



**POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
21ST JULY 2009**

SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT CONNECT SECURE EXTRANET (GCSX)

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the committee of the achievements made to date regarding the implementation and usage of the Government Connect Secure extranet (GCSx) network within CCBC and the future plans for increased utilisation of this facility by CCBC to work more efficiently and securely with partner organisations.

2. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 2.1 Appropriate utilisation of the GCSx network enables the secure sharing of restricted and confidential information between CCBC and partner organisations, such as the Police, Health, Department of Work and Pensions, Job Centre Plus, Welsh Assembly Government, Criminal Justice Board, other Local Authorities, etc. This in turn assists the ease at which CCBC and these partner organisations can work together, making the joint working partnerships more efficient, effective and secure.

3. THE REPORT

- 3.1 Following a number of high profile security breaches within government departments, some of which having previously been well publicised by the press, a mandatory change has been introduced by the government in the data sharing requirement method between government organisations.
- 3.2 The new method of data sharing relies on utilisation of the GCSx network instead of using removable media such as CD/DVD, which then has to be couriered between organisations. This new practice will reduce the risk of data loss in future. The deadline set by the government for local authorities to gain accreditation and thus connection to the GCSx network was 31/03/09.
- 3.3 Due to the highly secure nature of the GCSx network, accreditation to it is difficult to achieve. A very robust process needed to be completed to establish the ICT security standards of the organisation wishing to connect to it. Completion of a code of connection (CoCo) was required which involved the completion of a 91 point security check list covering all aspects of the Authority's security policies, procedures and technical safeguards such as network access controls, encryption, firewall arrangements, etc. Following several months of work by ICT Services, a final on site audit and formal signoff by GCHQ, GCSx accreditation was achieved by CCBC in November 2008.
- 3.4 However, remote and mobile working within CCBC was deemed out of scope of the GCSx accreditation at this time, as this was subject to an upgrade of CCBC's remote/mobile network access gateway. This has subsequently been completed as part of the 2008/09 ICT capital

program. Accreditation for this area of the network will follow a successful follow up application and audit by Government Connect.

- 3.5 Other aspects of CCBC's security arrangements will also need to change over time, e.g. the password length will need to change from a minimum of 6 alpha-numeric characters to 8. Independent penetration tests will also need to be completed annually to prove the integrity of CCBC's security arrangements and thus ensure CCBC's continued accreditation to the GCSx network.
- 3.6 Alongside the GCSX accreditation process, CCBC were approached by the DWP to ascertain if the Authority would consider joining a joint "in and out of work" pilot project with the Job Centre Plus. CCBC were only one of a selected group of twenty local authorities across England and Wales participating. The objective of this pilot project was to test the sharing of information between Job Centres and local authority housing benefit departments, with a view to making these currently manual processes more efficient by use of the secure email system included with GCSx.
- 3.7 CCBC agreed to join the pilot and following subsequent project meetings with JCP/DWP to determine the required technical set-up, which included the installation of a direct temporary link between CCBC and the GCSx network. This was funded by DWP and a project live date of 10/12/08 was achieved as planned. The temporary link will eventually be replaced by a connection onto the PSBA network, once this too has been accredited to the GCSx network. DWP will also fund this future migration.
- 3.8 Some areas of CCBC have begun utilising the GCSx for the sharing of information with trusted partner organisations. These include to date: Revenues & Benefits, Trading Standards, Community Safety, (see case study at appendix B), Youth offending team, Protection of vulnerable adults (POVA) team, and the commissioning adults team in Social Services. No doubt others will follow shortly when the real benefits of this secure network become evident to more areas of the organisation.
- 3.9 The network also provides the means by which recently developed protocols for information sharing between Health, Police and the Authority, produced as a result of the work recently commissioned by the local service board (LSB), for specific client groups can be achieved.
- 3.10 Listed below are examples of where and what benefits may be accrued with the deployment and use of a GCSx secure network. This hopefully shows the potential that this development has to offer the Authority in future. A network diagram has also been included (see appendix A) to show how local authorities including CCBC fit in with the GCSx and other secure partner organisations networks.

Safer, more secure transfer of information

- GCSx facilitates the secure transfer of information from one organisation to another
 - Benefits include:
 - Better information security
 - Increased compliance with Data Handling Guidelines and the Data Protection Act
 - Reduction in the loss of personal information
 - Reduction in the loss of identity theft
 - Increased points of access for information

Speedier transfer of information

- GCSx facilitates faster electronic transfer of information between two organisations
 - Benefits include:
 - Faster delivery of data
 - More able to make urgent decisions informed by “real time” data
 - Quicker response times – need is met faster

Simpler, easier transfer of information

- GCSx facilitates simpler transfer of information between two organisations, through the use of technology
 - Benefits include:
 - Access to new systems
 - Reduction in likelihood of human error
 - Reduction in back-office processes associated with the delivery of hard copy information
 - Quicker delivery of information
 - Reduction in asking customers for the same information many times

Cheaper, money saving approach to transferring information

- GCSx provides a cheaper method of transferring information from one organisation to another
 - Benefits include:
 - Reduction in amount of money spent on delivering information – via postal services, secure mail services and courier services
 - Reduction in resources required to distribute data
 - Reduction in resources required to gather data
 - More money can be directed to meeting need, as opposed to delivering data

