

# Newcastle City Council Mitigates the Security Risks of Java Versions no Longer Supported by Oracle



## Eliminated 80%+ of Council's Java-related security vulnerabilities

**Challenge:** Newcastle City Council (NCC) was running critical governmental applications on Oracle Java. When Oracle changed the licensing and pricing model for Java SE, the cost of ensuring stability and security of NCC's Java estate increased dramatically. In addition, some of the older versions of Java used by NCC were no longer supported by Oracle. When security audits began flagging the Java runtime as a major concern, NCC knew it needed an affordable alternative to Oracle Java SE.

**Solution:** NCC identified Azul Platform Core as a one-for-one equivalent for Oracle Java SE at a significantly more affordable price. Azul Platform Core not only provided timely updates for all versions of Java used by the IT department, including Java 6, it also offered Critical Patch Updates (CPUs), which allowed security patches to be immediately deployed into production. Finally, Azul also provided workarounds for legacy functionality like applets and Java Web Start.

**Result:** NCC achieved its business objective: a fully supported and secure Java application estate.

*"Through our strategic partnership with Azul, we significantly reduced our security risk level with Java. With Azul Platform Core, our Java estate is consistent, standardized, and easier to maintain. Platform Core has brought a level of simplicity that's a huge benefit to our organization."*

**Narrative:** NCC provides municipal services to over 300,000 residents of Newcastle, the largest city in northeast England. Critical applications such as financial management, housing and benefits run on Java version 8.

In 2019, Oracle changed how it licensed and priced licensing and support for Java 8 and, as a result, NCC lost access to free quarterly security patches. Committed to the highest standards of security, NCC conducts annual security audits. When these audits began flagging the Java runtime (JDK) as a major concern - accounting for more than 80% of the organization's IT security vulnerabilities - the council knew they needed commercial support to access security patches for their older versions of Java. They also needed to be able to address the vulnerabilities without disrupting their essential Java-based business applications and systems used daily by approximately 1,100 employees.

### Full Support of Java Application Estate and Critical Patch Updates

NCC explored several options to address the need for more secure Java applications, including migrating away from Java completely. However, this move would have launched a year-long, prohibitively expensive process, creating unacceptable downtime for the government body. They also looked at moving to a free distribution of OpenJDK, but they needed full support for their Java estate to ensure security and stability.

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After exploring these options, the council turned to Azul Platform Core, an OpenJDK-based alternative to Oracle Java. With Azul, NCC received a one-for-one equivalent to a commercial support subscription from Oracle, including Critical Patch Updates (CPUs) that allowed IT to immediately deploy security fixes in production.

Because Azul supports more Java versions and platforms than any other vendor (including Java 6 and 7), the council could continue to safely use their older versions of Java without needing to upgrade to newer releases. This transition also fortified the security of their Java environment across 5,000 desktops, and ensured that their systems remained robust, efficient and compliant with the U.K.'s Public Services Network (PSN) requirements.

Azul's support engineers also provided valuable assistance in transitioning applications that relied on legacy functionality like Java applets and Web Start. "Azul support was a lifesaver," Tom Bone, ICT Information Security Manager, said. "Azul provided the best support we have ever received."

***"Through our strategic partnership with Azul, we significantly reduced our security risk level with our Java applications and Java-based infrastructure, which certainly helps me sleep better at night. In addition, the benefits of switching to Azul Platform Core as our JVM are clear. Our Java estate is now consistent, standardized, easier to maintain, and has brought a level of simplicity that's a huge benefit to our organization."***

Jenny Nelson, the council's head of ICT & Digital

The council rolled out Azul Platform Core to over 1,000 employees with no impact on performance and no complaints from service users. The rollout achieved the council's business objective: a fully supported and secure Java application estate.

"Java used to be a sea of red. But now that we've got the Azul Platform in place, I don't see Java vulnerabilities anymore," continued Bone.

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