

# Connecting the Public Sector

Patrick Clark, head of programme management at Government Connect, DWP, responds to LGITU's report, 'Connecting the Public Sector'.

In a remarkable example of successful joint working, local authorities, the DWP, DCSF, DCLG, the LGA and SOCITM, have implemented the Government Connect Secure Extranet (GCSX).

As LGITU goes to print all local authorities needing access to DWP systems are connected to a secure, pan-public sector communications infrastructure, offering a new platform on which to build joined up, effective and efficient public services.

Local authorities are now ideally positioned to take advantage of GCSX and use it in new ways that are beneficial and helpful to them and the citizens they serve.

However, whilst the technical foundations for secure and cost effective communication and joint working are now laid, the cultural perception of the importance of data, and the consequences of unauthorised use or access, lags significantly behind. As can be seen in this report, senior officers are well versed in the need to follow appropriate Data Handling Guidelines, yet practice – and training – on the front line is not consistent. Councils must work now to deliver the cultural change necessary to ensure the physical safety of sensitive information.

Clear identification of data 'assets' and ownership is needed, along with consistent training on the duties of data handling and procedures in case of breach. That 63.8% of survey respondents did not know whether their organisation had such policies and training programmes suggests there is much work yet to do on this front.

GCSX, by dint of requiring proven and trusted security protocols, supports frontline implementation of the Data Handling Guidelines. As a 'first choice' conduit, secure electronic transmission avoids the danger of frontline decisions taken in haste – or for reasons of expediency – that put sensitive citizen data at risk. Indeed, it is encouraging to see that the programme rolling out GCSX was credited in many cases with raising awareness of such issues.

From Place Shaping to Total Place, customer insight to preventative services, the ability to securely share information and open trusted channels for joint working has obvious benefits. With the 'perfect storm' brewing, where spiralling demand for public services and support in a recessionary Britain meets

dramatic decreases in available resource, now is the time for frontline organisations to look carefully at driving maximum benefit from their current infrastructures.

As can be seen from the Benefits Realisation Fund projects (right) GCSX represents a major opportunity to make fundamental step changes in delivering improved, cost effective services.

With GCSX in place the barriers to joint working are no longer financial or technical. Pioneering work joining up officers in different organisations to improve services is under way in these pilots – exploring the benefits in, for example, trading standards, joint asset recovery, tackling crime and antisocial behaviour, business crime, place shaping, civil contingencies and safeguarding children.

Indeed, GCSX couldn't come at a better time. Following recent industrial action public and business' confidence in the postal service has been severely damaged.

In this brave new electronic world the citizen expects secure, efficient joined up public services – accessible to them in the way that they choose, but powered seamlessly behind the scenes by proven and secure technology.

I believe that GCSX provides the secure communications required to support the delivery of truly joined up, citizen-centric, front line services across the public sector.

## **G**CSX, Central and Local Government: Developing opportunities for joint working and secure information sharing between central and local government:

- **DWP and councils - housing and council tax benefit, In and Out of Work and Tell Us Once.**
- **Youth Justice Board, HM Courts Service and local authority Youth Offending Teams.**
- **Trading Standards, the Serious Organised Crime Agency and JARD.**
- **Police, fire & rescue services and councils tackle crime, improving community safety.**
- **Patient identifiable data with NHSmail users (PCTs, acute trusts, GPs etc) and councils.**
- **Contact Point, the Common Assessment Framework (eCAF) and Free School Meals (FSM) plus secure email partners such as the Family Courts.**
- **A secure communication platform for shared emergency planning and response.**

[www.govconnect.gov.uk](http://www.govconnect.gov.uk)



To download the full report or an executive summary visit: [www.ukauthority.com/connecting](http://www.ukauthority.com/connecting)

## **I&DeA GCSX Benefits Realisation Projects**

**Bristol City Council:** Trading Standards and intelligence sharing in the South West (SWERCOTS)

**Conwy County Borough Council:** Joint Asset Recovery Database (JARD)

**Dartford Borough Council - Kent Connects:** Kudos, tackling crime and antisocial behaviour

**Devon County Council** on behalf of the Devon ePartnership: Flexible Working

**Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council:** Business Crime Partnership

**Great Manchester Public Protection Partnership (GMPP):** Business Compliance - Regulatory Services

**Halton Borough Council:** 'Place shaping' through GIS data sharing

**Hampshire County Council** on behalf of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Partnership: Exploring a regional approach to employee authentication

**Lancashire Council** (Lancashire Constabulary & Police): Antisocial behaviour data sharing in Lancashire

**Lichfield District Council:** Business data sharing in the West Midlands

**London Borough of Islington:** No Recourse to Public Funds

**London Trading Standards Authority (LOTSAs):** Trading Standards and Regional Intelligence in London

**North Kesteven District Council** on behalf of the Lincolnshire Public Sector Working Group: Customer Data Hub

**Plymouth City Council** on behalf of Devon ePartnership and Isles of Scilly: Civil Contingencies/Emergency Planning

**Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council:** Blue Badge Scheme

**South Lakeland District Council:** Information sharing to facilitate a needs led approach to older people

**Sunderland City Council:** Births - Tell Us Once

**Torbay Council** on behalf of Devon ePartnership: Safeguarding Children - GC Mail

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