



# GC Communicate

## *The story so far ...*

The last few weeks have been a challenging and exciting time for Government Connect (GC) as we approach the DWP Data Access Policy deadline. A large number of authorities have made significant progress towards an operational GCSx connection and in this newsletter we will clarify the exact position in relation to CIS access.

Recent progress has not been without difficulty and we would like to apologise to any authority that received a reminder letter which did not reflect their true status in relation to progressing towards GCSx connectivity. The programme had an urgent need to obtain definitive progress statements from all local authorities in order to plan resources effectively. We would like to thank all authorities that have been in touch to update us as we

now have a clear view of where the vast majority of authorities are in relation to connectivity. Indeed only 15 authorities have not yet submitted a Code of Connection for formal assessment. If you have not recently been in contact with us please do so as time is short.

In addition to the progress on scheduling we have also made good progress towards improving the assessment process. CESG and OGCBuying.solutions have agreed GC can now complete the formal assessment process without seeking CESG approval. CESG will retain an audit role, but this change will address many local authority concerns about the process, such as prolonged assessment timescales and inconsistent feedback.

We have restructured the account management team and increased the size of our formal assessment team allowing GC to respond faster to CoCo queries and assessments. Additionally we have

agreed with OGCBuying.solutions that GCSx circuits can be activated on a temporary basis ahead of CoCo authorisation; this will enable the configuration to be tested ahead of the go live day. These measures will significantly accelerate progress.

We have also made considerable progress in collecting signed OGCBuying.solutions Terms and Conditions and Cable and Wireless Service Contracts. If you are yet to return yours, or have any questions about this or any other connectivity issues, we encourage you to call the GC team. Thanks, keep going!

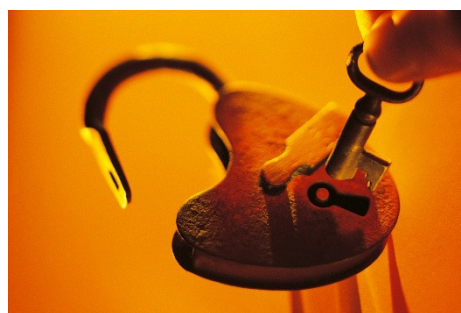
*Philip Littleavon,  
Programme Director,  
Government Connect*



## *GC & The DWP Data Access Policy*

Government Connect has featured regularly in publications over the last few months but, as the programme is now reaching a critical stage, we think it is important to spell out very clearly what the position is. In particular, as we're sure you know, it is DWP's policy that access to the Customer Information Service (CIS) will be withdrawn from any LA that doesn't have an agreed exemption and hasn't taken the necessary steps to achieve a secure connection by 31st March this year. So authorities not compliant with the Code of Connection (CoCo) by the 31st March will be unable to access DWP data, including CIS, on 1st April unless they are exempt. That policy was spelt out in a letter from our Permanent Secretary, Leigh Lewis, to all authorities last year and that remains our policy. But we want to explain in more detail what this means in practice.

First, we should say that a growing number of authorities have completed the process and now have a functioning, secure connection to CIS. Congratulations to all of you!



Last year, a number of authorities secured an exemption from the 31st March deadline. Exemptions were granted only to authorities who were able to demonstrate to Government Connect that they had a plan in place that would deliver everything that was required, but not by 31st March. Authorities in this position have committed to a revised delivery schedule beyond 31 March; they need to be pressing ahead with the plans they agreed last year with Government Connect.

Many more authorities are well advanced and at various stages in the process. To those authorities we would like to say "keep it up"; it may be a lot of hard work but we know you will find that it is worth it in the end. We do understand that the process can be quite arduous and you may find that your CoCo may not be approved on first submission and that various actions need to be undertaken before Government Connect can re-assess it. It is important that authorities in this position press on and deal promptly with any actions that have been identified. There are certain mandatory elements to the CoCo and an authority has to meet all of these in order for it to be approved. If you are in any doubt at all concerning the status of your CoCo application then we would urge you to contact the Government Connect project team. And if, for any reason, a non-exempt authority that has been working towards CoCo compliance by 31 March experiences an issue that may compromise

achieving compliance prior to the deadline then this should be quickly escalated by the authority to Government Connect. The escalation should be in writing to Anna Smith (Implementation Manager) and Philip Littleavon (Programme Director) and from the authority's Section 151 Officer. The Government Connect team will urgently convene a telephone conference to discuss the issue and decide with the authority on the most appropriate course of action. The Government Connect team may grant further exemptions for a specific, agreed period of time to authorities where there is a good reason to, where the authority is formally committed to Government Connect implementation, and has a fully resourced plan to achieve compliance.



