

The power of knowing



The North East Strategic Health Authority (North East SHA) is responsible for ensuring all health services within the region are fit for purpose, well planned, high quality and meet all Department of Health targets. Employing over 200 staff, the North East SHA covers an area from the Scottish border, down to North Yorkshire and across to the Cumbrian border in the west, serving a total population of 2.6 million.

The Challenge

Due to the wide geographical area managed by the North East SHA, staff often need to work from different locations across the region. The critical nature of the work carried out by the SHA means that business continuity must be ensured at all times, including during times of bad weather when many staff may have difficulty reaching their office base. This need, together with an increased necessity for directors and senior level staff to be able to access their corporate desktop from home had led to a decision by the Authority to invest in a more efficient and secure remote access solution.

The North East SHA had an existing remote access system in place, but as it only allowed use of email and the intranet, staff were still having to spend valuable time travelling to and from the office to access the desktop applications they needed to carry out their day to day responsibilities.

In June 2010, the North East SHA took the decision to upgrade its existing remote access solution to provide staff at every level with a secure solution that would enable them to fully access the corporate network.



UK IT consultancy and security specialist, Evolve North, was selected by the North East SHA to deliver the new remote access solution. Evolve North's experience of assisting the NHS to secure millions of individuals' sensitive medical records, combined with its ISO27001 accreditation in information governance and staff compliance meant it was perfectly placed to develop the solution.

The Solution

To address the North East SHA's requirements, Evolve North deployed a virtual private network (VPN) based on Microsoft's Unified Access Gateway (UAG) platform. Incorporating Swivel Secure's PINsafe tokenless multi factor authentication technology ensured that only authorised users would be able to gain access to the confidential information stored across the SHA's IT infrastructure.

Access to the UAG portal, which acts as a gateway to the SHA's corporate network, can only be gained by users who authenticate themselves using PINsafe's unique one-time-code (OTC) extraction protocol. The OTC is extracted from a security string, which can be delivered to the user in a variety of ways, without needing an individual token device. The options include SMS, mobile apps, and interactive voice response or as an image embedded in the login page. The OTC is generated by using the PIN as a positional reference to extract the correct digits from the security string.

As many of the staff at the SHA do not have access to a corporate mobile phone, the decision was taken to configure the system using the image option. When accessing the corporate VPN, in addition to entering their username and password, users are required to enter their OTC by using the obfuscated image displayed on their screen, combined with their secret PIN.

Due to PINsafe's unique OTC extraction methodology, the user's PIN is never actually transmitted via a keyboard or any other communication device during the login process, therefore guarding against a variety of hacking techniques such as shoulder surfing, man-in-the-middle, phishing or key logging attacks.

The remote access solution, incorporating PINsafe is currently available to all staff across the SHA.

WHY PINsafe?

Evolve North recommended Swivel's PINsafe authentication platform for four key reasons:

- It secures access to SHA's information systems
- It is a cost effective and reliable platform
- It is scalable and flexible in nature
- It is user friendly and simple to implement

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The expertise of Evolve North, combined with the advanced knowledge-base of the Swivel Secure team resulted in the smooth implementation of the remote access solution. Thanks to the new system, and the PINsafe authentication platform, the North East SHA has already begun to see a good return on the investment including:

- Improved productivity and business continuity

Staff are now able to securely access the corporate network from any location and make necessary updates to documents. This has resulted in a streamlined working process and a reduction in wasted travel time to and from the office. Business continuity is also ensured, resulting in a better and more efficient service for patients even during the worst winter weather.

- Enhanced security and compliance

PINsafe provides the North East SHA with a strong authentication platform. As a tokenless solution, PINsafe mitigates the risks associated with physical tokens being lost or stolen and also reduces the administration required from the IT department in rolling out and managing a token-based system.

- Authentication appropriate to access rights

As a flexible authentication tool, PINsafe enables the North East SHA to assign an authentication level to each staff member, meaning only authorised employees can access certain areas of the corporate network.

"PINsafe offers the North East SHA exactly what we needed, a secure solution that is flexible and cost effective enough to be rolled out to a wide user base. Staff have adapted well to using the image, and we hope to be able to roll out the solution further in the future." **Helen McElroy, Information Governance & IT Manager, North East SHA**

"The implementation of PINsafe with the Microsoft UAG could not have gone better. The flexibility of the Swivel product is of real value to our customers and enables us to provide solutions that align with their requirements."

Mark Dennis, Managing Director, Evolve North

