines they must adhere to appeared to ban Skype use.

- **Training for stakeholders** Training is needed for stakeholders at a variety of levels of technical confidence. Managing negative expectations that the technology is complicated and expensive is required.
- **Health and care professionals using VC:** Some professionals were keen to try out the technology, others are already fully confident in its use and others were quite wary. It may be useful to promote this project's findings to the national social care bodies and discover what access to IT training the average professional would have in their LEAs.
- **Parents as stakeholders** Parents were keen to participate especially if they live far away from the College and there are other reviews that are planned for the rest of this year.

Our local issues have included:

- **Web filtering** Initial problems with our external filtering service which blocked the GoToMeeting service were quickly resolved.
- **Lack of staff time:** stretched staffing resource in 2012-13 impacted on the amount of time available for partners to spend on the project at the expense of core service delivery. Locally, even short periods of time to train colleagues up were hard to arrange as everyone is so busy!
- **Possible issues for VI users:** the current model is for the one GoToMeeting "seat" to be driven by a fully sighted staff member but if a student with visual impairment wanted to host a meeting there could be navigation and accessibility issues with the GoToMeeting website (which Nick Brown detailed in a posting to the project website).
- **Sufficient training for staff to reach confident user levels:** staff who were trained needed to become very familiar with the use of GoToMeeting especially when under pressure, eg. Reviews staff hosting / chairing a review meeting alone whilst simultaneously managing part of the meeting online and enabling remote participants to join the GoToMeeting session.
- **Extra licences:** have been considered but will not likely be needed in the initial period when low numbers of operators can agree when to use the 'single room' subscription.

**Student Councils** Our Student Council coordinator Zoe Coltart is now in touch with Student Council counterparts in other ISCs Star, Derwen and Beaumont and plans to pair up groups of students by VC once the timetabling issues have been sorted out.



**IT tutors** Part-time IT tutor Mark Edwards wishes to network with other IT tutors in ISCs; and we are discussing a possible IT-related site visit to a theme park.

**Sports tutors / Paralympic Boccia specialism:** Barry Bowden, Head of Boccia Development at Treloar's and Team GB Boccia Coach, plans to share Treloar's experience and enthusiasm for disability sport, and engage other ISCs in Treloar's nationwide Paralympic Pathway Boccia Competition.

**Educational Content providers** Those JVCS content providers listed on the JANET website contacted to date are interested to offer services to schools and colleges on other platforms beyond the JVCS standards-based equipment route, to widen participation.

**International VC:** we have plans to continue links with contacts in China and Africa to enrich our Equality and Diversity focus calendar across Treloar School and College. Our initial attempt with Beijing produced GoToMeeting instructions in Chinese script, an issue which could no doubt be resolved for the next attempt.

*Derwen College Perspective:*

Reviews – As stated previously two reviews using web ex were carried out in February. On the 15.2.13 our first review using GotoMeeting was carried out. The chair of the review stated a benefit of being able to communicate with others in the review this way was 'more people are able to attend the review. It shows Derwen is doing all it can to facilitate an all-party review/cost savings for some parties'. When asked if they thought this method of communication promotes person centred planning and progress? The chair of the review answered 'yes, allows parties to 'attend' and input when financial/time constraints would otherwise mean they could not'. In response to this question the social worker who attended the review stated 'I think it promotes person centred planning in that more attendees with the technology may be able to attend. Also I hope if students wanted pre review meetings or one to one meetings with care managers while based at a residential college this would be made available using this technology'. The social worker stated she found the technology accessible and didn't feel there were any limitations to using the technology.

Initially a challenge of the project was that the majority of the focus was on reviews, which is of course important, however some colleges found it difficult to get local authority interest, so the project was diversified to explore other aspects of video linking (this is a key outcome of the approach), such as:

Curriculum – on the 1.2.13 - learners working in Hospitality from Derwen linked up with learners working in Customer Service at National Star. The group found this very exciting and really enjoyed the experience. Topics such as uniform, roles within customer service in each college, work experience and using tills were discussed. Learners suggested after the video that they would like to link up again to discuss other aspects of college such as leisure activities. This is planned again on the 15.3.13.

*OUTCOME: If the project had not diversified learners may not have had the opportunity to discuss their experiences and learn from each other in this way.*

When Derwen explored Skype Premium in College a number of tests were carried out including a test between groups of learners within sessions. This introduced learners to Skype/video linking in a vocational setting (Meeting Rooms) within the Hospitality and Housekeeping (HH) area. Thus this enhanced curriculum activity further as learners were able to carry out some work based learning in the area of video linking - in relation to practical skills in IT and Customer Care. The head of department for Business Admin would have ordinarily come over to the Meeting Rooms to set up VC for reviews; we have identified a member of teaching staff from HH as a link for this activity. So far this member of staff has had some training of how to set up Skype/JVCS/GotoMeeting within the Meeting Rooms; a protocol has begun to be devised as a guide. This training will continue after the project as a member of the transition team is going to take over coordination of video linking for reviews from the Head of Business Admin. More training for the Hospitality staff will be arranged too which can then be appropriately embedded within sessions with learners – this shows sustainability of the development from the project. A challenge of this is time – time for the liaison and training. Although once completed the benefits of this activity will be considerable: for learning in the curriculum and for staff time.

