Softcat

Case Study

CPW enhances security operations through a unified cyber security platform

Where buildings come alive

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Founded in 1978, CPW is a UK-based MEP engineering and environmental building services consultancy, focused on designing sustainable, low carbon buildings across a broad range of sectors.

With more than 350 experts working across multiple UK offices, CPW combines engineering expertise, technical innovation and a strong sustainability focus to help clients create efficient, future-ready spaces.

Key Facts

1. UK-based MEP engineering and sustainability consultancy
2. Founded in 1978, with more than 350 experts across 11 regional offices
3. Delivering projects across many sectors, including; Education, Healthcare, Residential, Commercial, Public Sector, Leisure, Industrial & Logistics, Life-Sciences, Bluelight and Defence

The Challenge

As CPW continued to evolve its cyber security maturity, its existing endpoint and managed security provision was approaching renewal. For Tim Hedges, Head of IT at CPW, the renewal was not simply an administrative decision, it was an opportunity to reassess what the business needed, how the wider threat landscape had changed, and how the IT team could continue to support CPW's long-term ambitions.

"As we were coming up to our renewal, I wanted to explore the market. I didn't want to just stick with what we'd got. I wanted to see what would fit the company, and assess where our Cyber Essentials journey really was, and if any other solution could help us better along that path."

The team recognised that its existing solution was capable, but it was not the best fit for CPW's size, operating model and internal IT resource. CPW needed a platform that would support a smaller team effectively, reduce unnecessary complexity and align with the wider direction of its cyber security strategy.

CPW also had a clear ambition to develop a more joined-up security environment. As its estate developed across networking, wireless access points, switches, firewalls, endpoint protection and mobile, Tim wanted to move towards a model that made operational sense for his team and helped remove avoidable management overhead.

"The main issue for our team was ease of management. The product was very capable, but it was quite difficult to manage for a busy team, and the capabilities needed to get the most out of it were quite specialist."

Cyber Essentials Plus was another important driver. CPW works with organisations where strong cyber credentials are increasingly expected, including government, universities and hospitals. For CPW, certification was not just a compliance exercise. It was a way to demonstrate its commitment to cyber security and provide confidence to customers, suppliers and internal stakeholders. "Cyber Essentials Plus is a great way to demonstrate how seriously we take cyber security, and we want to present that commitment to our customers and partners."

The business therefore needed a solution that could help it build confidence, simplify day-to-day management and support its wider journey towards a more mature security posture.

Critical Success Factors

- **Identify a cyber security solution better aligned to CPW's size, team structure and security maturity**
- **Support CPW's Cyber Essentials Plus journey and wider cyber security roadmap**
- **Achieve the preferred technical outcome at a commercially viable price point**

The Solution

Softcat supported CPW through a structured market review, helping the team assess a broad range of potential vendors and understand which options best matched the business's practical needs.

Alysha Hussein and Josh Jones, Client Director and Security Specialist at Softcat, helped coordinate vendor conversations and demonstrations, providing CPW with a clear view of the market and the confidence to compare options objectively.

"We were very thorough and saw about 10 providers, then narrowed it down based on the demonstrations, the way each solution would fit our journey, the size of our team, and the software itself."

Sophos emerged as the preferred technical option because it aligned with CPW's desire for a more integrated approach. The business was looking to make best use of Sophos' security operations capabilities, while also benefiting from its wider portfolio across firewalls, switches, wireless and mobile. For CPW, that created an opportunity to manage more of its environment through a consistent platform and reduce the complexity created by multiple disconnected tools.

"With Sophos, the management was great, but it was also really well integrated with their hardware. For networking, Wi-Fi, firewalls and other areas, that ability to manage from a single pane of glass is a huge bonus, and for the size of team we've got, that made it the right answer."

The decision was not based on technology alone. CPW also needed the commercial model to work. The incumbent option was highly competitive on price, and CPW expected that it might have to return to its previous provider despite preferring Sophos technically. Softcat worked closely with Sophos to explore how the preferred solution could be made commercially viable, using a five-year agreement and vendor engagement to secure a workable outcome.

"After pricing, we were expecting to go with the incumbent because they had put an offer on the table that we felt there was no way we could get anybody to match. Softcat offered to take it to Sophos, even though we all thought it would be a stretch. Through Softcat's close relationship with Sophos, they were able to get us to a point where the commercials were compelling."

