CASE STUDY

CSI
YOUR PERPETUAL EDGE

Darlington
Building Society

Delivering Exceptional Client Services from the Cloud

Exceptional Client Experience

Success in today's competitive markets demands that a business is resilient and flexible – a combination that challenges many organisations, but rewards those that make the right decisions.

With 86,000 members and total assets over £750m, Darlington Building Society (Darlington) reviewed its IT environment and saw the cloud as a platform for growth. Darlington is adopting leading technologies to build on the firm foundations laid over many generations.

CSI engaged with Darlington to manage a seamless migration to Microsoft Azure and continues to ensure that its clients are protected with AI-powered cyber resilience and data protection. CSI's design uses Azure Infrastructure-, Platform- and Software-as-a-Service (IaaS, PaaS and SaaS) to improve workload performance and reliability.

Following the successful cloud migration, CSI now delivers a portfolio of managed services to ensure day-to-day operations run smoothly and that the new environment continues to be fit for purpose.

Darlington now has a secure foundation to invest in further digital enhancements in the future.

Embracing
the Digital Economy

Darlington successfully brings together traditional and digital approaches to business - investing in its branch network at the same time as investing in technology.

With "Darlingtonline" providing access to member accounts and an eBroker system to improve processing of mortgage applications, Darlington reviewed its IT platforms and a decision was taken to take advantage of the flexibility and efficiency of a cloud environment.

With the nature of Darlington's business involving access to sensitive financial and personal data, the threat of cyber attacks is always top of mind. Being regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority means that Darlington has to meet extra levels of compliance and IT resilience – being able to identify threats and react swiftly to any potential breach.

Together with CSI, Darlington evaluated its systems and applications and matched each one to the best cloud model for maximum efficiency. With this information, CSI designed a migration path to move all functionality to a secure environment in the Microsoft Azure cloud.

Migrating to the Cloud

Rehost / Redeploy

- "Lift and shift" a system to cloud infrastructure without making any application changes

Refactor

- Switch functionality to cloud-based Platform as a Service (PaaS) offerings

Revise / Rearchitect

- Break up existing applications into a different structure that can be implemented to take advantage of cloud technology

Rebuild

- Discard old code and re-write existing applications to become cloud-native with microservices and containerisation

Replace

- Discard existing application and move to a Software as a Service (SaaS) model

"Gartner's 5 Rs of Application Migration"

CSI designed a new cloud environment for Darlington using a broad range of Azure services to increase application performance, cost-effectiveness and reliability.

Existing virtual machines were moved onto Azure with the IaaS solution split across two regions to provide disaster recovery. Replication between the two regions is provided by Azure Site Recovery and data protection is delivered via Azure Backup, with data stored across different data centres.

The migration also replaced the existing wide area network with connectivity provided via Azure ExpressRoute which allows more reliability, faster speeds, consistent latencies, and higher security than typical connections over the internet.

Darlington's database servers were replaced with Azure SQL Database PaaS functionality running on the latest version with 99.99% availability.

Darlington also migrated its on-premises email system to a subscription-based SaaS environment with Microsoft 365. The existing Mimecast system was retained for inbound and outbound mail filtering.

"Darlington Building Society welcomes the support of CSI with the recent migration to Microsoft Azure.

The decision to move to the new cloud environment saw the Society increase our application performance, cost-effectiveness and reliability.

Following the successful cloud migration, we are looking forward to a strong future relationship as we continue to grow and invest in our digital future."

Jonathan Harwood
Head of IT
Darlington Building Society

Cyber resilience

Recent changes in working habits have resulted in employees using personal devices as well as corporate endpoints – and from a mix of office locations and remotely. Staff productivity and responsiveness is improved through access to the internet and many websites, but this convenience is also a security risk.

In response to Darlington's specific requirements, CSI implemented two complementary managed services:

Managed Endpoint Protection

- AI-based defence against malware
- Identification and removal of potentially unwanted programmes
- Pre-execution prevention

Managed Web Filtering

- Integrated web filtering and reporting
- SSL decryption at category level
- Web access control policy

IT automation

CSI built Darlington's new servers using "infrastructure as code" and IT automation.

The estate is continually checked, so compliance audits become 'business as usual' rather than periodic business disruptions.

