

NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney

HEALTHCARE

Network security and the protection of sensitive patient data were a real concern for NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney Primary Care Trust. It wanted to ensure that all computers connecting to its network – including unknown computers – were compliant with its security policies. With Sophos NAC Advanced, installed and supported by Sophos Partner Foursys, it now has the enforcement and control capabilities it needs.



Business challenge

NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney Primary Care Trust (PCT) covers an area which is broadly aligned with Great Yarmouth Borough Council and Waveney District Council in East Anglia. It serves a population of approximately 230,000.

A change in the network needs to meet the demands of a more flexible workforce meant the traditional firewalls protecting the network were no longer appropriate. The PCT was concerned about protecting patient data and wanted to ensure that any computer accessing the network was fully compliant with its security policies. The risk posed to the PCT's network and the sensitive data held on it had never been greater.

After performing a risk assessment, the PCT highlighted two potential risk areas on its network. The first came from its own computers which sometimes failed to comply with its configuration requirements, for example they were not always up to date with security software or patches.

The second, and perhaps more significant, risk came as a result of the PCT's physically dispersed network and the resulting possibility that unknown computers might "piggy back" onto it, being assigned an IP address via DHCP (a way for networked computers to obtain the information necessary for operation within a network).

Key facts

Organisation

NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney

Location

Beccles, Suffolk

Number of users

1500

Solution

Sophos NAC Advanced

"Sophos NAC provides the ability for us to say: 'If you don't comply with our policies, you get placed in a bubble and can only talk to a subset of the devices on our network'"

Andrew Brinded, IT Services Engineer, NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney Primary Care Trust

In order to reduce the risk to its network security, the PCT decided that it needed a solution that would limit both the network access of unknown computers, and ensure that known computers always met a baseline set of IT policies.

Technology solution

The Trust evaluated Sophos NAC Advanced, which allowed its administrators to build comprehensive security policies, identifying and isolating all non-compliant, compromised or misconfigured computers accessing the network. As a result of the evaluation, the PCT decided to proceed with a full implementation.

Using a phased deployment, and benefiting from the product's flexibility, the initial installation was successfully completed with no impact to end users. Four days of technical consultancy by Sophos Partner Foursys meant that installation was even more straightforward, and Sophos NAC Advanced with DHCP enforcement was successfully installed and deployed throughout the PCT's headquarters.

Within days of the installation, the PCT had access to policy compliance information for its hardware. This enabled it to solve a number of issues before fully enabling NAC across the entire headquarters.

Upon completion of the project, the PCT's computers were 100% compliant with security policies defined within Sophos NAC Advanced which continues to monitor the status of anti-virus software and ensures that patches and service packs are up to date. Any computers that deviate from this policy, for example where their anti-virus software is disabled, are now isolated and fixed before being allowed access to the network.

Using one of Sophos NAC Advanced's enforcement mechanisms, the DHCP plug-in module, the PCT can detect, report and stop unknown computers attempting to connect to the network, ensuring they pose no risk. Unknown computers are checked for compliance with the PCT's security policy. If compliant, the end user is provided with filtered and logged internet access. Non-compliant computers are quarantined.



Business results

Andrew Brinded, IT Services Engineer for the PCT and technical lead for the implementation of Sophos NAC Advanced, says that the PCT is very happy with the immediate benefits it has brought and sees many additional uses. "Our currently configured policies are checking a few conditions, but we will look to expand further on this in the future. After having NAC fully active in our environment for some time now, we are planning to integrate NAC with 802.1x authentication for moving computers in and out of various VLANs on our switches depending on their security posture."

Sophos NAC Advanced has given the PCT back its confidence in its own network security, ensuring that only authorised users have access to the sensitive patient data held on its systems and assessing any external computers that need network access against its security policies, before granting access. In addition, Sophos NAC Advanced allows a phased deployment, enforcing varying policies for different users or sites. Whilst the PCT's headquarters is now fully enforced, remote sites can be deployed to in a report only mode, minimising impact to the end user.

"We will be starting several projects shortly, involving the majority of our GP sites and all our community sites which cover over 50 locations. This will include the deployment of other Sophos products in addition to Sophos NAC Advanced, including its anti-virus software and Utimaco SafeGuard".



Great Yarmouth and Waveney

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