

Secure remote working for Norwich and Peterborough Group



Signify provides flexible, fault-tolerant, group-wide strong authentication

Norwich and Peterborough Building Society (N&P) has over 50 branches, located mainly in East Anglia and Lincolnshire, and a branch in Gibraltar. The Norwich and Peterborough Group includes Norwich and Peterborough Building Society, Norwich and Peterborough Insurance Brokers and Hockleys Professional, a subsidiary which provides specialist property services including valuations, surveys and consultancy.



A year ago, N&P decided to upgrade its Remote Access Server (RAS) service and authentication system. At that time, its primary user, Hockleys, was using an old dial-up remote access system but, with more of Hockleys' surveyors working from home, it made sense to implement a more powerful, resilient and easy-to-use Internet VPN system to support their increased take-up of home broadband.

Key Benefits

- Secure:** strong authentication for remote staff
- Simple:** for users & administrators
- Powerful:** centralised control over security policy
- Flexible:** delegated management of users
- Reliable:** 100% availability on dual VPN servers
- Excellent support:** for administrators & end users
- Cost effective:** group-wide purchasing & support

Group-wide system reduces costs

"It was an excellent opportunity to implement a Group-wide VPN remote access system," continued Chris Cornish, N&P's Group Data Security Manager. "By putting in a Group-wide system we could get a consistent high speed access and authentication solution for all areas of the business. This would not only improve our service to remote staff, but reduce our telecoms, support and implementation costs."

Simple web-based management and 24/7 support

Currently, N&P has around 150 users, who are now able to access e-mail, intranet services and the Internet from home via broadband (with some limited use over dial-up) using an encrypted VPN tunnel.

The VPN servers are configured to communicate with Signify's Authentication Service over encrypted

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Internet connections. Signify operates the resilient authentication infrastructure in multiple secure Internet data centres, while N&P’s administrators are able to manage every aspect of their service via the Signify Identity Management Centre (IMC) web portal.

“We can manage the set-up and day-to-day running of our authentication service, add new users and handle most issues, thanks to the powerful IMC” said Chris Cornish. “Signify’s 24/7 End User Helpdesk allows our staff to self-help themselves should they lose their token or forget their PIN. They can fix the problem at any time of day and night without contacting our IT support team”



Centralised policy control with devolved administration

As Data Security Manager, Chris Cornish is able to define Group-wide security policies and retains overall control of the authentication service, while the IMC allows him to delegate routine operations to administrators in regional offices and at subsidiaries. The IMC models the organisational structure of the Group, with Norwich and Peterborough Building Society and Hockleys Surveyors as separate organisations. While Chris has control over all users and systems, administrators in each sub-organisation only have ‘scope’ over their local users and systems, and have no visibility of users in the other business unit.

“The organisational modelling capability of the IMC is very popular with our larger

clients”, comments Kate Holden, Customer Services Business Manager at Signify. “They can combine the benefits of centralised purchasing and policy definition, with the ability to devolve routine management to their local administrators.”

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Excellent support & resilience

N&P’s administrators can escalate any issues to Signify’s Customer Services team. “We literally pick up the phone and the problem is resolved,” added Chris Cornish. “The response from Signify’s Customer Services team has been excellent, although in fairness, we have had virtually no problems. The service just works!”

Recognising the need for high availability, the Group implemented twin fail-over VPN servers. According to Chris Cornish, the Group has on average over 1,000 user log-ins each week and it was important that the authentication service would support this non-stop VPN system. “The Signify service is configured to work against whichever VPN system is active and has delivered 100% reliability,”

Exceeding expectations

Stephen Mulley, N&P’s Head of IT believes that the Signify authentication service has delivered considerable benefits to the Group. “We now have a secure, fault-resilient and easy-to-use remote working service that allows our Group employees to work from home or other location.” he commented. “Signify’s service was implemented rapidly and with minimum disruption to our day-to-day activities. We can enjoy the benefit of leading edge security, without having to maintain the detailed technical expertise in-house. Signify has exceeded our expectations in reliability and service.

info@signify.net

www.signify.net

+44 (0)1223 472572

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