

## SECURE UNIFIED ACCESS AT BLACKPOOL COUNCIL



A major town of nearly 150,000 people, Blackpool is a well-known holiday resort and the third largest settlement in North West England, after Manchester and Liverpool.

Blackpool Council provides network services for most of the state schools and public libraries in the area, as well as for a multitude of its own office sites.

The challenges Blackpool Council faced were threefold; build defenses to combat an increasingly changing threat landscape, drive efficiencies due to school budget cuts, and safeguard citizens under the new Prevent guidelines.

Prevent is one of four strands of the UK government's counter-terrorism strategy, known as Contest, first created in 2003, and its remit later widened in 2011. Prevent is designed to support people at risk of joining extremist groups and carrying out terrorist activities; and requires teachers, faith leaders, doctors and others to refer any suspicions about people to a local Prevent body. An assessment is then made about whether further action is needed.

Blackpool Council first started working with Fortinet following the Conficker computer worm outbreak in 2009, when Blackpool Council became an early adopter of FortiGate enterprise firewalls at the heart of its infrastructure.

Blackpool Council's IT service had significant business drivers to develop traded services as a response to budget cuts and austerity, whilst dealing with evolving threats, and increased compliance and regulation such as PSN, PCI, GDPR and NHS N3.

The email threat landscape has since continued to grow at a phenomenal pace, with +90% of all emails filtered out as spam. This is in the region of half a million emails per day.

The council is also at the forefront of safeguarding, including implementing the Prevent agenda for schools and the wider community.

*"Fortinet and TNP have been our network security partners for many years. As the threats have continued to evolve we have found the Fortinet products have helped us to quickly adapt and meet new challenges. The fact that all Fortinet solutions talk to each other to quickly identify and block an attack saves us significant time and resources, as well as enabling a faster response. This approach is now more important than ever as we increasingly see more sophisticated and automated attacks"*

– Tony Doyle,  
Head of ICT Services,  
Blackpool Council



### DETAILS

**CUSTOMER:** Blackpool Council

**INDUSTRY:** Public Sector

**LOCATION:** Blackpool, UK

### BENEFITS

- Reduced complexity resulting from multiple networking solutions in place
- Increased IT security, management and control
- Drove efficiencies due to school budget cuts
- Helps safeguard citizens under the new Prevent guidelines

### DEPLOYMENT

- FortiGate
- FortiSandbox
- FortiSIEM

## BUILDING TALLER WALLS

The council's cyber security concerns came to a head during the Wannacry attack in May 2017.

Fortunately, Blackpool was protected from Wannacry having invested in the FortiSandbox and IPS subscriptions which meant that the signatures of Wannacry were quickly detected and prevented from entering the Blackpool network, whilst other cyber hygiene was brought up to date.

In addition, the council has recently added FortiSIEM so that the team is able to gain greater visibility and proactively respond to any new or emerging threats on the network.

Today elected members now take an active interest in the council's cyber defenses, and regular reports are provided by the CIO/ SIRO to the council's Audit committee.

## DRIVING EFFICIENCIES IN TIMES OF AUSTERITY

Despite a backdrop of austerity across the nation, the council's IT service has remained viable through traded and managed services. with a significant proportion of income coming from schools.

This was threatened by the emergence of a new academy trust in the region, at a time when many academy trusts elsewhere in the country were migrating away from council provision and building their own infrastructure.

However, the Local Loop Unbundling (LLU) network delivered to schools in Blackpool in conjunction with the council's network partner The Networking People

was extremely agile. In order to meet the needs of the largest Multi Academy Trust in Blackpool using the FortiGate Virtual Domain technology, a new virtual network was able to be rapidly developed and delivered in September 2017.

Not only was this more cost effective than building separate network infrastructure, it also provided multiple schools within the trust a seamless migration path from the traditional LAN on to a new virtual WAN for the Multi Academy Trust.

## COMPLYING WITH PREVENT

Due to the raised profile of the Prevent agenda, one of Blackpool's largest schools, built under the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, was coming under increased scrutiny to ensure that appropriate safeguarding was in place.

The school faced significant budget challenges with the licensing model of the incumbent filtering solution within the school. They also had concerns that whilst some filtering was in place on desktop machines, there were ways to potentially bypass the filtering service due to the ingenuity of its pupils.

In response to these challenges, Blackpool Council and its partner The Networking People were able to enhance the school's capabilities in all these areas through utilisation of a locally-based FortiGate enterprise firewalls.

This included proactive alerting of potential child protection and radicalisation issues, and also included SSL deep packet inspection to identify any inappropriate activity via encrypted services. The guest WiFi services were also replaced with

personally identifiable information for all guest users.

Security and compliance continues to increase in complexity with data now traversing way beyond the council's immediate infrastructure into the cloud, into the home, on to a multitude of devices.

Blackpool Council are now able to simplify their approach to security and proactively combat security threats across its network, with Fortinet's suite of solutions - including FortiGate, FortiSandbox and FortiSIEM.

An added benefit of FortiSIEM is that the council now has the increased capability to group all networks and infrastructure devices into a business group, and therefore provide a greater understanding of the business impact on any network, component event or failure.

Through meeting compliance regimes, greater transparency and increased responsiveness to new threats, there has been a notable increase in confidence in council meetings.

Fortinet is one of the few vendors that can provide end to end solutions to these modern day challenges of the borderless network. In order to stay relevant as an IT service provider, Blackpool Council now relies on Fortinet as an agile IT partner with the ability to comprehensively meet these challenges.



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