

**"Remote access has made a huge difference"**  
**-Jim Riley**

**Who are they?**  
THE THISTLE FOUNDATION.

**Where are they?**  
Edinburgh.

**What do they do?**  
Provide individually-tailored services and support for disabled people and those with long-term health conditions.

**How big are they?**  
Around 150 employees.

**What did they receive?**  
Since 2006, a wide range of software from Microsoft; Cisco routers and equipment; Symantec Norton AntiVirus and Internet Security; Winfrasoft VPN-Q 2006 Enterprise; Huddle 1-Year Plus Package; Flickr Pro Accounts.

**The outcome?**  
The ongoing IT requirements of the organisation are met.

[www.thistle-foundation.biz](http://www.thistle-foundation.biz)



## Supporting those at the front line of delivery

The Thistle Foundation in Edinburgh has been a long-term 'customer' of the CTX programme – it received its first donations (of Microsoft Office) back in 2006. Since then, the charity has benefited from software and equipment from most of the donor partners who support the scheme – not as piecemeal 'bits and bobs', but as part of an ongoing strategic commitment to IT.

Jim Riley, IT Co-ordinator at the charity, recalls his discovery of the scheme. "A colleague had heard of it and had brought the information in - we sat round a PC, had a look at it online and thought 'this is too good to be true!'" he remembers with a smile. "But it wasn't!"

The Foundation's core purpose is to provide individual services and support to disabled people across the region. Great stress is put on this word 'individual' as, whilst helping with the tasks associated with common everyday living, the charity's onus is on the big picture – the ambition that each client has for their life ahead. "We try to help people realise their aspirations," says Jim. "That's where personal planning comes in – we ask: 'what is your dream?'"

At the front line are a raft of Team Leaders, working out in the community to deliver the charity's services. "There's a range of IT knowledge amongst these people, with many being less confident with this side of things. But IT has made a big difference to them," says Jim.

"We sat down recently as a team and discussed – what's been the most important thing that CTX has enabled us to do?" he explains. "And it's definitely been the introduction of Client Access Licenses."

The CAL's allow the charity's workers to log in to the central IT system from their own homes – negating the need to travel to the office. "Our service users are based all around Edinburgh and we have an office supporting people over 50 miles away in Renfrew" says Jim. "The Team Leaders might have just three or four hours a week admin time, and they don't work a simple nine to five day – they have to respond to the needs of their clients. Remote access has made a huge difference in saving travelling time and allowing them to work more flexibly."

With around 150 employees to co-ordinate, timesheets and payroll to manage, management information to generate and grant applications to produce, the charity's IT requirements are no simpler than for a well-funded commercial business.

With CTX, Jim cites the ease by which he can ensure that legitimately licensed products are sourced, and is extremely open about the financial realities that his IT team has to work with.

"The CTX programme is extremely beneficial to small charities like ourselves. Before it arrived, we sometimes qualified for charity rates on software, but if we didn't, we'd try to negotiate, or have to pay full price," he says. "Then in recent years we've faced some big financial restrictions. So it was good timing for us when this scheme came along – and, really, we couldn't do without it now."