



## Case Study | Mercy Hospice

# Transforming palliative care: Why Mercy Hospice moved to Microsoft Surface devices

After comprehensively updating its legacy back office systems and implementing an electronic health record system, Mercy Hospice took a final step towards the modern workplace by issuing staff members with Microsoft Surface devices, supplied and supported by SecureCom.

As a result, the specialist palliative care provider for Auckland has seen a tremendous boost in staff efficiency. The new devices are enabling staff to spend less time on administration and paperwork, resulting in an improved focus on the ailing.

Mercy Hospice provides a range of specialist hospice services for people facing life limiting illnesses, caring for them with clinical expertise, compassion, and quality of service. The not-for-profit organisation also offers support and education to family, friends, and carers to support them with the challenges faced. Mercy Hospice (Mercy) supports people living in the Auckland District Health Board.

SecureCom is a locally owned, award winning Microsoft partner with 60 staff providing digital transformation and IT support services to New Zealand organisations and businesses.

## Situation

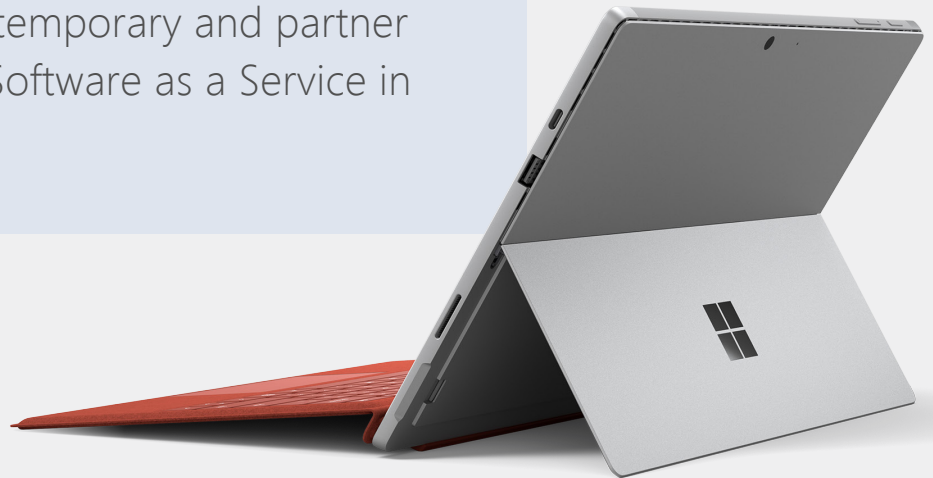
When CEO Paul Couper arrived at Mercy Hospice four years ago, he found an organisation with limited technology systems which hadn't seen an update in years. "To give you an idea, with 140 staff there were only around 65 that had email addresses. Nobody had laptops or tablets, and we were running thin client devices with Citrix. No-one even had sound cards, let alone access to cameras.

In today's age, 'thin clients are a misnomer, as these devices look every bit like a 1990s desktop. It was all pretty old school stuff, we even still ran with paper-based health records. Every patient had a big folder which was filed away in cabinets. We went through over 2 tonnes of paper every year."

There was, says Couper, plenty of room for improvement. "We realised it was time to move into the 21st century with a modern work environment and a framework for the future, but with something that was simple and intuitive given the level of upskilling required."

Mercy Hospice engaged its IT Partner, SecureCom for guidance. "We conducted a complete review of Mercy Hospice's modern work requirements, including the best devices for their users," says Shaun Graham, SecureCom Key Account Manager.

"We needed to embark on a journey to get ourselves current and contemporary and partner with someone who knew Software as a Service in the healthcare market."



## Solution

Long before devices were selected, the first steps involved SecureCom transforming the back-end systems, with a move to Software as a Service (SaaS) where systems and applications are now hosted and backed-up in the cloud. Part of the transition to a modern work environment included the introduction of Microsoft 365 productivity tools. Couper says once this was achieved the focus moved to improving the devices required to support the modern work environment.

"Going into SaaS was revolutionary because it gave staff access to information anywhere at any time, substantially improving productivity and convenience – in theory, at least. The next step was how to interface with the cloud systems; we needed to give our people the right devices for the desired mobility and ease of use."

SecureCom introduced two different devices for Mercy to trial: Microsoft's Surface Pro 7, and a more traditional laptop. Couper says this provided the necessary frame of reference and it quickly became apparent the Surface Pro had many advantages, including being portable and lightweight.

First introduced in 2012, SecureCom Head of Public Cloud Matt Allwood says Microsoft's Surface Pro has proven itself as a premium device packing full computing power into compact dimensions. "Now in their seventh generation, the devices have become a favourite for anyone who's used one. They are fast, reliable, ultraportable and versatile. The ideal 2-in-1 device for a mobile workforce needing flexibility in how and where they work."

That's led to a decision to now standardise the complete Mercy computer fleet on Microsoft Surface devices, Couper confirms.

"We decided to standardise our entire fleet on the Microsoft Surface because they're 100% reliable, they do everything that everybody could want, we could customise the experience depending on user needs and they're portable which is ideal for our nursing staff out on the road."



## Results

"The first advantage is the sheer lightweight portability of the device. It is so much easier than lugging around a large laptop," he says.

Being very mobile is invaluable, because of the 1,100 patients under Mercy's care, up to 80% are in their own homes. With frequent travel, a lightweight, easily transported device is welcomed.

That's confirmed in the feedback Couper has received from his team. "Those that have used older devices before are over the moon with their new devices. Touchscreens, foldability, easy to move, great battery life, fast start-up thanks to the SSD, reliable, easy to use. These are the things we're hearing about the Surface Pro devices."



The devices and the enabling back end cloud SaaS has played a crucial role in equipping Mercy for the COVID-19 lockdowns. "Things changed overnight but as a 24/7/365 service, we simply could not shut down, as we had at least 300 patients to care for at the time. There was a very real possibility that we would be forced to shut down, if we couldn't find a way to remove the very high risk, especially at College Hill."

Turns out it was a relatively easy change – "our people had their Surface Pro devices and access to the cloud and went straight to working remotely. It wasn't really a problem. And to be honest, if we didn't have that in place, we would have had to shut down, it is as black and white as that," Couper reveals.

Surface devices last longer too; "While the initial cost is higher for a premium product, we've had Surfaces alongside the other devices for around 18 months. The Surface Pros have not aged, and on top of that, we've enjoyed 100% uptime with zero failures," he adds.

"The investment in Microsoft Surface, complemented by our partnership with SecureCom, has delivered more than the anticipated benefits such as halving our operational cost and greatly improving our communication capability."



Then there's the seamless integration with Microsoft 365, and specifically, Teams. "We've found the Surface Pro cameras, speakers and microphones massively outperform anything else," Couper notes, again pointing to the value of having a frame of reference. He refers to the Infra-Red camera which produces colour accurate images for video calls, the Dual far-field Studio Mics and the Dolby Audio stereo speakers. "They really do provide a superior experience for online meetings."

With Mercy Hospice offices now set up for Microsoft Surface devices, and a plan to create a flexible workspace design, it's easy for any staff member to walk in, connect to the Surface Dock and enjoy the benefit of a multiscreen experience.

"In short, the investment in Surface complemented by our partnership with SecureCom has delivered more than the anticipated benefits. There's a lot we can do with them, and we're still learning. In the hospice sector, we're considered an early adopter with everything we have done over the last year, but with the benefits we're getting, especially from the Surface Pro devices and SecureCom, folks look at us and are really impressed," Couper concludes.