

CITY OF YORK COUNCIL ACHIEVES GCSX COCO COMPLIANCE

About City of York Council

The City of York Council (CYC) is a Local Authority consisting of 22 wards, with an estimated population of 193,300. It provides information and services covering a wide range of areas, including health and social care, education and housing.

The challenge

CYC, along with all Local Authorities in England and Wales, was advised that it must meet the Government Connect Secure Extranet Code of Connection (GCSx CoCo) in order to keep sharing information securely with central organisations, such as the Department for Work and Pensions, by March 2009. Any Local Authority that failed to meet the compliance requirements by the deadline was entitled to apply for an extension of up to six months.

CYC submitted its results three times, but they were rejected by the Government Connect Assessors. As Roy Grant, Head of IT at CYC recalls, the council experienced difficulty in gaining compliance for its provisions for home/mobile users and school/library connections. "In November 2008, we knew that we were going to struggle to meet the deadline, so we applied for a four-month extension until July," says Roy. "We divided the non-compliant controls between our tech teams and selected a project manager to oversee the project. However, little progress was made owing to the problems we faced understanding the standard. When our revised July deadline crept closer, we realised that our IT team needed help to interpret the controls and achieve compliance."

Company Profile

INDUSTRY: Local Government Authority

LOCATION: Yorkshire, United Kingdom

CHALLENGES:

- Compliance
- Time restraints

SERVICE USED:

- SecureWorks® CLAS consultancy

The solution

One of CYC's existing partners, Kcom, recommended that CYC approach SecureWorks® as they understood the company to be an expert in this area. So the decision was taken to enlist SecureWorks® services through the existing Managed Services Contract with Kcom with the hope of establishing a plan that would help CYC become compliant by July. "When we first met with the SecureWorks® consultant, their expertise and experience of dealing with our challenge was immediately clear," says Roy. SecureWorks® completed a five-day consultancy engagement, which involved working through non-compliant controls – interpreting and prioritising them, and liaising with the Government Connect Assessors.

Another important step in the process, initiated by SecureWorks®, saw the documentation of business justifications of the processes that CYC had opted to risk manage rather than become compliant for.

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Support from SecureWorks® in terms of taking a step back and helping CYC to understand exactly what it had to do to meet compliance was also extremely valuable. “Before SecureWorks® carried out the gap analysis, we didn’t have a feel for how far away we were from achieving compliance. On the back of the gap analysis, the SecureWorks® consultant pulled together a pragmatic, and successful, plan for us to meet compliance requirements,” explains Roy.

CYC found that SecureWorks® people management and interpersonal skills helped to pull together all of its teams, and keep them focused and motivated. “Everything became a lot calmer when the SecureWorks® consultant became involved, and helped us to form a clear idea of what we had to do and why. Progress increased rapidly with the new methodology,” says Roy. “The consultant’s experience and expertise in the GCSx CoCo, and compliance generally, was impressive – especially in interpreting and prioritising controls and understanding suitable solutions.”

SecureWorks® approach ensured that pragmatic solutions, built around operations, the business and financial needs, were found for controls. This helped to ensure that the proposed solutions represented a good strategic fit for the organisation. A clear understanding of the controls did not only lead to an efficient process, it also ensured that all resources were utilised cost-effectively and that the risk was spread across the business instead of sitting solely with the IT department.

“Although around 95% of the work was completed by our team, SecureWorks®’ input was invaluable in terms of focusing our effort in the right direction and helping us see how we could reach compliance in time,” recalls Roy. “We were also impressed by SecureWorks®’ flexibility in terms of how it approached the engagement.”

When CYC submitted its revised documentation well ahead of the deadline, it was simply required to clarify a couple of minor points before becoming compliant. “I could not have wished for a better outcome. I would definitely recommend SecureWorks® to other organisations that are struggling with a similar problem to the one we faced regarding GCSx CoCo compliance,” says Roy.

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