

Microsoft 365 Data Protection

Case Study: The Health Informatics Service

Barracuda's "fit-and-for-get" cloud backup hits the right note for healthcare IT provider THIS.

Cloud migration is helping organisations across the globe to become more agile, efficient and productive. This is particularly important for the UK's National Health Service (NHS), a 76-year-old institution increasingly stretched to the limit by the pandemic and long-term demographic shifts. But cloud customers can only extract maximum value from their investments if they're able to manage and mitigate related cyber risks appropriately. This is where IT services partner The Health Informatics Service (THIS) steps in to help.

So when four THIS clients migrated mission critical emails and data to Microsoft 365, the race was on to find the right backup solution and the team worked with COOLSPIRiT for advice on the current market.

Customer

- Founded in 2006, The Health Informatics Service (THIS) provides digital and IT services to health and care providers across the UK in primary, secondary and third sectors.
- Hosted by Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust, the shared support service's 200+ staff support NHS and other healthcare organisations across the UK.
- THIS have deployed Barracuda Cloud-to-Cloud Backup across four customers with a combined user base of around 18,000.

COOLSPIRiT
a Databarracks company

www.coolspirit.co.uk

T. 01246 454 222 E. hello@coolspirit.co.uk

 Barracuda
Cloud-to-Cloud Backup™

“What we wanted was a ‘fit-and-forget’ backup system,” explains Paul Halliday, Technology Officer at THIS. “We wanted it to back up all of our data and have role-based access controls so we could hand over the routine parts like file recovery to our service desk getting that closer to the end customer.” That’s exactly what he got with Barracuda, from COOLSPIRiT.

Searching for simplicity

The scale of the project was significant. THIS serves four NHS customers with a combined user base of around 18,000. Previously, when supporting on-premises Exchange for these four customer organizations, THIS was forced to provide 45TB of backup capability — and even then, this only covered a 30-day retention policy. The need to mitigate against the risk of accidental loss or potentially malicious (i.e.: ransomware) external threats was made more urgent with government requirements to ensure all email communications were properly archived.

“We were getting emails from the top of government saying anything to do with COVID had to be saved because it may legally be required for the public inquiry,” explains Paul. “Even if messages were deemed inconsequential at the time, they had to be kept — which meant an even greater need for backups.”

Paul's colleague Paul Simms, Principal Infrastructure Engineer at THIS, understood from their customers that Microsoft's out-of-the-box retention for Microsoft 365 was insufficient for their needs. He subsequently assessed what was on offer, looking for something “robust,” competitive on price, and that allowed users to go back in time “almost indefinitely” to recover and restore data.

“As a backup person, I didn't want to get heavily involved in day-to-day restores of mailboxes, as that could quite quickly end up being my full-time job,” Simms adds. “I was keen to get something I could delegate — but in a good way — so we could give our customers first point of contact with the Service Desk. I had a vision of being able to familiarize myself with the product, and then train the Service Desk and hand it over.”

Challenges

- Microsoft 365 data retention policy not sufficient for NHS clients
- Need to offload data recovery to service desk

Results

- Simple to use and rapid deployment
- Unlimited backup-as-a-service for peace of mind
- Saves THIS engineer time, and accelerates restores

“Barracuda Cloud-to-Cloud Backup is truly backup-as-a service without us having to do very much at all. We just click the buttons and consume the service. That is very welcome.”

Paul Simms, Principal Infrastructure Engineer

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It soon emerged that Barracuda Cloud-to-Cloud Backup “ticked all the boxes from the simplicity side” and hit the right price point.

“With Barracuda Cloud-to-Cloud Backup there was a ‘backup forever’ scenario, which seemed extremely good value for money,” Simms continues. “We removed the cost of managing our own storage and having local storage. And we offloaded that point of failure from internal infrastructure to the cloud.”

Set up in just hours

With technology review assistance from COOLSPIRiT, THIS selected Barracuda Cloud-to-Cloud Backup for its NHS clients. The product is designed to provide unlimited backup and restore of Microsoft 365 data in Teams, Exchange, SharePoint and OneDrive. There are role-based access controls for enhanced security, point-in-time retrieval, and both scheduled and on-demand backup. Corporate data is deduplicated and compressed to optimize storage efficiency and minimize the backup window.

An engineer was assigned to the THIS project, but Simms was amazed at how quick and easy the whole process was.

“We enabled the licensing, established the keys and within a couple hours we were basically up and running. We were taken through operation of platform, did some test restores, and were directed to the Barracuda Campus which I used to create internal documentation for handing over to first line [service desks],” he explains.

“Everything I needed was there. I set our policies up, excluded a few mailboxes that we didn’t want backed up, and we were up and running.”

Streamlined and seamless

Since implementation, THIS has been able to hand over backup and restore tasks to the service desk which supports its respective NHS customers. They’re able to manage all four organizations through a single pane of glass.

“Since I’ve handed Barracuda Cloud-to-Cloud Backup over to our Service Desk I’ve not had one call saying there’s a problem.”

Paul Simms, Principal Infrastructure Engineer

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"Since I've handed Barracuda Cloud-to-Cloud Backup over to our service desk I've not had one call saying there's a problem. That's a really successful handover," says Simms.

"From a purely selfish perspective as an engineer, it's also reduced my workload."

For the same reason, handing over responsibility for restores to the service desk means a better all-round customer experience — because people are waiting less time to regain access to critical information they need to do their jobs.

"It's allowed us to pass on to first line the ability to restore user's data at the first point of contact, rather than it going into a call queue and someone like me picking up the call when I've got the time, which could be 2-3 days," Simms explains.

Barracuda Cloud-to-Cloud Backup has also delivered the assurances the THIS IT team needed that everything is working as it should in the background, enabling it to deliver a first-class service to healthcare providers operating extremely demanding environments.

"There are only two things that are real in 365: emails and files. Those are the tangible assets and having a platform where we really don't have to think, we just have it backed up and have the knowledge we can get any of it back from any time, is great," explains Paul Halliday.

Having established a "good foundation" with email backups, the THIS team is now preparing to do the same for corporate files in Microsoft 365.

"Barracuda Cloud-to-Cloud Backup is truly backup-as-a service without us having to do very much at all. We just click the buttons and consume the service. That is very welcome," concludes Halliday.

About Barracuda Cloud-to-Cloud Backup

Barracuda Cloud-to-Cloud Backup provides easy-to-use SaaS backup for your Microsoft 365 data, including Teams, Exchange Online, SharePoint and OneDrive, including OneNote, with unlimited storage and retention.

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