Prescription for Simpler and More Secure Remote Access

NHS Forth Valley teleworkers can securely access applications without the hassle and security risks of VPNs and hardware tokens, with Akamai

5 min
To publish an application on the Akamai Edge

< 1 min
To add a user account

300K
Patients served

Secure remote access for the entire workforce – quickly

Before the pandemic, NHS Forth Valley had just a few remote workers. They securely accessed applications over a VPN, proving their identity with something they knew (login) and something they had (hardware token). But when Scotland's workforce was ordered to stay home, there wasn't time to buy and distribute hard tokens for the entire workforce. NHS Forth Valley found a simpler solution for secure remote access, with Akamai. With just a few clicks, the team publishes applications on the Akamai Intelligent Edge Platform and indicates which users are authorized to access each application. The experience for users is simple: a smartphone app stands in for the hard token. Staff working from home enjoy the same application experience they had in the office, helping them stay focused on what matters most – people's health and safety.

When the National Health Service went home to work

NHS Forth Valley is 1 of 14 regional health boards in Scotland, serving approximately 300,000 people. "When we found out we'd be going home to work during the pandemic, my team suddenly had to scale from just a few remote users to hundreds," says Robert Craig, ICT Infrastructure Team Lead for NHS Forth Valley.

Before the pandemic, the few people who worked remotely connected to the VPN. To protect patients' healthcare information, NHS Forth Valley used multi-factor authentication (MFA): a certificate on the laptop, username and password, and a hardware token inserted into the laptop. But with little warning before the office would close, Robert didn't have time to buy and distribute hard tokens to hundreds of staff. He looked for a new approach, which had to be at least as secure as the VPN, but faster to deploy and simpler to manage. "Healthcare workers are often under stress, and technology shouldn't add more stress," Robert says. "Hard tokens were a barrier between our staff and the information they needed to do their jobs."

NHS Forth Valley
Scotland
nhsforthvalley.com

Industry
Healthcare & Life Sciences

Company Size
8,000 employees

Solution
Enterprise Application Access

Solution: multi-factor authentication without the hassle of hardware tokens

NHS Forth Valley met both goals — fast deployment and a simple user experience — with Akamai Enterprise Application Access. "Akamai puts us in the driver's seat because we don't have to procure and distribute hard tokens," Robert says. "The smartphone app is as secure as the hardware token, and far more convenient."

Adding applications to the Akamai Intelligent Edge Platform took just 5 minutes. One was Scotland's Test and Protect application for COVID-19 contact tracing. Adding users was just as fast. An administrator creates a user account and selects the applications the user can access. "We beat our deadline," Robert says. "I give Akamai a 10 for support. I have yet to come across another company prepared to go that extra mile to help a customer get started with a technology."

Like working in the office

NHS Forth Valley staff working from home were productive from day one. "With Akamai, the experience is just like it is in the office," Robert says. "Application performance was great. Our staff took to it like ducks to water."

The ICT team has spent very little time managing the Akamai solution. No more calls from frustrated users having problems with the VPN, and no complicated configuration. "A lot of ICT costs don't show up on the budget spreadsheet," Robert says. "They're for time spent on procurement, configuration, and training. Configuring our old VPN took weeks — the Akamai solution took very little time."

Flexibility for changing work habits

Robert noticed growing interest in remote work even before the pandemic, and expects more staff members to telework after offices fully re-open. With Akamai, secure remote access won't be a barrier. "I haven't seen any other secure remote access solution that's as simple to deploy and manage as Akamai Enterprise Application Access," Robert says. "It was a massive win for our team. If it hadn't been for Akamai, we'd have been deploying laptops with hard tokens months into the pandemic. Akamai put us ahead of the game and allowed ICT to get on with our jobs. That's brilliant."

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Robert Craig
ICT Infrastructure Team Lead

NHS Forth Valley is one of 14 regional health boards in Scotland, serving around 300,000 people. The Board controls an annual budget of approximately £570 million, and employs around 8,000 staff. Its modern acute hospital, Forth Valley Royal Hospital in Larbert, is one of the most advanced and well equipped in Europe, and is supported by a network of four community hospitals, 56 health centers, day centers providing care and support for patients with mental illness and learning disabilities, and a wide range of community-based services. NHS Forth Valley has been named in a survey of trainee doctors as one of the top places to be in the UK for medical education and training. nhsforthvalley.com