*OUTCOME: If we had not facilitated these curriculum activities this progress in regards to staff and learners developing video linking skills may not have been made.*

Student Council – the learner voice coordinator has been in contact with Henshaws college. They plan to link up with Henshaws with a group from Derwen's student council on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2013. The topic will be red nose day.

*OUTCOME: If the project had not diversified learners may not have had the opportunity to discuss their experiences and learn from each other in this way.*

Training - in January 2013 Video conferencing training for chairs of reviews was held at Derwen on 14.1.13. Leads of training session: Russell Pentz and

Laura Jones. Attended by: Quality Curriculum Manager, Vocational Curriculum Manager, Transition and Partnerships Manager, DE/DE3 Programme Coordinator (all four of these people are chairs of reviews) and the Hospitality and Housekeeping link for video conferencing.

The training covered an overview of the LSIS Technology Project. GotoMeeting was introduced to the group - key features such as document sharing and recording meetings were explored.

As GotoMeeting has been added to the platform of software at the college, participants were asked if they would like to briefly explore Skype – Skype was also looked at. For both platforms the Bradbury centre was linked to within the main College building and the quality of the two systems was compared.

The training was offered as awareness for the chairs of reviews and the HH link (of the project / GotoMeeting / Skype) additionally for their views around feedback collected from stakeholders/relevant persons when video conferencing has been used to link into reviews/with learners. Feedback was given on the draft questions compiled to collect this feedback – to be explicit this is collecting information around the accessibility of the technology, to ask if there are any limitations, additionally if there is anything else we could offer. The phrasing of the offer of video conferencing sent on review letters was agreed to be reviewed to illustrate the support that can be offered to stakeholders/parents to link into reviews (Transition Manager). This has since been altered.

This training also subsequently discussed in an unplanned way and **promoted** the use of video conferencing for other meetings, for instance the vocational curriculum manager and chief executive/principal could video link into meetings as part of the PRD group linked to a local FE college.

At the end of July there is some CPD planned to ‘demystify video linking’ and explore how video linking can promote person centred planning and enhance the curriculum. If partners in the project were available at this time we could look into video linking within this session to demonstrate to attendees video linking. This is something I will look into in the coming weeks. This also makes the developments from the project sustainable internally at Derwen and externally to partners involved in the project.

PRD – In relation to the above the Principal has sent out an email to the management team in regards to meetings using video linking. VC has been used for the Natspec Skills Competition meetings on a regular basis. For instance on 4.2.13 – a Natspec skills competition meeting was hosted from Derwen using GotoMeeting which was successful. National Star, RNC and another college not included in this project group attended the meeting.

*OUTCOME: It if was not for this project we would not have had the opportunity to promote video linking in this way.*

*Royal National College Perspective:*

Student reviews – single user

One of the key events was the first successful review meeting with a student. In this case we were conducting a scheduled review and the student's parent wished to be involved but could not travel. We offered the chance to connect by video conferencing. The review was successful and the parent commented that he would like to use the system again for subsequent reviews.

Student reviews – multiple users

In a later review a student required several people to attend their review, including her social worker and a professional from the careers service. Neither of these users wanted to travel to RNC for the review and one of them would not have been allowed to but both were required to be at the meeting. We were able to use the technology to hold the meeting with one of them using their laptop and the other using their employer's video conferencing suite.

Feedback from the stakeholders, the student and the chair of the meeting was all positive, all indicating their eagerness to use the technology in future meetings.

*Beaumont College Perspective:*

We have completed a number of VC activities since the start of the project:

We have been offering the option for stakeholders to attend student reviews since December but have only had one local authority that expressed any interest. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> January Cathy Smith a Careers Adviser from Wales dialled in using the software and found it very useful and easy to use.

We have also used the solution to join a number of student unions together from different college that were involved the LSIS project and others that are out-with the LSIS RCF VC project group.

We have also used the solution to connect classes together. In March Beaumont College and Henshaws College Media groups met to share practise and working methods. Again, this would have been impractical and expensive to have arranged for a physical meeting. The students at both colleges enjoyed the experience and found it very useful.



