

Bath and North East Somerset Local UK Council secures workforce mobility with SAS PCE, ensuring PSN compliance

After five consecutive years of use, the UK district council chooses to renew its SafeNet Authentication Service Private Cloud Edition (SAS PCE) subscription for its reliability, low cost of operation and ease of use.

The Organization

Bath and North East Somerset Council is a unitary authority that serves as a combined non-metropolitan county and district council, providing a broad range of services to a resident population of over 176,000, ranging from community planning to healthcare and education.

The IT Department at Bath and North East Somerset ("BaNES") Council provides IT Services for 2300 Council Staff, 100 staff from the West of England Combined Authority, Network and Telephony services for Virgin Care (BaNES) and Virgin Care (Wiltshire). The department is currently in discussions to partner Bath & NE Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group.

The Business Need

In light of the UK's Central government PSN (Public Services Network) mandate, the IT Department at BaNES required a solution that would enable strong two-factor authentication (2FA)

for all employees and partners accessing the PSN network. The solution would restricts access to council systems made available over the public internet, adding a second layer of authentication to mitigate against such threats as phishing, brute-force attacks, generic malware and shoulder surfing.

Challenge

The IT department of BaNES Local Council sought a costeffective and easy to use 2FA solution that would ensure PSN compliance and enable secure remote access for council employees.

Solution

SAS PCE was selected for its low total cost of operation, as well as its compatibility with current systems and its range of supported authenticators.

Benefit

Deploying the solution has enabled the council to consolidate work accommodation, reduce overheads and offer secure anywhere access for 1800 staff members—all with minimal operational cost and effort.



Bath & North East Somerset Council



" Price and flexibility have been key to us continuing to use this solution. Technically it is easy to manage and does what it says on the can and users very rarely have issues. The token life of the budget units has also been very good with very few issues during their 5 year life to date."

— Stuart Batson,
IT Service Delivery Manager at BaNES District council.

The extra layer of security would not only ensure compliance with the UK nationwide PSN regulation, and protect public services systems from unauthorized access. Rather, it would also empower council staff members to work remotely—enabling consolidated accommodation for council staff members and further reductions in operational overhead.

Key requirements the BaNES IT department sought in a potential solution were:

- **Cost efficiency**— As a public services provider, the district council issued a bid for a 2FA solution that would offer effective use of public funds and a low total cost of operation (TCO).
- **Authenticator flexibility** – The council sought a 2FA system that offered a number of different authentication methods and form factors including hardware tokens, software tokens and SMS text messages for their staff and partners.
- **Compatibility with current systems** – The prospective solution would have to integrate with the IT department’s current network and systems, including various MySQL user repositories and their Citrix environment (Citrix Access Gateway, now Citrix NetScaler).

The Solution

The council’s IT department approached its security solution partner, Vohkus, for recommendations, and Vohkus arranged demonstrations and trials. Six solutions were initially considered but after further evaluation against their requirements, the council narrowed the choice down to Thales (formerly Gemalto) and another competitor.

Technically, both solutions met their requirements; however, the flexible pricing strategy offered by Thales’s SAS PCE proved to be a decisive competitive advantage, and allowed the council to purchase additional licenses and hardware at a fixed price for 5 years—sealing the deal for the council on their 2FA needs. Each license offered an all-inclusive subscription fee, including software tokens (OTP apps), customer support and all the latest features.

“This flexibility and competitive pricing sealed the deal for us and again this flexibility and commitment to their customers has led to us signing up for a further 3 years (of SafeNet Authentication Service) in association with Vohkus,” says Stuart Batson, IT Service Delivery Manager at BaNES Local council.

Originally, “1200 users required access to work from home,” continues Mr. Batson, “however, this has now grown to over 1800 supporting the council’s continued drive to offer its staff more flexibility in working from home.”

The Benefits

The benefits that made the district council choose Thales again were:

- **Ease of management** – “Technically it is easy to manage and does what it says on the can, and users very rarely have issues,” says Mr. Batson. SAS PCE offers set-and-forget management through fully automated workflows. These include automated provisioning of permissions and tokens, users self-enrollment and token activation, self-service portals, event and threshold-based alerts and automated reporting.
- **Secure workforce mobility** – “We continue to be able to offer our staff flexible working from anywhere with the Gemalto solution, in combination with our Citrix partner,” continues Mr. Batson, “Around 150 staff at any one time are regularly securely signed in to our home working solution. Secure anywhere access for council staffers offers work convenience, in addition to reduced travel costs and journey times, and has further positive environmental effects such as reduced pollution reduced need to commute, whether via public transport, car share or driving.”
- **Reduced accommodation overheads** – “Around 150 staff at any one time are regularly securely signed in to our home working solution. As stated this allowed us to consolidate our accommodation,” and “...to close 2 buildings in central Bath, helping the council achieve its savings targets and accommodation plans.”
- **PSN compliance** – By adding a second later of authentication each time a district council system or network is accessed remotely, SAS PCE provides a secure working from home solution in line with council and national policies and governance, including the UK nationwide PSN regulation.
- **Token reliability** – Thales’s family of SafeNet MobilePASS one-time passcode authenticators includes both hardware and software form factors. These never expire, and their durability offers a long lifespan. Over the past five years of usage, the reliability of its tokens has saved the council precious time and resources.

About Vohkus

Today Vohkus is the trusted technology and services partner for cores of prominent UK organisations. Working with clients of all sizes and verticals, Vohkus helps deployments run smoothly and also provides secure, performant hosted cloud platforms. As a vendor-agnostic, hands-on partner, Vohkus has insight that can help businesses avoid the pitfalls of adopting and managing new technology.

About Thales's SafeNet Access Management and Authentication Solutions

Thales’s industry-leading Access Management and Authentication solutions let enterprises centrally manage and secure access to enterprise IT, web and cloud-based applications. Utilizing policy-based SSO and universal authentication methods, enterprises can effectively prevent breaches, migrate to the cloud securely and simplify regulatory compliance.

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