

The Local Authority Guide to Government Gateway e-Government Services

This paper provides a brief summary of the e-government services and facilities provided by the Government Gateway. It explains how these common, open interoperability e-Government components can be used within local authority portals and web sites.

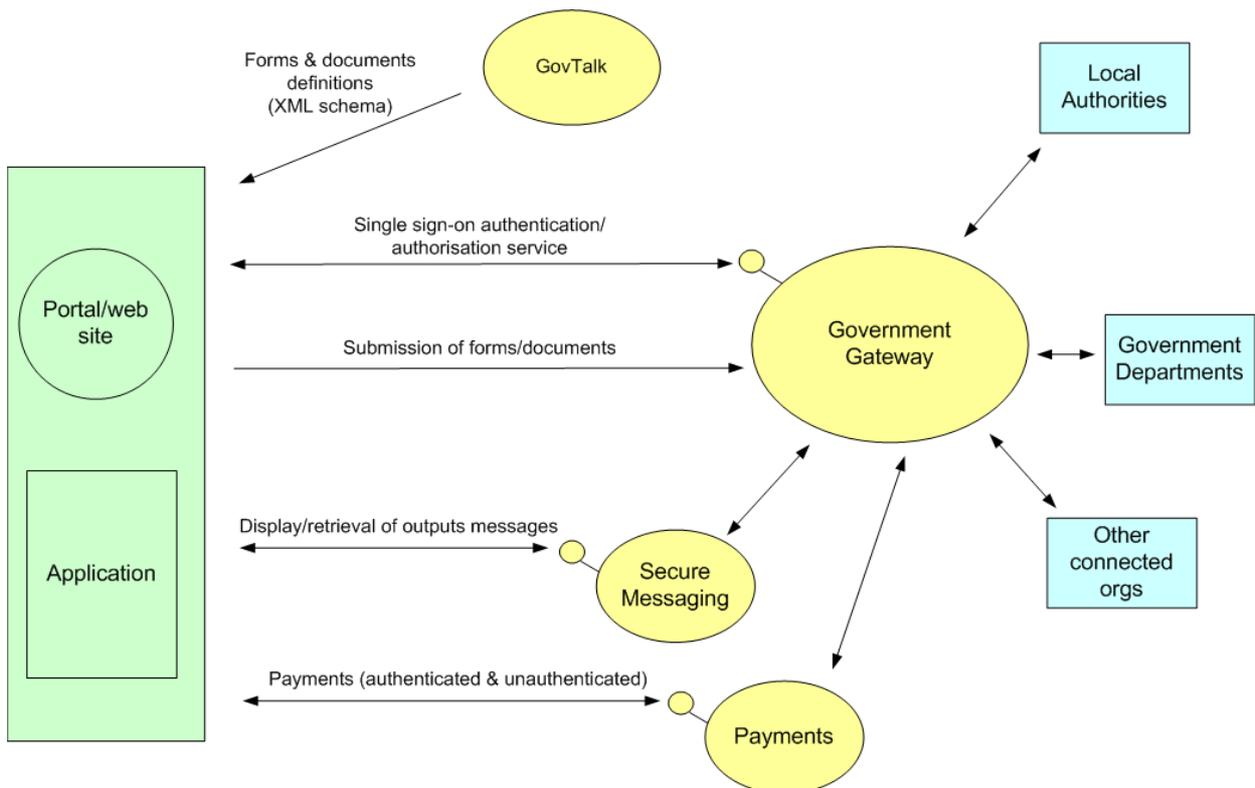
Use of the Gateway's e-government services will:

- save both time and money
- reduce the risk of launching successful e-services
- ensure that the Government's overall joined-up vision is achieved.

As the Gateway's e-services are transparent to end-users, local authorities will retain and strengthen their direct customer relationships through their own portals and web sites. Use of these common components – including authentication and authorisation, transaction handling, secure messaging and payments – enable local authorities to direct their resources into providing richer online services which exploit these facilities rather than duplicating expenditure on common infrastructure components.

What is the Government Gateway?

The Government Gateway acts as a secure, intelligent, Internet-based hub that helps to enable and deliver effective electronic service delivery. It provides authentication services, verifies the integrity and validity of transactions, and routes them to or between appropriate government organisations.