We have also used the solution to meet for other project activities such as those involved in the JISC DART2 project – in this case National Star, Henshaws, Beaumont and colleagues at JISC. Another example is that on 13<sup>th</sup> Feb 2013 the BT sponsored Connect to Control project C2C undertook a review using the GoToMeeting video technology, these uses were highly successful and the technology will be used again in future.

Beaumont hosted a meeting for the JISC TechDIS InBook project between –

- Beaumont College staff and learners,
- Ayr College staff and learners,
- Bridge College staff and learners,
- Langton College staff and learners,
- Kevin Hickey from JISC RSC
- Margaret McKay (JISC Scotland)

The meeting was to introduce new colleges to the Inbook project and to link them to two of the original members of pilot group (Beaumont, Bridge) and discuss and renew the code of conduct of Inbook. This meeting had around 30-40 participants in total and would not have been possible through any other means other than video link due to geographical There were some technical difficulties during the meeting, although everything was covered that was intended.

#### Henshaws College Perspective:

- Following recommendations from John Couzins at Beaumont and Paul from Visimeet I bought hi-quality, low-cost VC kit – Jabar 410 echo-cancellation conference speaker (£80) and Logitech c920 webcam (£75)
- Fully tested and reviewed Adobe Connect – Adobe gave us a month’s trial. Some success for audio conferences (DART2 project board meetings) but very little success in the video testing I did, especially to mobile and home devices including Mac. These tests and results all documented into collaborative spread sheet hosted on Google Drive.
- Supported testing for WebEx / GoToMeeting / Visimeet (*eurgh*) / JVCS / Skype Pro. VC with the other ISCs and to Paul @ Visimeet to trial software. Reported my experiences in collaborative technical spread sheet hosted on Google Drive. Help determine which software I felt was best for us.
- Bought GoToMeeting. Following tests, I decided this was the best solution.
- Trialled 2 student review meetings over VC. Invited social workers, connexions advisors etc. to participate over VC.
- Dedicated bookable room for VC. With principal leaving, we have an empty, bookable room that we can dedicate to VC during this project.
- Recommended cheap ebuyer kit for others to join in VC <£10 (products since discontinued... ☹).
- Student council VC college to college
- Media groups VC college to college
- Collaborated with 5 other ISCs. Regular VC meetings – tests and strains our software / hardware setups. 3 face-to-face meetings. Regular email / blog contact.
- Delivered joint presentation at LSIS conference. Sharing findings and recommendations for hardware / software.
- Setting up dedicated GoToMeeting email address + calendar – rather than being assigned to one user.

Example: Henshaws College and Derwen College Video Conference (feedback from student liaison worker):

Henshaws Student Council took part in a Video conference with Derwen College on Monday Friday 15th March; we asked lots of questions and answered lots of questions about college life, leisure activities, students and the student councils. The benefits of this were that we found out about what sessions they do in their college, meeting new people, what they do on their student council and having the chance to take part in a video conference.

It was very successful and we have arranged to have another video conference later in the year as we all enjoyed it so much. There was nothing unsuccessful about it; the only thing we would say is that it was a bit hard to hear sometimes so more volume would be better. We all really enjoyed it and we spoke for 35 minutes, it was a fantastic experience for our student to be involved in, from my point of view it was good to hear what sort of things they discuss in their student council and the way it is run. All in all a very enjoyable experience.

**The collaboration**

How well did the collaboration work and what were the key factors that led to this

*National Star College Perspective:*

The collaboration was one of the most successful areas of this project, with all partners keen to bring their experience and knowledge to ensure the outcomes were met. The team came with different skills, some very technical so able to answer the questions about the platform and compatibility with networks, some from a teaching and learning background, so able to identify the benefits to learners, some organisational, able to manage others and keep the project on target, and others with specialist knowledge of the Reviews and Transition planning, able to advise on how the system would be used in practice to meet the original objectives.

All the participants had excellent internal links within their own and outside of the organisation. This meant even when they didn't know the answer to a query were quickly able to respond and progress the project. The key factor was the diversity of backgrounds of staff involved to cover all areas required to make this project a success.

*Royal National College Perspective:*

Working with other colleges:  
 One of the most important aspects of the project was for the various colleges to forge working relationships and to work together towards achieving the goals. This showed particularly well during the technology phase, where we got to know each other and all helped each other in choosing and evaluating the various options.

During the trialling phase, we attempted to build on these relationships by offering opportunities for our staff and students to work with each other, using the technology. At RNC we found it difficult to get staff involved, due mainly to the pressure of work allied with the recent move to our new building. For those who were interested, we were unable to find people at

other colleges with a similar interest.

We had somewhat more success with administrative meetings, however. We used the technology to bring together a group of principals, and later, a large group of colleges interested in the new Education Bill. These meetings all used the technology without issue.

