



# GC Communicate



**Local Government Association**

I'm often asked why we need Government Connect. The answer reminds me of the Los Angeles Police motto – 'protect and serve'. Local authorities are often the front office for other public services such as benefits paid by DWP. Therefore councils and central government departments may need to share information so that benefit payments are correct, and promptly adjusted when the customer's circumstances change.

People are rightly concerned about how public authorities handle personal data. We need to assure people that data is held securely, and that sharing data between different authorities benefits the public. Government Connect will help us all do that. It helps share sensitive personal data securely, and it also gives a platform for reduced costs and better services. That's why getting all councils on the Government Connect network will be such a big step forward.

At times it has seemed a really tough challenge. I think that local authorities up and down the country are making a fantastic effort to get connected, and I'm looking forward to seeing the benefits unfold. With everyone working together, we can turn some dreams of exciting improvements into reality.



*Stephen Jones,  
Director of Finance &  
Performance  
Local Government  
Association*

## *Going Live: The experience of Preston City Council*

Preston City Council was connected to the GCSX network on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2009, just six months after its original Code of Connection submission.

"We continually invest in ICT at Preston, move with the times and keep our technology current. From this point of view we had a very good base to build on and not a huge amount of work to do to become compliant" asserts Greg Skellorn, Preston City's ICT Support Manager.

"The main challenge for us was ensuring that our processes, policies and procedures included the specific requirements of the GCSX network. This also gave us the opportunity to ensure that these were generally properly documented and up to date."

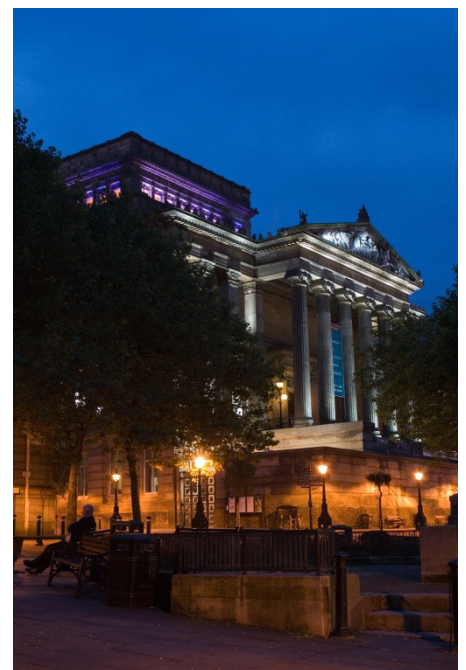
The main motivation to signing up to the Government Connect programme was the DWP Data Access Policy that came into force on 31<sup>st</sup> March this year. "Longer term, we hope the facility will help us to streamline services by speeding up secure data exchange with a range of public bodies. Any services that come online and will help us to do this, we'll make use of" says Greg.

He advises local authorities not to be fazed by the process: "It's not as complicated as it seems! Just be open and honest about your

environment - if you do something a certain way and you have good reason for doing so, then don't be afraid to tell it like it is."

"Take advice from the Government Connect technical team and when you have to make changes, set realistic timescales and stick to them. This is when support from both client departments and senior management becomes essential, so make sure you engage with these people right from the start."

Preston was awarded city council status in 2002. It aspires to be the third city of the North-West region, after Manchester and Liverpool. Set in rural Lancashire, with its villages and leafy suburbs, Preston is also an ethnically-rich city.



## GC Benefits Realisation

The Government Connect programme has a £1.5m benefits realisation fund, being managed by the improvement and development agency (IDeA). The objectives are to encourage the beneficial implementation of Government Connect across the sector and to share the learning and experience.

A total of 193 applications were received, requesting funding of £8.85m; All applications were evaluated using set criteria as previously outlined.

Ten bids have currently been approved for funding, with projects addressing:

- information sharing to facilitate a needs led approach to older people
- flexible working
- data base and information sharing process for people with 'No Resource to Public Funds'
- blue Badge processes and information sharing on a sub-regional basis
- front office shared services
- GIS data sharing
- multi-agency data-sharing to tackle anti social behaviour
- Joint Asset Recovery Database (JARD)
- business compliance – regulatory services
- identity management and staff authentication.



A further 26 bids are still being considered for funding with further information being sought before final decisions are made. We anticipate that the funding will be fully allocated in due course.

### Capturing and Sharing Learning

The IDeA will work closely with funded projects on an ongoing basis, to ensure that lessons are learned and best practice captured throughout all stages of the project.

The IDeA will use exemplar projects to demonstrate the benefits of GCSX and will collect, evaluate and help disseminate the good practice developed by the funded projects, report on the overall benefits delivered by the project and work with LA's to share lessons learned.

A key element of the above will be the 'Government Connects Benefits Realisation Fund for local authorities' Community of Practice (CoP). This will include information such as:

- list of funded projects
- descriptions of individual projects and the outcomes sought
- contacts for individual projects
- monthly update on progress and any lessons learned
- case studies, when available
- final end of project report.

A link to apply to join the CoP can be found on the [IDeA website](#). We would encourage anyone with an interest in projects utilising Government Connect to join.

### What do you need to do next?

#### Authorities not yet live:

- Monitor your compliance and configuration schedule and keep to the agreed actions
- Prepare for your free configuration visit and ensure that you have the technical help at hand on the day
- Should your authority's circumstances change please keep in touch with the support team:  
gctech.team@dwp.gsi.gov.uk
- Monitor the Government Connect website & newsletters for updated information.

#### Authorities that are now live:

If you are already live with GCSX and have any operational problems, please refer to annex i of the [operational support guide](#) or contact the service desk at 0800 505 3375 / [it.servicedesk@tameside.gov.uk](mailto:it.servicedesk@tameside.gov.uk)

### GC Approved CoCos

Code of Connection Approved by GC	In month	total
March	-	202
Predicted in April	38	240
Predicted in May	27	267
Predicted in June	31	298
Predicted in July	21	319
Predicted in August	15	334
Predicted in September	76	410

Figures as on 17 April 2009

### Join Gov Connect



**Socitm Spring Conference**  
Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire

**23 April 2009**

For more information go the [Socitm website](#)

### Contact GC:

CoCo Support: 0845 838 2945  
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