The Government Gateway provides:

- **authentication and authorisation** – to ensure that users are who they claim to be and that they have the right to access a specific service or set of services
- **single sign-on and single-credentials across all government services** – national, regional and local

- **a common transaction and routing facility** – ensuring the reliable delivery of documents and messages. This includes both documents between business and citizens and government, as well as the routing of documents between government organisations
- **a secure messaging facility** – enabling secure communication between business, citizens and government organisations
- **an integration tier** – offering reliable delivery of standards-based information into the connecting organisation, including the option for customised local integration into existing systems and applications
- **a payments facility** – offering both unauthenticated and authenticated payments, ranging from credit and debit cards through to direct debit

The Gateway is part of the UK's critical information infrastructure and provides a highly secure environment, a resilient "always on" service and a capacity to handle high volumes.

A more detailed document entitled 'The UK Government Gateway – Overview' is available from the Office of the e-Envoy.

The Business Case for the Gateway

The provision of a common set of e-government infrastructure components shared across national, regional and local public services:

- avoids the duplication of the common facilities and services necessary to connect individual organisations to each other and to customers over the internet
- delivers joined-up services by provisioning a common authentication service and enabling a customer to interact with many departments in a single transaction using a single identity
- enables both the private and public sector to provide customer driven applications that can interact with government in a consistent manner

Instead of using resources on duplicating these common components, the Gateway's services enable a local authority to focus on its own particular line of business applications. Using these common services – single sign on, routing to other government organisations and so on – local authorities can build high quality on-line services for their local business and citizen population in a way consistent with all other public sector organisations. The services have been built in such a way that a user of a local authority e-service need never know they are in fact built upon Gateway components: all they will see and interact with will be the local authority service on the local authority's own web site or portal.

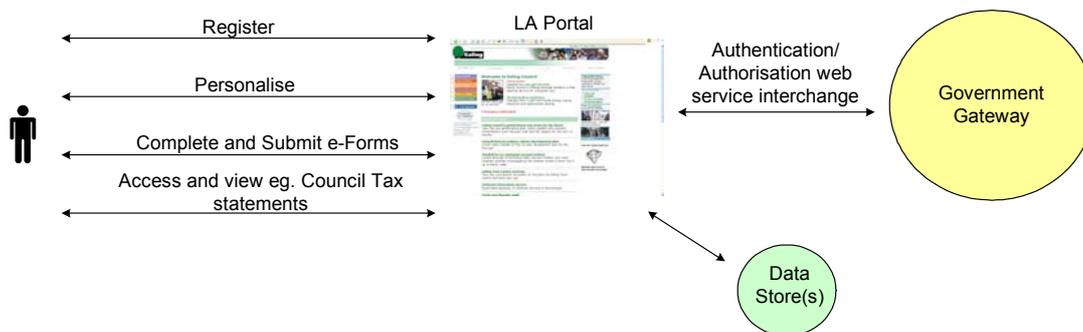
Gateway Authentication

The Gateway implements the various levels of authentication set out in the Office of the e-Envoy's authentication framework (see <http://www.e-envoy.gov.uk/publications/frameworks/authentication/authentication.htm>). Full support is provided for all unauthenticated (level 0) transactions, level 1 (using user IDs and passwords) and level 2 (using digital certificates and digital signatures).

Single Sign-On

A local authority may choose initially to take advantage of the single sign-on facilities offered by the Government Gateway. This will enable users to set up a User ID and password (or digital certificate if that is required for services) for use with their local authority portal and services. The same identity will also be available for use with all the other services powered by Government Gateway single sign-on.

Using this single identity, the local authority can personalise their services around a user, enabling them to establish a strong customer-relationship, while also enabling support for a common secure credential that can be used across all government services. An initial scenario could be a local authority portal using the Gateway for single sign-on services, and serving all of its own data, e-forms and interactions locally. This is shown in the schematic below.



Driving Uptake

One of the key issues with making e-government initiatives successful is driving uptake – that is, making services easy and compelling enough for citizens and businesses to want to interact electronically. The design of the Government Gateway recognises these concerns and provides a variety of features that can assist with the promotion and uptake of e-services.

In the single sign-on scenario the question arises of how and when a user would register and enrol for services in the first place – and hence how they would set-up their single identifier for use across all government services: local, regional and national. One method the Gateway supports is a promotional campaign by a government organisation. For example, a local authority could decide to promote e-services to all or some of its population through a concerted marketing and promotional campaign.

Let's take the example of a local authority that is launching a range of local services – such as Council Tax statements and payments online, housing rent statements, payments and repair requests online, a clearing system for local school waiting lists online – and wishes to maximise uptake. It can do this through a range of awareness-raising materials on local authority premises – libraries, the town hall and so on – together with a mailshot to all targeted households.