Working with external stakeholders:

One of the key aims of this project was to enable external stakeholders to attend Student's review and assessment meetings without having to travel to RNC. We send a survey to some of these people, although that didn't get very many answers, possibly because many of them were surveyed by the other colleges at the same time.

To understand the level of interest, our reviews team started to include a question about whether stakeholders would prefer to attend via videoconference. A significant proportion of both professionals and parents are now asking for this option, showing that there is a desire to cut travel costs and benefit the environment.

Working with internal stakeholders:

One of the fears expressed by potential internal users was in setting up the technology correctly. To address this, we made it clear to potential users that we wanted them not to worry about the technology and that we would supply a technician to set it up, if they wanted.

Following the trials, a programme of staff development has been made available, showing key staff how to set up the equipment and software and how to start a session. This worked very well, disconnecting the need to understand the technology from the end user and encouraging people who otherwise wouldn't like to be involved.

Sharing the task

The group suggested a number of possibly technologies and each college selected one to run through a series of tests, both internally and with each other. RNC chose the Janet Video Conferencing System (JVCS) as we were already users. The results of the tests are available in the project documents. The key to a successful test was being able to work with other colleges on each technology, setting up and being part of many different tests and discussing the relative merits of each system, based on our experiences.

Remote technology problems

Any video conferencing system relies on the technology at the far end of the



link being in working order and a certain amount of freedom to run software and install hardware, something that may be restricted by IT departments.

During the trials we had one user whose laptop simply would not work at all. In these circumstances there is nothing to do other than to ask them to connect by telephone, something that GoToMeeting supports well.

We also had one IT department who would not allow a web cam to be installed on their equipment under any circumstances. This may be something that can be dealt with over time in discussion with the IT management, but in the interim it is necessary to fall back to the phone. This can be done immediately without too much impact on the conference.

#### *Beaumont College Perspective*

The project had a slow start, that was hampered in our view by the original author of the project bid (principal at Henshaws College) leaving the College part way through the project. In December 2012 Maria Chambers, the principal at Beaumont College was asked by the Natspec board to take the lead on this LSIS RCF project. Maria Chambers delegated responsibility to Rohan Slaughter, head of technology at Beaumont to undertake a project review. John Couzins was already the Beaumont college project representative and became the defacto project manager with close support from Dave Dalby at National Star College. The LSIS associate (Tim Kelly) worked with John and Rohan and the project was re-focussed away from the original single focus on the review process (which was proving difficult due to lack of interest from local authorities) to cover a wider area of work:

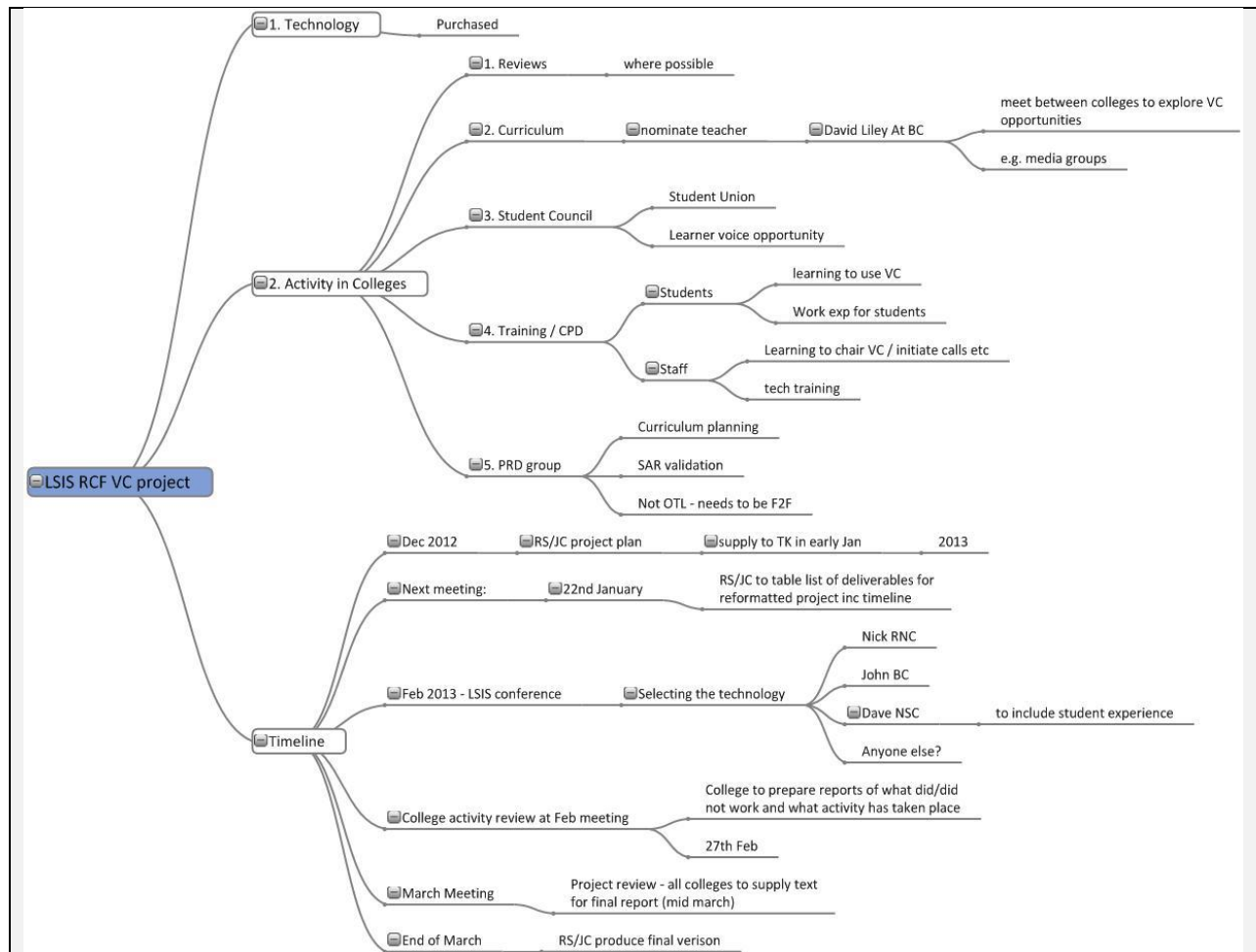
**Issues with reviews as a primary vehicle for the project.** As some colleges are having issues getting buy-in from their local authorities for remote student review opportunities (as specified in the original bid) colleges are also able to evaluate the VC technology for other elements of our practice. This is what we suggest:

