Automating Endpoint Management in Critical IT Environments

Medway NHS Foundation Trust uses baramundi Management Suite to secure and streamline its endpoint management system

Medway NHS Foundation Trust is a public benefit corporation authorised under the National Health Service. Based in Gillingham, it serves more than half a million patients a year across Medway and Swale, including 110,000 Emergency Department attendances, 62,000 inpatient admissions, and over 325,000 outpatient attendances. With 4000 plus staff, the trust is one of the region's largest employers. In addition, the trust has close to 400 volunteers who provide support through initiatives such as Hospital Radio and the Voluntary Services Department.

Hospital Tech: Upgrade, improve, streamline and manage

In the business of saving lives, having a reliable IT infrastructure is imperative. Checking and updating patient records, ordering medical equipment and pharmaceutical supplies, as well as assigning beds and rooms are just some of the daily tasks that rely on the smooth running of IT to ensure a consistently high level of care for patients. With an increasing number of devices being used throughout the organisation, Medway NHS Foundation Trust was finding it increasingly difficult to manage its vast IT landscapes for its 4000 plus staff. With a traditional 'visit the device' approach to endpoint management entailing hours of manual update implementation on a device-by-device basis, the organisation was in need of an efficient and automated system to package and deploy software to its various endpoints as fast as possible. Reliant on antiquated spreadsheets, legacy databases and traditional time-consuming manual processes for software updates and vulnerability management, the institution's valuable IT resources were strained. This was causing disruptive downtime periods and difficulty in ensuring all endpoints conformed to the latest security policies. "Software vendors release critical security updates and patches on a regular basis" said Liz Capp-Gray, Director of IT at Medway NHS Foundation Trust "which meant that hours of hard work were devoted to the accomplishment of basic – yet critical – endpoint management processes." Even with a robust patching schedule, the IT department found itself unable to force device reboots, ultimately causing unexpected periods of downtime and major disruption to the critical operation of the hospital.
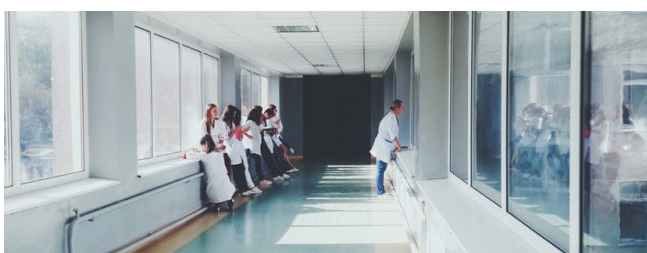
Enhanced reporting capabilities and auditability of the environment

In order to track the status of its IT infrastructure and all the applications running on top of it, NHS Medway created an accurate account of its entire IT landscape with baramundi Inventory, in order to get concise information of any device and software at any given time. "Through the intuitive Application Usage Tracking tool built into baramundi Management Suite, we can create usage profiles for each item of software deployed and eliminate unused software, streamlining our reporting processes and cutting down investment in superfluous applications. Deploying baramundi's solutions saves us both time and money."

Complete control from a single location

With a large number of endpoints used for a variety of purposes throughout the facilities, baramundi Remote Control provided IT administrators at Medway NHS Foundation Trust with remote access to endpoints and resolve issues on the behalf of hospital staff, reducing time spent on IT-related issues and increasing overall service performance. "Our infrastructure consists of over 90 different departments spread over a number of individual buildings on the hospital campus. With baramundi Remote Control, we can access all devices from a single location allowing us to resolve user problems quickly and securely, and control our servers from our desks."

Leveraging the power of automation

To ensure IT operational efficiency across its fast-paced environment, Medway NHS Foundation Trust introduced baramundi Deploy to schedule device reboots at pre-agreed downtimes. This was especially the case of critical departments such as the accidents/emergency and intensive care units. Used in parallel with baramundi Automate – both of which are standard tools included in the baramundi Management Suite solution – the process of supplying endpoints with software, crucial security updates and patches has become automated, freeing up IT resources that could be used for proactive and preventative maintenance. "We now have the capability to issue targeting

updates and patches for malware and other vulnerabilities as soon as they arise. baramundi helps contend with potentially hundreds of software threats discovered daily for the most common operating systems and daily applications, providing us with the time and resources that can be used to improve patient and staff care".

Passing on the benefits of a safer, smarter system

By automating the majority of its software management system and eliminating the need to manually visit each device to apply patches, baramundi Management Suite has paid dividends in terms of time saved and increased security. Installing complex software bundles for touch screen and kiosk PCs supporting the E-Bed Management System has been reduced from 12.5 hours to 5.5 hours, while Windows imaging times have been reduced from 3.5 hours to a mere 30 minutes. The ability to manage endpoints remotely has also cut downtime and call queues, with first-time-fix (FTF) rates soaring to above 80%. Additionally, the baramundi Management Suite's Smart Licence Management system has led to lower financial investment in software by enabling Medway NHS Foundation Trust to recycle software licences and remove unused software remotely when not required. "Not only does this help to keep track of what software is installed where and what purpose it serves, but ensures that all of our systems comply with licencing regulation, becoming of ever increasing importance in light of regulatory standards such as GDPR."

Staying one step ahead

The majority of large-scale businesses and institutions have more frequently become the target of malicious cybersecurity and ransomware attacks, the effects of which can be devastating and costly. With the need to shorten the time between the release of a patch and its installation, an effective cybersecurity strategy underpinned by smart endpoint management is no longer an option. "It is our responsibility to our patients and staff to ensure that all devices across the IT landscape are equipped with the latest software and patches to avert any and all cybersecurity threats. Tools such as baramundi Patch Management ensures security across hundreds of devices simultaneously, creating a powerful line of defence against cyber-attacks. With the help of the tools provided by baramundi, our IT department has now received a cybersecurity rating from KPMG of 'Significant Assurance,' an accolade which we are proud of."

Conclusion

"We saw in baramundi a very cost-effective and flexible solution, which has allowed us to use our IT resources more effectively, providing the safest possible environment for thousands of staff and hundreds of thousands of patients" said Liz Capp-Gray. "The NHS is committed to improving its services and patient care through digital channels, which means developing best practices for IT infrastructure and cybersecurity. By automating essential daily tasks, we can reinvest our time into enhancing our practice in the digital and physical worlds".