

## What is the Cloud?

The cloud is a network of servers. Some servers provide an online service and allow you to store and access data. Until recently we would buy a disc set to watch movies but now we can access them online paying a monthly subscription fee rather than buying them outright and they are hosted on the cloud. When you take photos on your smartphone you can upload them to various social media sites, again you are storing them on the cloud.



- Businesses and voluntary organisations are able to use applications for a range of needs:
- accounting and invoicing
- tracking sales
- planning
- performance monitoring
- communications (including webmail and instant messaging)

As a service rather than a product it can be viewed in the same way as other utilities such as and gas electricity, where you tap in and use according to your needs and only pay for what you use. Software as a Service, or (SaaS) describes any cloud service where consumers are able to access software applications over the internet. The applications are hosted in “the cloud” and can be used for a wide range of tasks for both individuals and organisations. At a social more personal level Google, Twitter, Facebook and Flickr are all examples of SaaS, with users able to access the services via any internet enabled device.

As the adoption of cloud-based IT and communications continues to gather momentum, organisations of all types are looking to exploit the inherent benefits of flexibility, scalability and security at a predictable, manageable cost.

Around 95% of UK organisations are using the cloud in some form or another. If you think you are one of the 5% who aren't, just stop and think for a minute. If your organisation is using DropBox, Google Analytics, Web Ex, Twitter, LinkedIn, Salesforce or Office 365 then you're one of the 95%.