Using its own databases, which contain information about each individual at a particular address and their relationship with a local authority (eg. Council Tax payer), the local authority can send out to its targeted audience letters which contain details of the new service(s) being launched, together with what is known as a Departmental Activation Token (DAT).

The letter would provide details of the service, the web address at which it can be found and alternative ways in which a user can make use of on-line services if they do not themselves have direct Internet access (such as for example making use of free Internet access PCs located in libraries).

To illustrate this, a letter might contain something along the example below. This is purely for illustration only and is **not** meant to be definitive in terms of the type of data that an authority might use in setting up suitable authorisation.

Dear Mrs ABC,

We are pleased to announce a new range of our services are now being made available on the Internet.

From today you will be able to access and make use of the following services, securely, over the Internet:

- **Council Tax:** statements and payments online
- **Education:** local schools co-ordinated waiting list clearing system
- **Street Amenities:** reporting of defective street lights, potholes in roads and other issues you wish to bring to our attention
- **Planning:** filing of planning applications online and online monitoring of progress

Contained in the sealed section of this letter is a secure PIN that will enable you to activate your online account and start using these new services. You will need to remove the secure flap at the base of this letter to access this PIN. Once your account is activated, you will then be set up ready to use these new services over the Internet.

If you do not have the facilities to directly access the Internet yourself, then all local branch libraries and the Town Hall have free use access terminals which you can use to make use of these services. Alternatively we are working with other organisations, such as the CAB, to enable them to access these services on your behalf should you wish them to do so.

To address any concerns about confidentiality you may have, please rest assured that these services use state of the art security features. The council is committed to ensuring the continuing privacy, confidentiality and integrity of all personal data in its possession.

If you have any questions about these new services, please contact our Internet Service Helpdesk on xxx xxxx xxxx or email eservices@localauthorityname.gov.uk.

As well as the activation PIN contained in this letter, in order to activate your online account you will also need the following information:

- Your Council Tax reference number (this can be found in the top left hand corner of your Council Tax statement)
- Your full postcode

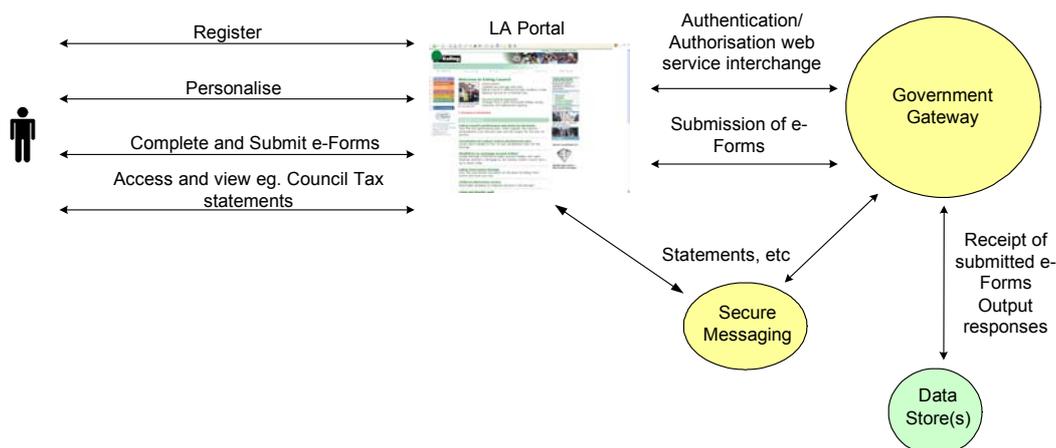
Ready to start? Now visit <http://www.localauthorityname.gov.uk/eservices> to activate and start using these new services. Further services are also planned and full details will be made available in due course.

Activation PIN (lift flap to reveal)

The fact that the registration and enrolment process is powered by the Government Gateway is totally transparent to a user. Yet by setting up a user account in this way, not only do users have access to the local authority services, but also by default they gain a sign-on credential that provides access to all other public sector sites.

Transactions

A subsequent development beyond the use of single sign-on facilities is the use of the Gateway by a local authority for all of its transactions, as shown below.



At first glance, the above scenario may appear to offer a complex way of routing documents and interactions between a local authority and a user – after all, transactions now go via the Gateway rather than directly into the local authority system. However, from a wider e-government perspective, and from a user experience point of view, it has several strengths to recommend it. For example, a local authority can make use of existing infrastructure components, such as the secure messaging store, rather than constructing its own. It also enables a local authority to send an e-form onward to another public sector organisation (potentially such as a health trust, central government department or other local authority) using the Gateway's organisation to organisation routing capabilities.