- Reviews - evaluating the technology to improve the review process is still one of the elements that should be attempted, where this is possible. We are aware that there have already been a number of reviews that have taken place using VC, however it should be noted that some Colleges, Beaumont included have found it impossible to get any local authority interest in this area.
- Curriculum – the curriculum is an area that can be used to demonstrate how VC could be used to improve links between establishments. Each college will have their own interpretation of this, but an example could be within media groups to exchange information and ideas cross-colleges. We volunteer one of our teachers David Liley to lead this element.

- Student Council – Video conferencing technology could be used to connect student councils together giving learners a wider voice and allowing collaboration between student councils / unions.
- Training – There are many opportunities to use video conferencing to improve and reduce costs of training among staff, students and other stakeholders.
- PRD – Video conferencing could be used among PRD groups for such tasks as SAR validation and curriculum planning.
- We suggest that each college should pick two of the above options and have the feedback by the end of the project (March 2012). One of these options could be reviews, but it would be good to evidence other uses in line with the collaboration agenda of this funding stream. We also note that in some cases we may only be able to explore, not fully realise each of these areas, but that is seen as an acceptable outcome as it will be of use to others.

It was decided that all future meetings from Dec 2012 would be done remotely using goToMeeting to save on travel time and cost, (this is a VC project after all). A VC conference was held between Tim Kelly, Rohan Slaughter, Maria Chambers and John Couzins in late Dec 2012, this was done to address the issues LSIS had with the direction of the project. It was decided how to redirect and improve the project planning (see above) given the lack of direction / planning that was concerning the LSIS associate following the last physical meeting that took place at Derwen in November 2012. This leads us onto the project outline mind map format plan that can be seen below, this was agreed at this time.

It was felt by all partners that this change in direction made the project richer as can be seen by the perspectives of each provider college who took part. Beaumont did indeed take the lead role with the support of the LSIS associate and this intervention very clearly benefited the project, again as can be seen by individual College feedback in this report.



### The benefits and impact of the project

What benefits/ impact has the project had on:::

a. the work/ effectiveness of the organisations in your consortium

*National Star College Perspective:*

- There will be a significant increase in the number of Local Authorities and other organisations who directly participate in formal reviews and transition planning meetings. This will improve outcomes for learners and provide additional opportunities to show how learners are progressing at a time when ISCs are constantly being asked to demonstrate the difference being at a residential college is making to a learner and their future potential for living and learning independently.
- Learners learning about life at other similar colleges and the activities they are doing. This has prompted some changes to activity already

where learners commented on how they liked the learners at Derwen having a uniform for Hospitality and this has been introduced at National Star College.

