

CASE STUDY

CDW DATA PROTECTION SOLUTION ENABLES STOCKPORT NHS FOUNDATION TRUST TO OVERCOME BACKUP AND DISASTER RECOVERY CONCERNS.



OVERVIEW

- Ageing backup infrastructure at Stockport NHS Foundation Trust meant its overstretched IT team was struggling to deliver reliable services to healthcare teams
- CDW's software-defined data protection solution provided the Trust with resilient end-to-end data protection infrastructure, which helped to reduce annual data centre costs by up to **£100,000** a year
- The highly innovative solution, supplied in partnership with Cohesity and Cisco, transformed the Trust's IT operations, resulting in a more agile and responsive data protection performance

ABOUT STOCKPORT NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

- Stockport NHS Foundation Trust provides hospital care for children and adults across Stockport in Greater Manchester and the High Peak in Derbyshire
- Stepping Hill, its main hospital, provides a range of emergency, surgical and medical services, treating more than **500,000** patients per year
- The Trust also runs teaching services to train doctors and nurses for the future, and employs more than **6,000** staff

CHALLENGE

Stockport NHS Foundation Trust depends heavily on its IT estate to provide vital healthcare services across the north of England every year. However, the combination of ageing infrastructure and an overstretched IT team – comprising 25 people to cover 6,000 employees – was causing a number of operational challenges. With a commitment to providing the highest levels of support to healthcare teams delivering critical patient care, Bhekimpi Sibanda, IT Technical Architect at Stockport NHS Foundation Trust, recognised that the Trust had to embrace new technologies to improve results.

"In particular, we had some legacy backup and disaster recovery infrastructure which was no longer fit for purpose," he says. "Data protection and security is crucial in healthcare environments. Any loss of patient records or a lack of access to medical services can result in a hospital being closed and even lead to a substantial fine. Also, with an ISO 27001 accreditation on the horizon, we knew we had to improve our backup systems to avoid compliance failure. Our IT team was already stretched, so we needed to work with a technology provider who could be trusted to deliver a more flexible and agile solution."

The existing backup and disaster recovery infrastructure comprised two seven year old servers which were no longer supported by the original supplier. The ageing technology could only provide the most basic functionality, and it was taking the IT team an enormous amount of time to restore systems when they failed. The Trust identified a need to invest in a modern solution that would provide both security and compliance, while also being future-proofed to meet a requirement for ease of scalability and adaptability to the cloud.

"It was vital that we implemented a reliable and resilient backup system, as we needed to get to a point where we could react quickly to any problems, allowing us to get core systems up and running as fast as we could," Bhekimpi says. "The COVID-19 pandemic showed that unpredictable events do happen, and IT systems are absolutely critical to providing a timely response."

“ Nothing was too much trouble, and the level of knowledge provided by the CDW team was exceptional throughout. The deployment process exceeded our expectations in every way. ”

—Bhekimpi Sibanda, IT Technical Architect at Stockport NHS Foundation Trust

SOLUTION

The IT estate at Stockport NHS Foundation Trust comprised of an existing Cisco HyperFlex Hyperconverged Infrastructure and software-defined network, orchestrated centrally with a Cisco SaaS Management Platform and an ACI Application Policy Infrastructure Controller. The IT team was keen to implement an on-premise backup and recovery solution that would sit side-by-side with this existing infrastructure, helping it consolidate the number of vendors in its environment and simplify its technical support arrangements. The Trust also wanted a platform that could be easily operated through a 'single pane of glass'.

As technology lead on the project, CDW worked with the Trust to design and implement a data protection solution that would fully address backup and disaster recovery requirements. Additionally, CDW conducted a performance and capacity assessment on the legacy storage platform to identify the type of data and respective capacities that needed to be protected. Meanwhile, the

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Trust performed a data assessment on the physical servers, with the resulting output helping CDW to accurately size the proposed solution.

“We had worked with CDW previously, and it had always provided an excellent level of service,” says Peter Hughes, Head of IT at Stockport NHS Foundation Trust. “What we had always liked was the fact that there was consistency of contact, you work with the same team all the way through a project. For me, personally, IT infrastructure projects are as much about people as they are technology. The strength of our existing relationship with CDW gave us the confidence to push forward and progress with the backup and disaster recovery refresh,” he says. CDW took an agnostic approach to

technology partner selection, with Cisco and Cohesity identified as the standout solution. The selected technology comprised Cisco UCS servers and a Cohesity software-defined hyperconverged platform, providing Stockport NHS Foundation Trust with the opportunity to unify its end-to-end data protection infrastructure.

“The solution was designed to integrate seamlessly with the Cisco HyperFlex infrastructure, while supporting our on-premises applications and IT services,” says Peter Hughes. “The backup solution was also highly scalable both in capacity and performance, meeting predicted data growth of between 5–20 percent over the next five years.”

OUTCOME

Deployment of the solution was completed just as effects of the global pandemic were putting the IT team at the Trust under pressure. However, according to Bhekimpi Sibanda, the CDW team provided a consistently high level of service throughout the deployment process, working remotely in a collaborative manner to ensure that it ran to time and budget. “It was one of the most seamless deployments I have ever taken part in,” he says. “Nothing was too much trouble, and the level of knowledge provided by the CDW team was exceptional throughout. The deployment process exceeded our expectations in every way.”

Now operational, the Cohesity solution has already delivered numerous benefits to the Trust. It has provided excellent backup and disaster recovery capabilities ‘out of the box’ says Bhekimpi, helping the Trust’s IT team to become far more flexible and agile. “The solution has proved to be very flexible,” he says, “and it currently supports all physical, virtual and SQL workloads, while backing up all critical databases. We can carry out restores quickly and easily, with procedures that would have taken all night now being completed in a matter of minutes or a couple of hours.”

Simplicity of use has been another positive. Previously, the Trust’s IT team would spend much of their time troubleshooting when it came to the backup system, switching from one screen to another to identify problems. Since the new solution has been implemented, the team can work in a far more efficient way, says Bhekimpi. “The dashboards delivered through the single pane of glass, along with the excellent predictive analytics, means the Cohesity solution is really easy to use. This has really helped reduce pressure on our over-stretched IT team.”

It has also proved to offer high levels of security. “The solution can identify any anomalies – such as a large amount of data being deleted overnight – and is quick to flag that up,” he says. “We have had ransomware attacks before that have resulted in a need for lengthy overnight restores. Now, the solution detects such incidents before they become an issue. That’s key for us in making sure our data is kept up-to-date and as clean as it possibly can be.”

The Trust now has the confidence to perform upgrade procedures that previously would have required external vendor support, safe in the knowledge that data is protected.

This has already helped it to save a considerable amount of money, it says. Going forward, deployment of the backup and disaster recovery solution will also help the Trust with its upcoming ISO 27001 accreditation. “Previously, our backup and disaster recovery systems might have resulted in a failure. Now, we can breathe easily,” says Bhekimpi.

Additionally, the integration of the backup and disaster recovery solution into the Cisco hyperconverged platform has delivered significant operational savings. By bringing the technologies in-house and standardising IT operations, the Trust has been able to reduce its support and licensing costs by nearly £100,000 a year.

Penny Williams, Public Sector Sales Director at CDW says, “We are immensely proud to work with Stockport NHS Foundation Trust, helping it deliver first-class IT services to frontline healthcare teams. The relationship between the two organisations has always been based on mutual respect and trust, and that has resulted in the deployment of best-in-class technology solutions that are highly agile and secure.”

To learn more about healthcare solutions provided by CDW, please contact your Account Manager or email healthcare@uk.cdw.com.

uk.cdw.com | 020 77916000

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