This approach enabled CPW to select the solution it felt best supported its technical requirements and long-term strategy, without compromising commercial value. The move also fitted with CPW's wider use of Sophos hardware and its preference for greater visibility and centralised management.

The solution was supported by a collaborative working model between CPW, Softcat and Sophos. Rather than simply presenting products, Softcat helped CPW understand the market, organise discussions, challenge options and build a path to the outcome CPW wanted.

"Both Alysha and Josh provided good support. They organised the meetings, sat in where they could, and allowed us to communicate."

Solution Highlights

- **Market review covering multiple cyber security vendors and demonstrations**
- **Five-year Sophos agreement shaped to support CPW's preferred technical outcome and commercial requirements**
- **Integrated approach across endpoint, security operations, switches, firewalls, wireless and mobile**

The Benefits

The move to Sophos has helped CPW build a more manageable, integrated and proactive security environment. By aligning endpoint protection, security operations and infrastructure components within a broader Sophos ecosystem, CPW has improved visibility and reduced the friction created by running multiple disconnected platforms.

This has been particularly valuable for CPW's internal IT team. Rather than relying on a solution that required deeper specialist knowledge to interpret and manage effectively, the team now has a platform that better reflects its structure, resources and responsibilities. The aim was to reduce time spent on the system, and enable a more proactive approach to cyber security and infrastructure management.

"Proactivity is probably the area in which we've found the best improvement. We have much better visibility of everything, even including much of our network, which is quite a key thing for us."

By moving towards Sophos switches and firewalls, and consolidating wireless access points from multiple vendors, the business has created a stronger foundation for consistent configuration and improved estate visibility. This has supported wider work such as VLAN implementation, allowing CPW to manage more activity in a central location with a more consistent approach.

"By consolidating all that into one vendor, we've massively boosted our visibility. I've also been implementing VLANs, and this allows us to have a central and consistent configuration across all areas of the business."

The solution has also helped CPW avoid additional software spend in some areas. With Sophos Central supporting the management of Sophos switches, "It stopped me from needing to buy extra hardware licences that essentially do the same thing. Sophos Central has mitigated that cost because we're now using their switches."

Security visibility has improved as well. During the transition, Sophos identified an issue that had not previously been flagged, giving CPW an immediate example of the value the new platform could provide. Since then, Sophos has continued to flag issues requiring attention, helping CPW tighten background processes and improve its broader security posture.

"When we were doing the changeover, Sophos picked up and resolved something that hadn't been picked up before. That was an easy win for us and a great start to proving the value of the change."

One practical outcome has been greater control over access attempts. CPW identified repeated attempts to access its systems from overseas locations and after consulting with Sophos, responded by locking down its Microsoft 365 tenant, blocking those attempts at source and reducing the volume of avoidable alerts seen by Sophos.

"We were getting quite a lot of attempts to get onto our system from foreign locations, and we've now locked down our Microsoft 365 tenant. Sophos isn't even seeing those now because they're blocked at source."

The project has also supported CPW's certification ambitions. CPW achieved Cyber Essentials Plus in January 2026 and is working to renew it again, while also working towards DCC as the next stage of its security maturity. For CPW, that journey is ongoing, but the Sophos solution and Softcat partnership have helped create a more practical foundation for continued progress.

"Have we completed our journey? No, but I don't think anybody really completes it, it's more a process of continuous improvement. We've got some next steps we'll take, but once we've got the other offices complete with the hardware, we'll be in a great place to build out even more security capabilities."

Benefits at a Glance

- **Improved visibility across wireless access points, switches and key security activity**
- **More proactive cyber security management and stronger background processes**
- **Support for Cyber Essentials Plus certification and CPW's continuing security maturity journey**

Why Softcat

For CPW, the value of working with Softcat came from partnership, openness and a shared commitment to finding the right outcome.

Tim made clear that he prefers suppliers who work collaboratively, provide honest input and help make informed decisions, not those who simply deliver a sales pitch. "Softcat are just straightforward, good partners. I don't think there's any better way to put it." Softcat's willingness to understand CPW's needs, coordinate the market review, work with Sophos on the commercial model and support an open, practical decision-making process helped CPW choose the solution it wanted with confidence