



Customer Success Story

# Dougie Mac

Fortifying Firewall Performance with  
Engineer-Led Health Check



## CHALLENGE:

Dougie Mac provides specialist palliative and end-of-life care for adults, young adults, and children living with life-limiting illnesses across Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire. Its wide-ranging services include inpatient and home-based care, day services, bereavement and dementia support, and holistic wellbeing programs. To help fund this vital work, the charity also operates 23 retail locations throughout the region.

For a hospice charity like Dougie Mac, a secure and reliable network is critical, as it underpins both the delivery of care and the long-term sustainability of the organisation. The charity's five-person IT team, led by Head of ICT Darren Penny, oversees a broad remit spanning infrastructure, databases, and day-to-day support. Given its lean size, the team often partners with external specialists to provide the advanced expertise needed to keep systems secure, resilient, and fit for purpose.

When Dougie Mac first set out to implement FortiGate firewalls, they partnered with an external vendor for support. However, the process quickly became frustrating, leaving the team uncertain about the firewalls' configuration and overall security. Seeking a more dependable solution, Dougie Mac turned to a trusted partner for guidance, who recommended Optec as a provider they could rely on.

## AT A GLANCE

### CHALLENGES

- Needed to ensure Fortinet network was configured to best practices
- Sought a more dependable provider to ensure network was secure

### SOLUTION

- Carried out a Fortinet Health Check to uncover risks
- Produced a clear, easy-to-understand report
- Recommended best practices configurations

**“Working with Optec has been a truly positive experience. They are straightforward, reliable, and deliver exactly what they promise. We’re very grateful for all of the work they’ve done.”**

**DARREN PENNY**

Head of ICT, Dougie Mac

## **SOLUTION:**

Optec quickly focused on resolving one of Dougie Mac's most pressing challenges: securing the correct FortiGate licensing. Where attempts with the previous vendor had stalled for months, Optec immediately leveraged its Fortinet partnership, connecting the charity with an account manager straight after the initial meeting. This swift action not only resolved the licensing issue, but also gave Dougie Mac confidence that their network was finally in the right hands.

**"Optec's ability to step in and immediately leverage their expertise and relationships gave us real confidence," Penny explained. "They were clearly the right team to partner with."**

Optec then carried out a FortiGate Health Check to uncover risks and recommend best-practice configurations. Led by NSE 4+ certified engineers, the review benchmarked the existing setup against more than 50 validation points and ran over 1,000 individual checks. The result was a detailed report with a clear, actionable plan. To ensure the team felt confident moving forward, Optec also hosted workshops to walk through the findings, explain the risks, and outline the impact of implementing the recommended changes.

"The work Optec produced was very quick, very professional, and very clear - even to a non-technical person," Penny explained. "And we felt really confident applying the changes knowing that we had this wealth of knowledge provided by the Optec team."

## **RESULTS:**

Following the implementation of Optec's recommendations, Dougie Mac now has complete confidence in the security and performance of its FortiGate firewall network and plans ongoing health checks to maintain peak performance, as well as additional FortiGate licensing.

**"We are extremely satisfied with our partnership with Optec," said Penny. "From connecting us with our Fortinet account manager to providing guidance and support throughout the remediation, they delivered on every commitment. That reliability is incredibly important to us."**

Dougie Mac's IT team now has a clearer understanding of their firewall configuration, and the partnership with Optec has closed a critical knowledge gap and strengthened operational stability in a 24/7 hospice environment. It has also provided Dougie Mac with the confidence of having a long-term trusted Fortinet support partner.

**"Optec is honest, upfront, transparent and approachable - and they deliver on their promises," said Penny. "I would 100% without a shadow of a doubt recommend them to anyone, and look forward to our continued partnership."**