By delivering cyber security services to protect endpoint devices together with managed backup and disaster recovery, CSI provides Darlington with the first line and the last line of defence against cyber threats.

Following the successful migration to Azure, Darlington received a positive independent assessment of its cloud strategy, highlighting the robust, well-considered approach taken by the IT Department around the wider data protection and information governance challenges.
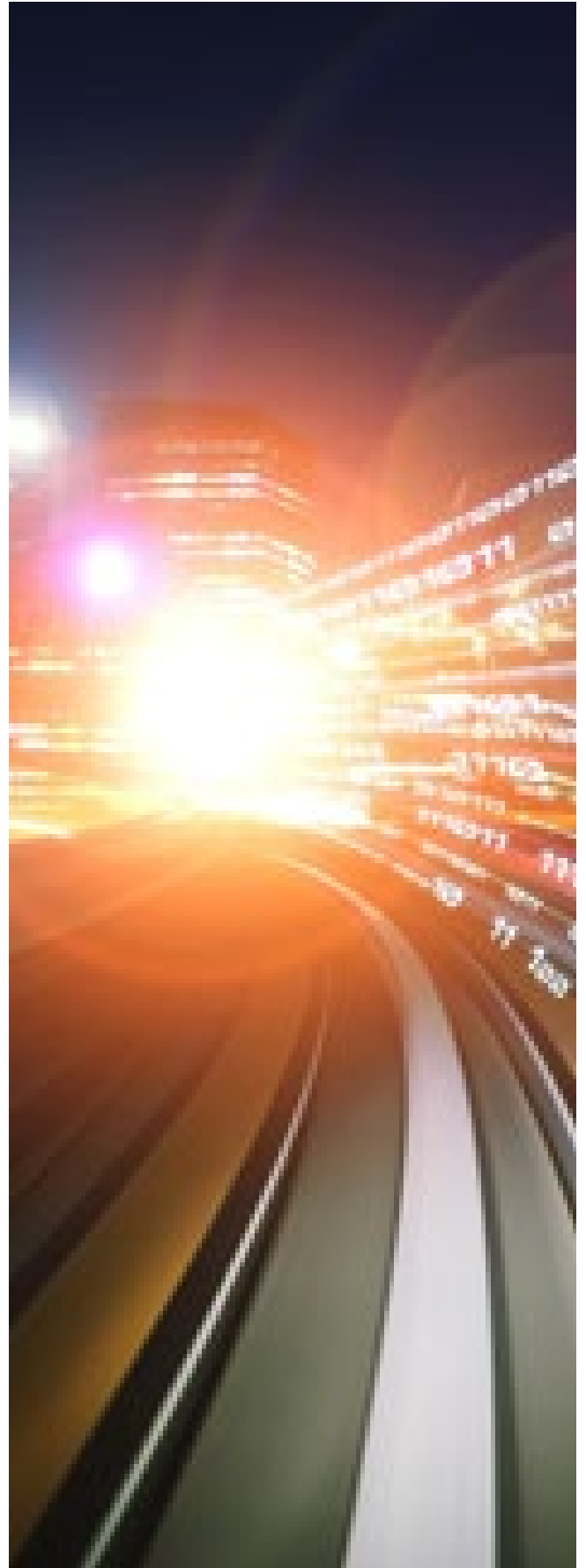
About our client

Darlington Building Society was formed in 1865 as the Darlington Working Men's Equitable Permanent Building Society to benefit local people from the very beginning. Today, it continues that commitment with a range of savings accounts and mortgages designed to help members realise the dream of owning their own home today.

In 2021, Darlington won the "Building Society of the Year" category at the Money Age Mortgage Awards. From the start of the first national lockdown it adopted an "open for business" strategy; all branches remained open, and staff made telephone calls to vulnerable and isolated members, just to keep in touch and to check if they needed any help.

Companies in regulated industries are beginning to host their most critical applications in the public cloud, attracted by the flexibility and access to new features. They require a cloud-first strategy which prioritises security and is supported by a trusted partner who can minimise risk and disruption. As a Microsoft Cloud Solution Provider, CSI adds value through its managed services, billing flexibility and expert advice.

Our cloud migration and managed services ensure that the Microsoft Azure cloud platform delivers the expected advantages of scalability and agility. In addition, we help manage costs and maintain the high levels of security and compliance demanded in highly regulated industries.