Secure email exchange with central government departments, Police, NHS and other local authorities

- Protects exchanges of messages and information between local authorities, services and central government systems and enables trusted communication directly between LA and:
 - Police
 - NHS
 - DWP

- CLG
- DCSF
- Other government departments within GSi
- Other LAs
- Enables the replacement of existing less secure and less efficient methods of transferring data and provides Savings by migrating communications by post, courier and fax to GCSx

Secure browser access to central government applications and databases

- Provides LA staff with a more secure and reliable way to access information at source without the need for it to be transferred across the internet, via courier or by post.
- Provides ability to share information securely, quickly, reliably and efficiently across government will improve the ability to deliver joint working initiatives
- Currently activated for LAs to securely access DWP Customer Information Service (CIS) across GCSx. Tactical internet access to be switched off on 31st March 2009.

Housing and Council Tax benefit administration data

- Improved benefits administration via direct secure access to DWP Customer Information Service (CIS) and email across GCSx.

Joint Working

- Delivery of joined up, citizen-centric services and enabling shared resources and multi-agency co-location

Trading Standards

- Ability to securely access Joint Asset Recovery Database and Moneyweb from a local authority desktop will enable financial claims against the criminal asset database.
- Secure communication with Regional Intelligence Officers, Police, Office of Fair Trading, Environmental Health, NHS and Neighbouring Local Authorities
- Improved 5x5 reporting via secure electronic transfer between organisations

Youth Justice

- Establishment of secure connectivity between Youth Justice Board (YJB) and local authority based Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) for secure access to and exchange of data including secure access to LIBRA database and secure structured messaging resulting in the replacement of less secure and less reliable encryption across the internet.

Crime, Community Safety and Child Protection

- More secure, reliable and timely exchange of data between the Police and local authorities via email across GCSx.

Health, Children's Services and Adult Services

- Ability to securely share information with anyone on NHS.net such as GPs via email over GCSx and replace existing paper based methods of information

exchange will better protect citizen data whilst enabling it to be shared more reliably and efficiently.

1 ACTUAL GCSX UTILISATION BY CCBC THUS FAR:

- **Community Safety** - as per case study in GC Journal, see appendix "B".
- **Trading Standards** - secure information sharing with Police, HMRS, DWP, and other enforcement agencies, in particular Food Fraud and Proceeds of Criminal Investigation - JARD database access.
- **Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA)** - secure information sharing as early as possible with other key statutory agencies in order to put immediate protection steps in place to protect vulnerable adults and ensure actions to protect and clear are carried out
- **Youth Offending Team** - secure information sharing allowing the Youth Offending Service to receive information from the Courts LIBRA system, in doing so reducing data entry time, improved data quality / timeliness, and meeting CJSSS principles within the courts.
- **Housing Benefits** - secure information sharing allowing 'in/out' work customers claims to be processed at single point of contact (Job Centre plus) more quickly and securely.

4. PROCUREMENT

- 4.1 Associated procurement requirements were undertaken via the Procurement section and thus compliant with normal standing orders process.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 CCBC did bid for grant funding of £75,000 via the "application to Government Connect Benefits Realisation Fund for local authorities" to cover costs for associated GCSx infrastructure requirements, including the acquisition of a new consolidated audit logging system, a required upgrade to the mobile access gateway, a dedicated GCSx mail server and a mandatory annual network penetration test.
- 5.2 However, unfortunately this grant funding was too widely spread between too many local authority bidders, many far less advanced in the accreditation process than CCBC and the bid was unsuccessful. Therefore, funding had to be found from a combination of the existing ICT capital and ICT revenue budgets.
- 5.3 An ongoing annual revenue commitment of £20,000 will be required to cover costs for system maintenance, penetration testing and continued security improvement to ensure GCSx accreditation is retained.

6. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Additional security implications for personnel needing to utilise the GCSx service include an identity check, this could be in the form of an existing CCBC registered CRB check, or by the provision and verification of certain documents, such as a new style driving licence, a valid passport, plus proof of address in the form of utility bills.
- 6.2 The relevant personnel will also be required to go through a GCSx awareness training session prior to their GCSx set-up taking place. This has been the case with the 100 staff to date, who are now using the system. It should be noted that the administration and training work

involved in this area is anticipated to grow with the increase in number of requests for GCSx access and therefore, will need to be resourced appropriately, via Personnel and the ICT training section. The ICT Security Officer is currently undertaking this additional work, however, this will not be sustainable as a permanent arrangement. Appropriate business cases for access to GCSx will need to be completed and signed off by directors and or heads of service prior to user set-up.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 The information in this update report is noted.

8. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 To raise awareness of the updated and improved communications infrastructure within CCBC, which now includes access to GCSx facilities. To highlight the achievements made to date in successfully gaining GCSx accreditation, and the business benefits accrued thus far and to inform the organisation of the future potential to take further advantage of this facility by other relevant areas of the Authority to assist in the provision of efficient, secure data sharing between participating partner organisations.

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Appendices: Appendix "A" – GCSx network diagram
Appendix "B" – CCBC/Gwent police GCSx case study