

Case Study - NECS Use Your Own Device (UYOD) Remote Access

The Challenge

To support efficient and safe working during the Covid-19 pandemic, NECS rapidly mobilised a Use Your Own Device (UYOD) Remote Access solution. This provides an additional remote access offering, significantly improving the effectiveness of ICT services utilised by GP practices to enhance their clinical delivery in response to Covid-19.

The solution allows users (via their own home computers) to securely connect directly to NECS' datacentres across the internet to access systems as they would when in their GP practices.

This presented a number of challenges that the team have had to rapidly overcome:

- Set-up an appropriate datacentre infrastructure and software configuration
- Ensure that the solution is appropriately protected from cyber threats
- Complete the relevant governance activities
- Engage with users to rapidly mobilise the solution

"It really works! Absolutely excellent - many congratulations to you and your colleagues."

I actually couldn't believe that it would be so simple. My smartcard was recognised straight away with no additional installation needed. Amazing. Makes a big difference in being able to do e-prescribing."

Dr David Robertson
Barnard Castle Surgery

"A huge thank you for all your efforts!

You've done an incredible job!"

Pippa and the team at Spring Terrace Health Centre, North Shields

The Solution

The NECS Systems team prioritised Covid-19 activities and formed a team to design a suitable UYOD solution as well as plans for deployment. The solution design was rapidly developed and progress was monitored daily.

Servers were re-purposed in NECS' datacentres to provide an appropriate platform to deploy VMWare's Horizon View VDI solution. Servers were configured and provisioned with network and firewall connections to allow them to be accessed securely.

An Agile approach was adopted with the initial release on March 30th of a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) to a limited cohort of 50 users. This provided an initial critical subset of the overall functionality. The solution has since moved on and now covers:

- Windows 10 & Apple Mac support
- EMIS and SystmOne clinical systems access
- Device security posture controls to ensure devices used are secure
- Two Factor Authentication token on users' smartphones
- SmartCard enablement
- Access to NHS "Spine" services including EPS, PDS and SCR
- Access to network drives, Intranet and web based applications
- Connection to Adastral and Docman
- EMIS and SystmOne interfacing with Sunquest ICE

A dedicated support team was mobilised to on-board users to use the new service with this team working daily between 8am and 10pm including weekends and bank holidays.

A comprehensive risk assessment against NCSC, ICO & NHS IGA guidance was completed alongside a third party penetration test to ensure that the solution is secure.

Following an accelerated period of development, testing and mobilisation, the solution is now in use providing remote access for clinicians and support staff across the North East of England, North Yorkshire, Vale of York and Derbyshire. The UYOD solution has the capacity for 1,000 GP practice users to gain secure remote access including to their GP clinical systems.

Find out how NECS can help your organisation

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Results

With a significant proportion of GPs and practice support staff self-isolating for a variety of reasons, but many of these still able to work effectively, the solution allows the mobilisation of remote working at scale across GP practices in the North East, North Yorkshire, Vale of York, and Derbyshire.

This solution was rapidly built across a 3 week period and has 200 active users with another 500 progressing through the on-boarding process.

With the global shortage of laptop devices, this game changing platform removes the reliance on providing laptops and VPN solutions with a cost effective and agile solution. Clinicians can use their own home PC to access clinical platforms securely, removing the risks inherent in deploying and re-deploying laptops for clinicians who are moving in and out of self-isolation.

The solution is deployed in NECS' DSP Toolkit assured datacentres. It can easily be scaled up further and NECS plans to build on this platform to provide a wider range of capabilities to a broader user base.

With the focus on providing a fully secure platform, especially at this time of heightened cyber activity, the provision of comprehensive technical controls to ensure the safety of the device being used and a comprehensive risk assessment, provides assurance for our users that their continued operations are not compromised in any way.

The solution is responsive to evolving user needs with new features being added over time, prioritised by the NECS team in conjunction with our GP Informatics digital leads. This ensures that the team focuses on the most beneficial and appropriate improvements.

The ability to rapidly and easily enable GPs and practice staff to work remotely has opened up benefits for staff by providing a safe environment for those who are self-isolating to operate effectively. This in turn has enabled more appointments to be delivered thereby helping to ensure patients are able to get the care they need at this critical time.

The solution is fully supported by NECS' experienced ICT Service Delivery team that currently supports in excess of 20,000 users. Users from NECS' existing support base are able to access all of the facilities that they can from their practices and those that are not currently supported by NECS have slightly limited functionality but are still able to access the full range of cloud based services available via HSCN including NHS "Spine" and EMIS and SystmOne clinical platforms.

Users are guided through an on-boarding process remotely to get them operational in as little as an hour, downloading components across the internet, with no requirement for any local support provision, on-site attendance or component delivery.

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