Regrettably, there are a few authorities that have been slow to engage with Government Connect and, if your authority is in this position, you really are leaving it very late and there must be a real risk to your continued access to CIS after 31st March. We do urge any authorities in this position to contact Government Connect immediately. We know that there may be a number of reasons for your delay but it is important that we know what those reasons are. If there are aspects of the CoCo that you are struggling with then the Government Connect team may be able to help you - they are certainly willing to do so. No reasonable request for help will be refused. But if you do not engage with the Government Connect team then they will have little alternative but to assume the worst and may feel the need to write to your Chief Executive to set out clearly the risks your authority is facing.

We appreciate that, if you are reading this, you may be in the part of the local authority that deals with benefits. It may well be that engagement with Government Connect is dealt with in another part of your authority, getting the secure infrastructure in place raises many IT issues and so this may be being dealt with by an IT specialist. It may be that they don't appreciate the very serious implications for the

authority of losing access to CIS. If you are in this position we urge you to talk to your colleagues and impress on them the importance of getting a secure connection, you don't need us to tell you the serious consequences for benefit delivery if access to CIS is lost.

Finally, Government Connect has agreed with OGCBuying.solutions that it can activate GCSx circuits for a limited (e.g., 24 hour) period ahead of Code of Connection compliance to enable the reconfiguration services to be delivered and the GCSx circuit to be tested. This agreement is conditional on the authority's CoCo submission having no outstanding MUST FAIL actions. Government Connect is currently seeking to schedule the provision of live configuration services with authorities on this basis and will appreciate help and cooperation to avoid the building-up of an implementation bottleneck. Early scheduling of the live configuration service will be much appreciated. The first step is for your authority to complete the Pre-Configuration Checklist which has been recently sent to your IT leads. Please complete and return this to Government Connect as soon as possible. The team will then make contact to offer a date for the on-site support; we ask that authorities are as flexible as far as possible in agreeing to offered dates.

Some local authorities may achieve compliance with the CoCo on or before the 31 March 2009, but will not have received the services provided by Government Connect to support the re-configuration of IT services to use GCSx. With so many authorities approaching compliance on or around the 31 March it is inevitable there will be some delay in activating the circuits and reconfiguring services. DWP and Government Connect will not of course inconvenience these authorities and the DWP Data Access Policy will not be enforced during the intervening period.



## *What do you need to do next?*

- Agree a plan for CoCo re-submission with the central support team.
- Schedule your free configuration visit
- Should your authority's circumstances change please keep in touch with the support team: [gctech.team@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:gctech.team@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)
- Monitor the Government Connect website & newsletters for updated information

If you were granted an exemption, keep working towards going live on the agreed date. This includes meeting the agreed actions, staying in contact with Government Connect if you have any questions and submitting your Code of Connection in time to meet your revised Go Live date.

## *LA Connectivity Progress (as on 18 Feb 2009)*

<b>1</b>	GCSx Proforma submitted					
410	All LAs Complete					
<b>2</b>	Limited communication/no CoCo pre-assessed		CoCo Submitted to RAM for pre-assessment			
15	5		10			
<b>3</b>	Submitted but not yet assessed	Progress stage 1	Progress stage 2	Progress stage 3	Progress stage 4	GC CoCo Approval
351	1	83	117	55	82	13
<b>4</b>	Pre-Sign Off Stage		Signed Off	OGCs Approved	C&W Circuit Activated	
24	12		0	3	9	
	Tech Configuration Date Agreed	OGCs Ts & Cs Signed	C&W Contract Issued to LA	C&W Contract Signed by LA		
	19	254	184	119		
<b>5</b>	Configuration Complete and Operational					
20	20					

*Visit Government Connect*  
[TSI/LACORS Year Ahead Leadership Event](#)  
 26 - 27 February 2009  
 Belton Woods, Lincolnshire

### *Contact Government Connect:*

CoCo Support: 0845 838 2945 / [gctech.team@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:gctech.team@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)  
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 General enquiries: [gc.info@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:gc.info@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

