

Security Testing 101

101 – a new number to call

101 is a new non-emergency number introduced locally in July 2006 by the Northumbria Partnership. The Partnership is made up of Northumbria Police, the Police Authority and all the twelve local councils across Northumberland and Tyne and Wear.

Funded by the Home Office and the Department for Communities and Local Government, the service provides one, easy to remember number 24 hours a day, seven days a week. People can call for advice, information and action on community safety and anti-social behaviour issues.

It improves response times to these issues, provides people with better access to services and help free up the 999 service to handle real police emergency incidents.

It also provides greater coordination between local councils and police, better information about what problems are happening where, and improves the management of resources and services to the public.

As well as in Northumberland and Tyne and Wear, 101 is now available in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, Cardiff, Sheffield, and Leicester City and Rutland. The service will be fully evaluated in these areas and this will inform the strategy for the further rollout of the service in the future.

The Northumbria 101 Operation

Derek Lynch is the ICT Infrastructure Manager in the Northumbria 101 Operational Management Team. He is one of a team responsible for implementing Northumbria 101's system and ensuring the security of the network is maintained. As part of the management team, Derek liaises closely with representatives from all 14 organisations involved, co-ordinating the ICT infrastructure across the partnership.

Northumbria 101 is a hosted system, consisting of 2 datacentres which is supported by multiple firewalls and servers. The Northumbria 101 system provides a service for 400 101 advisors; facilitating access to the Partnerships database and utilising the Internet for quick and efficient incident response.

The Assessment

Due to the nature of Northumbria 101's work it is essential to test the resilience of its network.

"Carrying out regular vulnerability assessments provides us with proof that our network is secure" comments Derek. "We connect with many government authorities, because of this we are required to have our vulnerability assessments carried out to a CESG CHECK security clearance level,"

The IT Health Check Service, or CHECK, was developed to enhance the availability and quality of the services that are provided to government agencies and departments in line with HMG policy. Companies belonging to CHECK are measured against high standards set by CESG and the certification carries with it a large amount of integrity; both for the organisation providing the assessment and the company being assessed.

The Northumbria 101 Partnership began to look for a suitable organisation to carry out the assessment on their networks. They employed Sapphire, a local independent security advisor, through a quotation based order.



“There were three main reasons I chose Sapphire to provide us with the assessment. Sapphire had CESG CHECK clearance and green team leader status – this made me have a great deal of faith in the level of service they could provide. The pricing Sapphire submitted was competitive and they could provide various references from other public sector organisations that they had worked with.”

Derek Lynch, ICT Infrastructure Manager, Northumbria 101

Northumbria 101 has a new system that required vigorous testing of both the internal and external networks. The tests were carried out before the systems went live using a variety of tools from assigned IP addresses, with the Northumbria 101 system connected to testing equipment via the internet at Sapphires head office.

At no point during the assessment did Derek or the Northumbria Management team encounter any problems. The end result was that Northumbria 101 was provided with a complete security assessment report of both their internal and external networks. As a result of the tests Northumbria 101 was able to successfully go live with the production system.

The assessment also provided Northumbria 101 with a good basis for continuing with ongoing tests. Something that Derek intends to do on a regular basis.

“The assessment achieved everything I hoped it would” comments Derek. “We are now confident of our existing security measures and we can move forward with further infrastructure developments.”

“I found Sapphire to be extremely professional throughout the whole assessment. Its consultants were very flexible and knowledgeable. I would certainly recommend them to others.”

Derek Lynch, ICT Infrastructure Manager, Northumbria 101



For more information on Sapphire's CHECK penetration testing services please email info@sapphire.net with 'SNEN' in the subject header.

