



Databarracks' case study

# CHILDRENS CHARITY PROTECTS CRITICAL SYSTEMS WITH BAAS & DRAAS

About Plan International UK

Plan International UK is a global children's charity. It works with girls and boys growing up in some of the world's poorest communities, making sure they have access to the education, health care, clean water and future opportunities they need to thrive.



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## The Challenge

Tarik Hasan is IT Operations Manager and has worked at Plan for over 19 years.

“We have staff deployed to sites around the world, but the vast majority of our 260 users are based here at our headquarters in London. From a continuity and resilience point of view, we need to be able to operate if anything were to happen to the site and we need secure off-site copies of our data.

“Prior to working with Databarracks, we were backing up to tape. It was a very manual process which introduced potential for error. If there was a problem with a backup and it didn’t complete successfully, you wouldn’t know until you needed to recover from the tape. Staff were responsible for taking the tapes off-site so there was always a chance they could be forgotten, lost or damaged.

“We were also constantly fighting with capacity issues. At one stage, we needed to change tapes 3 times per day to get a complete backup. We would run the backups overnight, change in the tape in the morning and then again at lunchtime. If I reflect on the changes since I started here at Plan, storage has grown exponentially. Our file storage for instance was just 20GB and is now over 5TB.

“It was clear that we needed a modern, automated solution.”

## The Solution

Plan International UK selected Databarracks to provide Backup as a Service and Disaster Recovery as a Service.

“The service immediately solved the issues we had with tapes. We eliminated the manual interaction, reducing the chance of human error in the process. We also removed the uncertainty about whether backups were successful and would work when we needed them.

“With the tape solutions, there could be a problem that went undetected for weeks or months. The Databarracks engineers check on the backups every day and if there is a problem, they are on the phone with my team to fix them. It gives me peace of mind to know that we’re always on top of it.

As Plan’s IT estate has changed, the data protection technologies have also adapted to fit. After first using Asigra for Backup and PlateSpin for replication, it now uses Commvault and Zerto for BaaS and DRaaS respectively.

“We were originally using PlateSpin because we had both virtual and physical workloads to protect. As we fully virtualised our environment, we were able to upgrade to Zerto. That had a big impact, improving reliability, reducing our failure rate and improving recovery times.”

## The Benefits

“We know that the service really works because we have had to use it in anger. Several years ago, we suffered a major incident and data loss. We were able to get back up and running within a day, restoring systems from backups. That could have been an organisation-ending situation if we were not able to recover effectively.

“It was one of the most difficult and stressful moments in my career but thankfully we were able to maintain continuity.

**“We know that the service really works because we have had to use it in anger.”**

“We also need to defend against the growing cyber threat. Working from home over the past 18 months has increased those risks.

“We’ve mitigated remote working risks as much as possible with tools like Mobile Device Management but it’s impossible to be protected against every threat. It makes having robust backups even more important.

Tarik describes a shift in the levels of uptime IT is now expected to deliver.

“When I joined the organisation it wasn’t uncommon for issues with systems to cause downtime of a day or two. That is no-longer acceptable. We are regulated by the Charities Commission, but the strongest external force actually comes from our donors. We need to demonstrate that we are secure and capable. Having the Cyber Essentials certification, for example is a pre-requisite for certain types of donors and funding.”

Future plans for Plan include further cloud adoption.

“When the lockdown happened, we adapted well. Our only real issue was with phones. We were planning to roll-out Teams at some point, so we pushed it through quickly. Everyone adopted it immediately, without any difficulty. It was a good reminder of how quickly we can make changes and introduce new applications when we really need to.

“We are using Azure as our Backup and DR target already. The lockdown and changes to hybrid working are leading us to review everything from our office premises to where we host our systems. Migrating production systems to Azure has been a consideration for a little while and is likely to be next on our roadmap.”



## About Databarracks

Databarracks is the UK's specialist business continuity and IT disaster recovery provider.

In 2003, we launched one of the world's first true managed backup services to bring indestructible resilience to mission critical data.

Today, we deliver award winning data and continuity services supported 24/7/365 by our team of handpicked experts.

We make enterprise-class continuity, security and resilience accessible for organisations of all sizes.

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