



### Phase 3 Mentor Pilot Feedback

Thank you for participating in the Mentor Phase 3 pilot. It would be greatly appreciated and of great value to the Glow project if you could provide us with feedback in the following areas:

- Overall impression of Glow
- Glow Components

Please email your completed feedback form to [glowadmin@ltscotland.org.uk](mailto:glowadmin@ltscotland.org.uk)

#### About you

What is your role?

e.g. teacher, local authority personnel, other

Teacher

What browser were you using e.g. Internet Explorer, Safari, Firefox, Netscape and can you provide the version if known?

Firefox 2.0.0.4  
Safari 2.0.4

#### Overall

I am afraid that Glow is not what I was led to believe. I was told that I could use Glow to host websites, blogs, wikis etc. Instead I found that I had to work with overly complex panels within pages to create "web parts" in which to display external sites in limited window sizes.

The only advantage to this that I can see is that it will allow staff to display banned sites such as Youtube through the Glow Portal as a web part.

I am concerned that many members of the staff in my cluster will not be able to grasp the complexity of page creation. Tasks such as using the documents facility are also not sufficiently intuitive for a

national release of Glow at this stage. For example, on the windows platform, it appears that clicking on the name of a document is sufficient to open or save the file to a local hard drive. On an Apple system, clicking that same link gives you the option of editing the name/description of the file or deleting it altogether. The only way a file can be opened on a mac is to click the icon indicating the file type (e.g. the blue W icon for Word documents). Throughout the pilot, I reported many other inconsistencies between the windows & mac platforms that must be ironed out before Glow has a chance to go live successfully.

I suspect that the testing of Messenger was limited for the reasons outlined below in the messenger pane. Without seeing who else was online at the same time, there was little scope to test the component sufficiently. I did find several bugs that I have detailed elsewhere. The Messenger component does appear to be a very poor relation to applications already available, such as MSN or the Microsoft Corporate Messaging Client that I have used extensively when working for a previous employer. All in all, I would say that features have been removed to the point where the value of having this component with in Glow is now in doubt.

On the whole, I wonder if a message board would better provide the communication requirement that Glow Messenger is seeking to fulfil. At least files, pictures, etc. could be uploaded for sharing & discussion. This is a vital feature that is lacking in the current version of Messenger.

Glow Mail as a web-based system is not as comfortable to use as a desktop mail client installed on your machine - there is an obvious inability to work offline for one thing. I also found the Mail component quite buggy still. Certain aspects of the address book and options gave blank screens or displayed lines of raw code when viewed on a mac, suggesting that full compliance across platforms is yet to be achieved.

I found the mail storage very restrictive and was irritated by the frequency of system generated emails telling me I was close to my storage limit.

I also felt that some of my bug reports were handled quite dismissively in the feedback I received. A response of "We tried it and it worked fine" does not to me suggest good feedback to the user reporting the problem. Neither does it suggest good testing by the response team. When a bug is reported **with a screenshot as supporting evidence**, a more appropriate level of response ( or

perhaps a request for further information from the response team) would not be unreasonable.

Are we trying to reinvent the wheel? I just feel that there are applications out there that can fulfil the objectives of Messenger and Glow Mail already and yet here we are spending so much money on components that are not necessarily performing as well or offering as many features as products that are already available off the shelf.

What did you think of Glow? Are there specific issues that you feel need addressed? Do you see it being useful within the classroom in its current state?  
[Components](#)

**For each component that you have piloted, please provide feedback on the following:**

- **Usability:** Did you find the component easy or hard to use. If hard can you explain why?
- **Usefulness:** Do you see any potential for this component in the classroom and if so can you give examples?
- **Defects:** Were there any particular issues with using the component

### [Glow Mail](#)

Did you use this component? YES

If you did please comment on usability, usefulness and defects.

I used Glow mail to send messages to myself at other email addresses and also to send messages to colleagues on my school email system. The user interface is quite straightforward although I have asked if the sent mail folder could be labelled more clearly.

I can't help but wonder at the size of the glow mail storage allocation for this pilot. It was far too small. I tried to use the glow mail account to send several screenshots to the helpdesk but my mail box quickly filled up and started to give me repeated messages about being at my limit. I think I only had 3 screenshots attached to messages when the limit was reached.

With this in mind, I think that teachers will quickly become frustrated at their inability to

- a) send files
- b) store files received via Glow mail.
- c) deal with a barrage of emails reporting close to storage limit.

I am curious where Glow mail will sit in the ICT systems of schools. Most schools already have email systems, my own school has a First Class mail server running. Is it the intention that these servers will be superseded by Glow mail? I have to say that I much prefer having a desktop client application that I can use rather than relying on an internet connection to run a web-based email system.

Also, the email addresses used in the pilot were particularly cumbersome and not nearly as user friendly as my current school email address.

I was unimpressed with the handling of the Glow Mail bugs I reported. I was simply told that it was tried and the bug was not found. Yet I was able to go back into Glow Mail after this feedback was received and replicate the bug once more. This to me suggests that there is a lack of attention to detail in the bug testing of Glow mail.

## Glow Messenger

Did you use this component? YES

Glow messenger is an interesting idea although I am yet to be convinced of it's usefulness in a classroom. It strikes me that this is more likely to be a time wasting opportunity than something pupils would actually use for educational purposes.

Functionality within Messenger is severely restricted compared to comparable instant messaging clients (MSN, AIM, Yahoo!, Gaim, Gabber). For instance, there is no facility to send files to the other party in the conversation. There is also a lack of audible signal to alert the user to an incoming message or event, such as a contact logging in. I was also unable to find a way to show only those contacts who were online and had to put up with a long list of offline people appearing in my messenger window.

I really do not like the way that a pop-up blocker has to be deactivated in order for Glow messenger to work. In essence, we are asked to switch off part of a security system to access the

application. While some browsers, such as Firefox, can allow pop-ups for certain domains, not all browsers offer this facility.

I have to query how well Messenger was tested during this pilot. The big problem, and one that was reported on both the message board and within the news section of my own "school" during the pilot, was that it was not possible to search for people who were online at the same time. Given the way that schools run to different timetables and the different allocations of non-contact time to staff, testing with contacts known to you was severely restricted in terms of looking for faults in the system.

There were several bugs in Messenger that I reported. One of these was the fact that there was an option to search for contacts by Display name, First name, email address, etc. When I searched for (and added) users by display name, I was able to see their online status no problem. However, when I searched for individuals by email address to add them to my contact list, their status was shown as "status unknown". Clearly this is a problem that has to be addressed.

An additional bug that arose repeatedly was that my contact list was not updated in real time when a new contact was added. Instead, I found that the new contact only appeared in my list when I logged out and then logged in once again.

I also found that the server had difficulty when I searched for people. I frequently received a server error or timeout. Given the limited number of people with access to Glow at this stage, it does not look promising for a national list of messenger users with the current infrastructure.