



Case Study

Youth Justice Board secures unique, confidential communications networks for 30,000 practitioners across England and Wales

Remote management of 200 sites proves essential for scale of network

With young people who offend representing 25 per cent of the overall criminal case load in England and Wales, the Youth Justice Board (YJB) has significant challenges to face. This is not just in the numbers of young people that must be managed through the criminal justice system and supported at every stage to ensure appropriate and relevant actions are applied to each circumstance. It also relates to the efficiency and security with which all case files and documentation are transferred as they follow young people through this process. After all, good and safe judgements can only be made if those making those judgements can base their decisions on accurate and timely information.

The YJB works with a whole range of different organisations, including Central Government departments, local government organisations, and private companies across all areas of England and Wales. The issues of capturing information and subsequently storing and communicating across many disparate organisations and systems are a major challenge. What the YJB required was a change of approach supported from the very top of the organisation.

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Mike Mackay
CIO
Youth Justice Board



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Key business benefits

- Defends against cyber espionage
- Secures DSL / MPLS / BGAN services
- Facilitates compliance with security mandates
- Certifications for UK & EU government use
- Enables secure home and mobile working
- Protects integrity of control systems

The challenge

Mike Mackay, CIO of the YJB, comments, "When you have 20 or 30 thousand unconnected practitioners in 200 organisations trying to share data on young people who offend and you don't have a massive budget to achieve it, then you need a radically new approach. We knew that the way forward was to move from using open information on individually secured networks to a system where secured information is communicated across the open network (the Internet) that already connects our many organisations. We wanted to exploit cryptographic technology and the internet to achieve a highly secure network that could be up and running quickly and keep cost down to a minimum without compromising security. AEP is a central part of this system, delivering the security that we need to guarantee safe delivery of sensitive personal data."

Key issues addressed

Two years ago, the YJB's Wiring Up Youth Justice programme assessed its existing processes for sharing information on young people who offend, throughout the youth justice system. The system was largely paper-based, relying on the manual sending of paper files and faxes between the various parties involved. This would include youth offending teams (YOTs), local authorities, secure establishments, the courts, the police, and several others. Of course, manual processes of this sort suffer from data loss, duplication of files, and incomplete documentation which, in turn, delays decisions and increases costs.

Automating the process was only part of the answer because any data being sent still had to be uploaded to the systems of all appropriate individuals and organisations working with young people. Of course, with the sensitivity of the data being so acute any resulting solution would need to be highly secure yet accessible.

"Part of the challenge was that the secure estate comprises local authority, HM Prison Service and private sector organisations, which means there is no common secure network infrastructure" says Mackay.



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New System Structure

Marc Bowie, Technology Deployment Manager for the YJB, comments, "We had to build a secure yet open infrastructure, which is something of an oxymoron to many. This new infrastructure had to present data to the right people at the right time and ensure the integrity of the information at all times. The manual system was failing to deliver so we evaluated the options available to us. In the absence of a nationally available secure network for all parties, we had to provide alternative options. We decided to create a supplementary network by building a closed user group connected by encryption devices and communicating information over the internet. With so many end points to the network, management of the devices was a huge requirement and this is an area where the AEP Net product stood out from the rest. This product allows us to manage all devices remotely, therefore keeping maintenance costs low while ensuring the integrity of the network for all 200 remote sites. With limited resources available for the project this remote management capability was essential, especially where on-going support costs are concerned."

A pilot system was implemented and this ran for five months to prove the concept. Its success led to a full deployment that would take 18 months to complete due to the scale of the project and its geographical spread.

Bowie adds, "AEP has provided us with on-demand assistance throughout, even up to CEO level. The relationship has worked very well as a result."

With network security assured by AEP's crypto devices (AEP Net), Mackay's team developed the connectivity information sharing platform which automatically maps quality-checked data from YOT case management systems to the sentence management system in the secure estate. Mackay concludes, "What we have here is a range of small pieces, loosely joined, locally owned and nationally steered. The key has been to secure the data, not the ring fence around it."

