

U.K. municipal government elevates security for citizen services

Bitdefender kills off ransomware, and improves infrastructure performance and user experience while simplifying security management



Barnsley Council is a local government authority in South Yorkshire, U.K. Serving approximately 228,000 residents, Barnsley provides citizens with an array of public services including development, conservation, culture, community learning, and adult and children-support services.

Industry
Government

Headquarters
Barnsley, England, U.K.

Employees
2,800 (IT staff, 115)

Results

- Deployed GravityZone in only three days with Bitdefender Professional Services
- Reduced frequent ransomware and other threat incidents to zero
- Improved infrastructure performance and end-user experience
- Reduced average daily time spent on security administration from two hours to ten minutes
- Consolidated patching and endpoint-security management for physical, virtual, and mobile devices in one centrally-managed solution

THE CHALLENGE

It was a Friday "tradition" at Barnsley Council. When their previous security product performed weekly scans of employees' desktops and laptops, the machines would become so slow, productivity would nearly grind to a halt. The impact was so severe that town officials supporting Stage 2 of the Tour de Yorkshire road cycling race asked the security team to stop scheduled scans.

Another concern was that ransomware attacks were bypassing the previous security product and encrypting file shares. It would take IT 24 hours or longer to repair affected systems and restore data while 200-300 users were unable to access their files. In response, Barnsley Council's IT evaluated Bitdefender, Trend Micro, Cylance, Microsoft, and Sophos solutions. The winner: Bitdefender GravityZone.

Steve Furniss, ICT Technical Specialist – Customer, Information and Digital Services, Infrastructure Team, Barnsley Council, recalls, "Bitdefender GravityZone stood out with a layered array of rich features from protection against zero-day threats to patch management to application-policy management. We also liked the single pane of glass to easily manage our entire physical, virtual, cloud, and mobile infrastructure."

THE SOLUTION

Barnsley Council implemented Bitdefender GravityZone to protect over 3,500 machines, including physical and virtual workstations and servers. In addition, Barnsley Council uses the integrated GravityZone Patch Management module to keep operating systems and applications up to date.

Bitdefender protects Barnsley's Nutanix hyper-converged infrastructure running Microsoft Hyper-V, a VMware vSphere environment, a Citrix XenServer and XenDesktop estate, physical Windows servers, and Windows laptops. The Council also plans to roll out GravityZone to 1,100 Android devices and protect its Microsoft Azure environment.

Bitdefender Professional Services assisted Barnsley Council with planning, design, deployment, configuration, and product training. GravityZone was implemented across the entire infrastructure in only three days with over 85% of the Council's server estate fully covered on the first day of the rollout. The process of migrating from the previous security product to Bitdefender had no negative impact on users and occurred without any guest reboots or performance degradation. GravityZone now performs QuickScans daily and full scans weekly. Further, IT has not received help desk calls during scans.

"We were blown away by what a slick, easy and flawless process it was to work with Bitdefender

Professional Services,” says Furniss. “It was probably the best services experiences we’ve ever had. The team captured our requirements upfront, took care of the design and configuration while promptly answering questions we had along the way. The migration also was completely non-intrusive to our users.”

THE RESULTS

Since deploying Bitdefender, ransomware attacks and other infections have vanished. Furniss says, “Immediately, GravityZone picked up and dealt with lots of Trojans, viruses, malware, and other threats that the previous security product happily had let go through for the last few years. Infections were sitting in files and folders just waiting for users to click them and wreak havoc. “There doesn’t seem to be anything that Bitdefender can’t handle. It just blocks the threats and kills them off—again and again. It’s priceless to know we’re so well protected.”

For Barnsley Council users, GravityZone is a win-win also. Not only have disabling attacks disappeared, but their computers run faster. “Before, we’d get a blast of hot air from the CPU fans when our previous security product was scanning,” Furniss describes. “That meant waiting for a few seconds for words to appear on your screen after typing them. With GravityZone, there is no impact on CPU or memory resources. Our application developers have gone out of their way to tell us how much quicker everything runs.”

Furniss credits GravityZone with substantial time savings for the IT team due to the resolution of past performance and security issues as well as drastically simplified administration. He estimates IT spends ten minutes a day on average managing security versus a couple of hours before. He states, “The management interface for GravityZone works really well. It’s dead easy to understand and use. Even someone without an IT background can pick it up quickly. Plus, being able to manage patching and security for all our mobile, virtual and physical endpoints from the same console is very convenient.”

Barnsley Council’s IT also appreciates GravityZone’s tight integration with Nutanix, Microsoft Hyper-V, Citrix XenServer, and VMware vCenter Server. In addition, Barnsley has replaced a manual patch process for third-party applications with GravityZone, and no longer waits for third-party compliance scans to identify where patches are needed. “It’s easy to centrally view our virtual servers across Nutanix, Hyper-V, Citrix, and VMware with the integrated feeds into GravityZone,” explains Furniss. “I spend a lot less time clicking around because we’ve replaced several configuration and maintenance tools with Bitdefender.”

GravityZone’s integrated Patch Management module also helps increase efficiency. Before, applications were not updating consistently, which would create incompatibilities across different components. As a result, IT needed to purchase supplementary update solutions, as well as manually check update status of applications.

Explains Furniss, “With Bitdefender’s Patch Management module, we’ll get visibility into the patching status across our entire infrastructure, including the third-party applications, such as Java and Adobe Flash, which don’t get picked up by the Windows Server Update Services. It’s going to make a massive difference with keeping us compliant and up to date.” In fact, Furniss estimates that the Patch Management module is decreasing the yearly time for a team of 4-5 people to manually identify and remediate patch updates from six weeks to a few hours. “We are now able to set and forget the patch management policies, then just keep an eye on how it is progressing.”

He reflects, “Considering the big gains in security, performance and efficiency, the positive impact of Bitdefender on our infrastructure, users, and the IT team has been amazing.”

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Steve Furniss, ICT Technical Specialist,
Barnsley Council

Bitdefender Footprint

- GravityZone Security for Servers
- GravityZone Security for Workstations
- GravityZone Patch Management

IT Environment

- Citrix
- Microsoft
- Nutanix
- VMware