- Opportunities for staff to link up to discuss their practice more easily with colleagues at other colleges.
- Our link with our Partner school in Kenya will be significantly improved through more regular real-time contact.
- Improved management of future projects through the experience of running this project following the guidance of the LSIS Critical Friend
- Planning and contact for other projects including 3 Leonardo European Projects, Worksteps Europe, Connecting Classrooms and Creating communities, including live meetings when learners are at our partners' locations throughout Europe.
- We plan to run some Trustee and Governor Meetings over Video Conference to provide more regular contact, improving communication.

*Treloar College Perspective:*

LSIS stressed that each of three projects goals were equally important:

- Technology – the task relating to the implementation of video-conferencing
- Collaboration – understanding, exploring, developing collaborative ways of working that are sustainable (there's a difference between this and simply working together)
- Improvement – the whole point of the above is to (hopefully) achieve a step change in the quality of provision i.e. make a difference

Inter-ISC understanding The early project site visits to other ISCs helped to bond the group better than if we had only met by VC throughout the project life. Every ISC is different and we learnt about each other's unique selling points. However the later meetings by VC were necessary as we all have limited staffing resource and were commonly multi-tasking in our work roles. Communication between partners fragmented at times and reminders to maintain a collaborative narrative were required.

From Treloar's perspective we have achieved all three goals and continue to achieve them as the project grows upwards and outwards. It has been a very useful learning curve. The legacy of the project will be accumulated benefits across the three year period of the GoTo Meeting subscription taken up by the six partner colleges. It would be useful to be able to access the shared project website for longer as this reflects the activity and provides a platform for continued collaboration. The potential to enrich the curriculum and to

share any new external partnerships would be useful.

#### Future plans at Treloar

- Funding additional webcams to enable whole-school or college assemblies to “visit” another school or college event or to attend a curriculum workshop
- Building on this project and keeping the inter-ISC and intra-Treloar’s momentum going!

#### *Royal National College Perspective:*

As a result of this project, we expect to offer videoconferencing *as an option at all future reviews* and possibly at assessments. It is now the standard for all of our external meetings and is expected to be used instead of travelling where possible.

In this respect, the project has achieved its aims for us and is reducing the burden of travelling as well as contributing towards our green targets.

#### Governor’s meetings

From the start of the trial phase all governors’ meetings were switched from the old system to the new one. RNC is now regularly holding these meetings using GoToMeeting. It is proving to be much more flexible and reliable and we have seen a significant increase in the take up and subsequent reduction in travelling to meetings.

#### Education bill meeting

A number of specialist colleges wanted to meet to discuss the forthcoming education bill which is being consulted on at the moment. Ten attendees were identified and we sent a GoToMeeting invitation to them along with a technical contact here that people could speak to if they needed help.

On the day we had a great mix of technologies connecting to the meeting. This included PC users with full conferencing systems, PC users with headsets and webcams, telephone users and even an iPad user. The technology behaved well, allowing a detailed meeting with a lot of participants using different technologies to communicate well without a good deal of travelling.

All users are now being offered staff development in using video conferencing with the aim of allowing users to run their own sessions and to expand the range of use, including the use of shared desktops. The technical support team will continue to offer support where needed.

The conference camera is now a bookable resource and we are acquiring a number of smaller USB cameras and headsets to allow videoconferencing without using the full system.

GoToMeeting is licenced per concurrent seat so RNC is considering second and subsequent licences as video conferences become more commonplace.

*Henshaws College Perspective:*

- We have hi-quality VC equipment on site. Low cost to replicate if needed. Can interface with all other VC systems (that have a desktop client). Very natural conversation – easy to interact with others; helps break down the barrier to the process that VC isn't as good as meeting face-to-face.
- Able to determine if Connect was the most suitable software for us. Stress test it to find failings. Used with multiple guests to help determine UI flaws. Sharing results in collaborative doc to inform others' decisions.
- Collaborative working, supporting others in their tests. Also gaining insight into different solutions – able to make informed choice rather than solely relying on others' reports.
- GoToMeeting benefits include: easy to invite others in, low skillset needed to operate, telephone conf, very hi-quality, no contact lists, no need for guest to create user accounts.
- Enabled group conversation that may have otherwise not happened.
- Easy to determine meeting times and if kit / space available. Room booking managed by admin staff.
  
