NHS FIGHT FROM HOME

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) is the largest Health Board in Wales covering five counties in part of the most beautiful areas of the UK. It serves approximately 700,000 people providing a full range of primary, community, mental health, and acute hospital services.

Late on a Friday night in March 2020 after the Prime Minister's announcement about the first pandemic lockdown, the Head of ICT at BCUHB confirmed to CAE that he had to enable nearly 3,000 staff to work from home the following week.

The health board's existing VPN solution wasn't fit for purpose and early indications showed that performance was already degraded with multiple calls in to its service desk. Providing healthcare is a true team endeavour, and the ability of administrative and other staff to work from home effectively was crucial to being able to cope with the accelerating pandemic.

Building the most robust solution possible with minimum delay

Although BCUHB had recently deployed new Palo Alto equipment, CAE worked closely with the team to find a more appropriate solution that could be installed very rapidly. CAE teams worked with vendor partners to arrange a fast bid process to ensure governance; working within pre-defined parameters to deliver exactly what was required. BCUHB was open with CAE about the COVID budget it could utilise, which allowed CAE to work as part of the team to build the most robust solution possible with minimum delay.

Going through the process of recommendation, negotiation, confirmation, and order would usually take several weeks.

As a result of great communication and teamwork, BCUHB's order was confirmed exactly a week after the initial briefing call.

The CAE team was onsite almost immediately to begin configuration, and discovered that the National Remote Access Network through NHS Wales Information Services was creaking as the infrastructure struggled to process the number of remote connections to National Applications.

Within a week the team had deployed Cisco DUO, and, working in partnership with both the Cisco and DUO Teams delivered a robust multifactor authentication solution for up to 5,000 users.

The CAE NHS & Local Government Team focuses on delivering the message to customers that they can and should engage with CAE when they need help, and this approach has led to a real partnership between CAE and BCUHB based on trust and demonstration of a robust solution to a critical situation.

The Outcome

The CAE team helped newly remote staff, unused to working from home and dealing with the personal impact of a changing world, to work from home seamlessly, accessing clinical applications quickly and securely. The team is delighted that the agile approach taken resulted in a successful deployment for BCUHB, allowing them to concentrate on supporting the NHS during a critical period.