

Suffolk GP Federation Cuts Backup Times by 40% and Achieves Absolute Immutability with Object First

Introduction and Executive Summary

Suffolk GP Federation is a not-for-profit organisation comprising 57 general practices in Suffolk, southeast England. Founded in 2007, the Federation aims to support primary care in the area with HR, training, and collaborative activities, while also helping deliver clinical services directly for the National Health Service (NHS).

As an organisation entrusted with sensitive personal data, the Federation is acutely aware of the growing threat of ransomware. The promise of backup storage with Absolute Immutability, seamless Veeam integration, and rapid recovery for critical systems ultimately led Suffolk GP Federation to work with Object First.

The Challenge

Suffolk GP Federation previously relied on NAS devices using SMB shares for its backups, resulting in several issues:

- **Security concerns:** The lack of advanced security features like immutability meant there was a risk of backup data being maliciously encrypted, altered, or deleted.
- **Performance limitations:** NAS devices offered limited throughput for backup and restore, and they struggled to work well with Veeam's Instant VM Recovery feature.
- **Manual overhead:** The team ran its devices on a manual power-on/off schedule to approximate protection—a cumbersome process that sometimes failed and required ongoing checks.

Steve Dyson, IT Security, Networking and Infrastructure Lead at Suffolk GP Federation, has ample experience of the damage ransomware can cause to an organisation. He was increasingly concerned about the flaws of the existing set-up—and what it meant for the Federation's recoverability:



“Before, I could never really be sure what was going to happen to our data in an attack. Now, our security risks are mitigated at every level.”

Steve Dyson

IT Security, Networking and Infrastructure Lead, Suffolk GP Federation



Company:

Suffolk GP Federation

Industry:

Healthcare / Primary Care

Country:

United Kingdom

Solution:

Object First Appliance

Results:

Absolute Immutability against ransomware, instant recovery of critical systems in hours rather than weeks, backup times reduced by an estimated 35–40%, enhanced security posture, and progress towards tightening NHS DSPT requirements.

“I’ve worked for MSPs in the past, and I consulted on ransomware attacks on several occasions. I quickly realised how difficult it is to restore an entire organisation that’s been hit—and how long and complex that process is if you don’t have immutability. In our case, with around 25 TB of data to recover, restoring the Federation’s systems after an attack could take weeks.”

Strict compliance rules for healthcare organisations—including the NHS Data Security and Protection Toolkit (DSPT) and the National Cyber Security Centre’s Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF)—added extra pressure.

“As a healthcare organisation, we have to comply with the NHS DSPT. While that doesn’t directly reference immutability at present, the DSPT is due to become far more aligned with CAF over the next year. CAF calls for provable recoverability, which very much does point to the need for an immutable storage solution. With that in mind, I wanted to go further than the minimum required right now—so I could stay one step ahead.”

The Solution

Dyson set out clear requirements for a replacement backup storage solution that would both address his concerns and keep the Federation ahead of the regulatory curve: immutability, strong backup and restore performance, seamless Veeam integration, and plenty of room to scale.

Dyson first came across Object First on social media, and it appeared to fit the bill. An initial demo left him very impressed:

“I was struck by how simple it is, and how tightly it’s integrated into Veeam. It’s literally a case of plugging it in, configuring the networking, and away you go. That doesn’t happen very often in IT.”

Subsequent deployment ran very smoothly, with the Object First appliance up and running barely an hour after it first landed on the doorstep.

The Results

By implementing Object First’s on-premises backup storage appliance, Suffolk GP Federation was able to address all its key storage challenges:

- **Absolute Immutability** protects backup data from tampering or deletion, providing a strong safeguard against ransomware
- **Faster backups**, with backup times reduced by an estimated 35–40%
- **An enhanced security posture**, as the appliance supports the Federation’s micro-segmentation programme through Access Control Lists and IP whitelisting, in line with NCSC principles
- **Reduced administrative workload**, removing the manual checks the previous NAS-based process required

The scale and speed of recovery stood out most for Dyson:

“I could run 20 VMs in instant recovery mode on the Object First appliance. For me, that’s just golden. I could restore the core function of our organisation in hours—not weeks.”

That capability was proven just two weeks after implementation, when a 2 TB file server failed to reboot following a regular Windows update. Dyson explains:

“I was able to instantly restore that file server. The business was totally unaware we’d had an issue, as we were able to carry on running from the Object First appliance in instant recovery mode for four days—after which we migrated back into production during a maintenance window.”

Overall, stringent security features and technical gains have delivered lasting reassurance for Dyson:

“Peace of mind is the biggest thing I’ve gained. Before, I could never really be sure what was going to happen to our data in an attack. Now, our security risks are mitigated at every level.”

Conclusion

For Suffolk GP Federation, the right technology has transformed a manual, performance-constrained backup environment into one that is secure, fast, and dependable. Dyson is clear-eyed about what that delivers:

“Object First, combined with Veeam, reduces our cyber risk significantly. It doesn’t eliminate it—nothing does—but it reduces it significantly.”

Looking ahead, he sees the Federation continuing to work with Object First as it grows—and is keen to see what new features develop, too:

“I never wanted to buy something we couldn’t build upon or scale out, so the ability to add another node when we hit 80% usage is crucial. I’m interested to see what else comes down the line from Object First in the future, too—because so far, it’s been great.”