- Little or no cost for guest user which encourages participation.
- College to college collaboration. Great experience for students; sharing ideas, seeing how other colleges run. No time or travel expenses for colleges in enabling this. (see additional report)
- As above + real context for magazine articles students are writing. Increased student motivation and engagement. (see additional report)
- Networking / creating relationships between staff within sector. Links make it easy to collaborate in future. Also helps determine who you might not want to work with again.
- Sharing findings beyond ISC sector. Tangible outcome from project to satisfy funders.
- Anyone can schedule and start meetings. Name displayed as 'Henshaws College'; more professional image and easy to identify in multi-person conf (rather than displaying 'Mike Thrussell' when I'm not present in the meeting). Meetings scheduled on shared outlook

	<p>calendar, managed by admin. Helps with booking the GoToMeeting 'seat'.</p>
	<p>b. the cost/ efficiency of activities</p> <p><i>National Star College Perspective:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time saved in travel and cost of expenses. At expenses of 40p per mile for car travel or £150 for a return trip to London, only a minimal number of meetings need to take place over Video Conference instead to cover the cost of the facility.</li> <li>• IT Systems support time is being saved, as Skype was commonly used and proved very unreliable, requiring regular team intervention. Staff are becoming used to being able to set up a meeting quickly with external professionals over Video Conference to resolve an issue concerning a learners</li> </ul>
	<p>c. any other aspect(s) of your work</p> <p><i>National Star College Perspective:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance at the LSIS Technology for Success provided an opportunity to present to a diverse audience from GFE and ISCs. The keynote presentations were important for information and subsequent follow up, especially those focusing on learning spaces and linking use of technology to the CIF and inspection.</li> </ul> <p><i>Royal National College Perspective:</i></p> <p>Contacts in other specialist colleges  We are hoping to use this project as a springboard towards greater collaboration with our fellow specialist colleges. The project has allowed us to forge relationships with our counterparts at other colleges and we hope to continue with and expand these as we move forward.</p> <p>Three clear avenues for this are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical support and collaboration, allowing us to discuss ideas and technologies with each other as the need arises,</li> <li>• Curriculum development, helping staff to understand what works, what doesn't and what students want and</li> <li>• Strategic collaboration, allowing principals and senior staff to work together on the future direction of specialist education.</li> </ul>

<p>What contribution to the success / smooth running of the project was made by:</p>	<p>LSIS funding: Essential</p> <p>LSIS Associate: Some</p> <p>Other contributors (please identify): Some support was offered by JISC RSC NW.</p>
<p>What did the project cost: LSIS funding + your consortium's contribution</p>	<p>£5000 LSIS funding as per original bid, plus unspecified uncosted support from IT Systems team as contribution from college – approx. 20 hours.</p> <p>Capital Purchases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 x cameras</li> <li>• GoTo Meeting 3 year contract</li> <li>• 2 x integrated microphones and speaker systems</li> <li>• Contribution to large screen monitor in Review meeting room</li> </ul> <p>Staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Management – NSC Director overseeing progress and final report, Beaumont College senior management support for John Couzins (who became project lead in effect)</li> <li>• Equipment Testing – IT support and Reviews teams</li> <li>• Conference system evaluations – IT Support, curriculum and Reviews teams</li> <li>• Learner links – curriculum teams</li> <li>• Senior Manager and Systems Manager time and travel to 3 x external planning meetings – Henshaws, RNC and Derwen.</li> <li>• CPD team workshop preparation, delivery and materials on how to set up and use Video Conferencing</li> </ul>
<p>What lessons did you learn / what tips would you give to other providers</p>	<p><i>National Star College Perspective:</i></p> <p>Set realistic objectives at the outset of the project, with clearer responsibilities for partners involved. Although this was a collaborative project, it still required a “lead” to ensure actions were completed on time. It would have been useful to have done the LSIS workshop at the commencement of the project rather than part way into it.</p> <p><i>Derwen College Perspective:</i></p> <p>Overall the challenges have been linked to time constraints – however as the project has progressed the positive and successful aspects of the project have been the increased use of video linking over the range of areas discussed above which has certainly enhanced learning for staff and students, progress,</p>



planning and efficiency in regards to time and money. In turn this has resulted in many collaborative relationships being formed, internally at Derwen and within the working group that can be continued in the future.

*Henshaws College Perspective:*

*What was successful*

- Quality of kit
- Stability of GoToMeeting
- LSIS conference presentation
- Wordpress collaborative site
- Setting up dedicated GoToMeeting email address + calendar
- Collaborative working
- Google Drive

*What wasn't successful*

- Review meetings – few replies to invites. The meetings that went ahead weren't fully successful due to user error or lack of access to kit.
- Using Box for collaboration. Confusing UI. Everyone needed an account. Not informed of changes.
- Wordpress initially not sending notifications. New content missed when blog updated.
- Initial running of the project – no clear leadership / outcomes. Project was floundering and at some-points at risk of failing.
- Focusing entire project on reviews – bid solely focused on this outcome and suggesting that each college obtain findings from 5 VC reviews in short timescale
- Felt like a huge time drain relative to remuneration; possibly due to unclear initial plan.
- XP issues – need admin to run exe.
- Confusing amount of ways to launch GoToMeeting – (MSI installer, exe download, joingotomeeting.com, Logging in on website as organiser, email link,) If you've scheduled a meeting and then load up the software – only presents you with 'schedule' or 'meet now' (which has a new unique meeting-ID – so previous invites useless) – doesn't recognise that you're wanting to meet with the previously scheduled meeting-ID.

