Sophos MDR Complete provides a SOC alternative for **Solihull College** and University Centre

Solihull College and University Centre is a further education institution, with campuses in Solihull, North Solihull, and Stratford-upon-Avon, England. The centre offers full-time, part-time, further education courses, bespoke employment training and apprenticeships. It has around 10,000 students and 1,000 members of staff.

CUSTOMER-AT-A-GLANCE

Solihull College & University Centre

Solihull College and University Centre

Industry
Education

Website
www.solihull.ac.uk

Number of Users
Circa 4,000 endpoints

Sophos Managed Services
Sophos Managed Detection and Response (MDR)

Sophos Product
Network - Sophos Firewall

"We were aware that cyber criminals were particularly targeting schools and colleges and the massive impact that could have, both financially and in disruption to teaching and learning. We couldn't take the risk of this happening to us but we didn't have the capability in-house to get the level of assurance we needed."

Dave Gartside, Director of IT, Solihull College and University Centre

Acutely aware of increasingly prevalent threats against education establishments, Solihull College and University Centre sought a fully managed cybersecurity solution. The college began exploring the options available to them and in February 2023, the college implemented Sophos MDR Complete. Read on to understand why Sophos MDR was chosen over and above other solutions, and to learn more about their journey.

Business challenges

Solihull College and University Centre had adopted Sophos antivirus and firewalls back in 2017, but over the years that followed, the college's Director of IT, Dave Gartside, was aware of the growing frequency and complexity of cyber threats.

Although the college's IT team excel in providing comprehensive support to both staff and students for all IT matters, they specialize in support rather than security expertise. Securing the large amount of data and safeguarding students were key priorities for the college, but as the risk of cyberattacks became of increasing concern, a key challenge was getting the right expertise in place to monitor and rapidly respond to threats. It had also become apparent that threat actors were often targeting institutions at busy periods such as exam time, or the beginning of school terms, as well as outside of work hours, resulting in a 24/7 threat.

The option of developing a college security operations centre (SOC) was considered, but recruiting and retaining the right talent, plus having employees available to work around the clock would prove difficult and expensive. Dave Gartside worked with the IT team to explore the solutions available to the college for 24/7/365 cybersecurity. Together, they assessed several options, including moving to Microsoft Defender and employing a third party to operate as a SOC for the college. However, as an existing customer Dave already trusted Sophos, and Sophos also offered the best scope for integration into the college's existing systems.

"The assurance we get from Sophos MDR is fantastic, but what I particularly like about the service is the human interaction and escalation points. This is what differentiates Sophos from other providers."

Dave Gartside, Director of IT, Solihull College and University Centre

The technical solution

Following the assessments carried out by the college, Sophos MDR Complete for Endpoint and Server was implemented in February 2023. With MDR Complete, the college receives cybersecurity as a service with ransomware and breach prevention services 24/7/365. This effectively provides the equivalent of an instant SOC, giving the IT team more time to focus on supporting staff and students. The MDR service was implemented alongside the college's existing solution, which meant that its cybersecurity has been significantly strengthened, without the need to duplicate contracts or purchase new infrastructure.

Dave and his team have found the service invaluable in day-to-day operations and use the Sophos Central interface each morning to check the activity across all the college's 4,000 endpoints. For any alerts or suspicious activity, they have the assurance that these will be managed by Sophos' active team of threat-hunting experts, who are also on hand around the clock to discuss any concerns. As part of the MDR Complete service, all staff and students at the college also receive free Sophos Home licences.

Business benefits

Since implementing Sophos MDR Complete, Solihull College and University Centre has experienced significant benefits. Dave highlights the convenience the service delivers as the #1 standout benefit, saying: "With Sophos MDR Complete, we basically have our own expert SOC, without the need to recruit and manage the team ourselves, which would be extremely challenging." Dave lists additional benefits as being:

- 24/7/365 managed threat detection and response
- The ability to triage security incidences with Sophos
- Easy visibility across all endpoints in a single dashboard with Sophos Central
- The ability to easily integrate the service with existing infrastructure and solutions

- Assurance that staff and student data is effectively protected
- Time savings for the IT team, enabling them to focus on other important tasks
- Free Sophos Home licences for all staff and students
- Support from Sophos' industry-leading threat detection and response experts

"For anyone in a similar position, I'd highly recommend the Sophos MDR service. Institutions like ours can't take a risk with cybersecurity. With this service we get access to the security expertise we need to prevent the worst from happening."

Dave Gartside, Director of IT, Solihull College and University Centre

To learn more about Sophos Solutions, visit Sophos.com

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