*What did we do to fix this*

- As user error was an issue, cover brought in so I could provide technical support (to staff and guests) at beginning of meeting.
- Ditched Box and went with Wordpress and Google Drive (setting the files to public, so no account / login required). Also allowed for real-

	<p>time editing online and revision control rather than downloading file, making changes and uploading new version. Wordpress also encouraged further discussion on posts using comments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wordpress set to email notifications after request made</li> <li>• Beaumont volunteered (? [?]) to head project and meet with Tim to set clear goals / outcomes.</li> <li>• Project focus / outcome altered to included college-to-college meetings, training etc. as well as review meetings.</li> <li>• Clear, achievable goals set relative to time-frame and funding.</li> <li>• Avoid using XP! Dedicated VC room is running Windows 7.</li> <li>• Advising all users to use 'joingotomeeting.com' – rather than other methods. Seems to be the most simple and successful.</li> </ul>				
<b>Telling others</b>					
<p>What have you done to share /disseminate this project with others in the sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation at the LSIS Technology for Success Conference in February.</li> <li>• Peer Review and Development group actively using the facility.</li> <li>• Presentation to SW TECHDIS Independent Specialist Colleges Forum.</li> <li>• Presentation to SW RSC Technical Forum.</li> </ul>				
<p>Provide a quote on your experience of the LSIS RCF project.</p>	<p><i>“A fantastic opportunity to work collaboratively with colleagues at other colleges to provide a facility that will significantly improve outcomes for learners”</i></p>				
<p>Are you happy for us to use this and your contact details for marketing and publications?</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; width: 50%;"><b>Quote</b></td> <td style="text-align: center; width: 50%;"><b>Yes</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><b>Contact information</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes</b></td> </tr> </table>	<b>Quote</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Contact information</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Quote</b>	<b>Yes</b>				
<b>Contact information</b>	<b>Yes</b>				
<p>Contact details for further information</p>	<p>John Couzins, Lead Network Technician, Beaumont College. <a href="mailto:couzinsj@beaumontcollege.org">couzinsj@beaumontcollege.org</a></p> <p>Rohan Slaughter, Head of Technology, Beaumont College. <a href="mailto:slaughter@beaumontcollege.org">slaughter@beaumontcollege.org</a></p> <p>Laura Jones, Lecture, Derwen College. <a href="mailto:laura.jones@derwen.ac.uk">laura.jones@derwen.ac.uk</a></p>				

	<p>Moira Johnson, Learning Resources Manager, Treloar School and College, <a href="mailto:Moira.Johnson@treloar.org.uk">Moira.Johnson@treloar.org.uk</a></p> <p>Mike Thrussell, Assistive Technology Coordinator, Henshaws College. <a href="mailto:Mike.Thrussell@henshaws.org.uk">Mike.Thrussell@henshaws.org.uk</a></p> <p>Nick Brown, Systems Technician, Royal National College. <a href="mailto:nick.brown@rnc.ac.uk">nick.brown@rnc.ac.uk</a></p> <p>David Dalby, Acting Director of College Development, National Star College <a href="mailto:ddalby@natstar.ac.uk">ddalby@natstar.ac.uk</a></p>
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**Please email all case studies to [leadership@isis.org.uk](mailto:leadership@isis.org.uk) by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013**

## **Micro Case Study from RNC**

### Accessibility

One of our governors is blind and uses a software package called JAWS that reads the computer screen out loud. GoToMeeting doesn't support a keyboard (it insists on everything using a mouse) rendering it unusable for speech users. This major accessibility flaw is being looked at by the manufacturers and it could be considered enough to rule the software out in some circumstances.

In practice, this failure of accessibility did not stop a blind user from starting the software and making a connection. It did make it impossible to turn on any webcam, however.

To work around this, RNC built an application which performs a mouse click on the "Share Webcam" button. It is available for free download from

<http://download.rnc.ac.uk/FindAndClickIcon.exe>

Blind users should follow these instructions:

- i. Start GoToMeeting from the link provided by the conference organiser
- ii. Plug in a USB headset or conference system (must be done after GoToMeeting starts)
- iii. A dialogue box will appear telling you that new hardware is detected. Select 'Yes' to use the new hardware
- iv. Run FindAndClickIcon.exe to start your webcam.

### **Micro Case Study of software evaluation:**

Attached is the technical evaluations sheet that was completed by each college on the video conferencing solutions that were highlighted in the meeting in the October.

[See attached testtests.pdf]