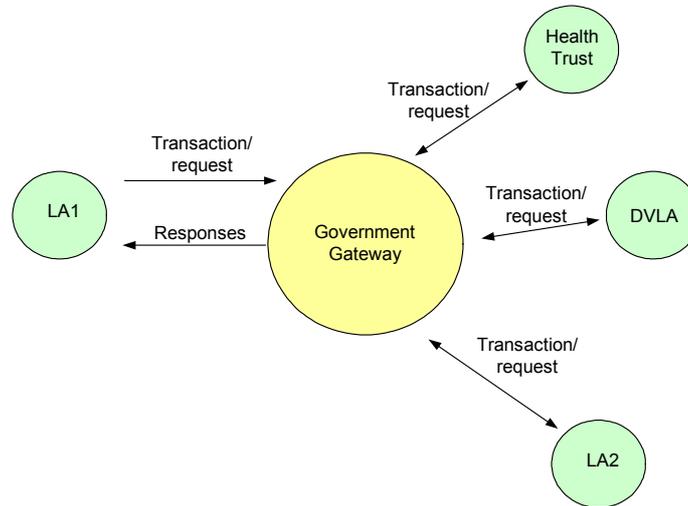
Although secure messaging is a single, central piece of infrastructure, its programmatic interface means that a local authority can present its content in a personalised way through its own local portal, using all its own branding and presentation. But since it is common infrastructure, the local authority can also make this view value-added, by enabling a user to view other items in the secure messaging system as well rather than just their dealings with the local authority.

Another key driver is that this second model also helps with joined-up transactions – for example, when a citizen moves from one local authority to another. By moving away from a model that is specific to one individual local authority to one that encompasses common infrastructure, it makes it possible for example to provide a user with a view of the final balance of their council tax where they used to live alongside a view of their new residence's council tax.

Having common components is also important to independent software vendors and others who produce application software for local authorities and other government organisations. It means they can develop against a common set of consistent and standard interfaces, which will also facilitate the production of improved new versions of software that are e-government enabled.

Inter-Organisation Messaging

As mentioned in passing above, the Gateway also provides an infrastructure for authentication and messaging between organisations, such as between local authorities or between a local authority and a health trust. This is shown in simplified form below.

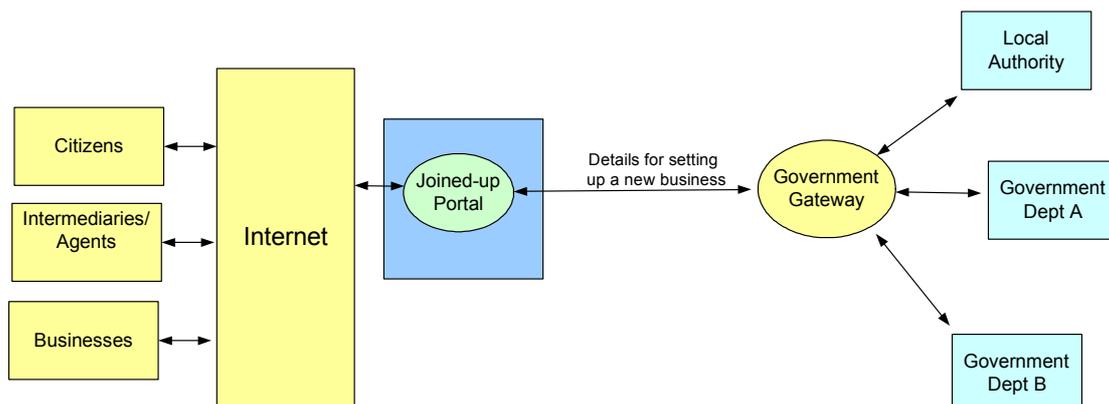


This inter-organisation messaging enables the common infrastructure to be used to move documents and communications between different government organisations – for example, a local authority could communicate with a central government department or a private pension company make automatic electronic returns to say the DWP. Given the range of stakeholders and various parties that a local authority needs to communicate with, the Gateway provides a cost-effective and streamlined means of facilitating these connections and interactions.

As with externally-originated transactions, transactions between government organisations and related parties are also authenticated and automatically routed by the Gateway. The authentication and authorisation features of the Gateway ensure that all communication flows are fully authenticated and authorised during these inter-organisation information exchanges.

Joined-up Transactions

The Gateway also supports joined-up transactions. Rather than each connecting organisation merely replicating its existing paper-based forms, users can be offered a single form that integrates various existing paper processes into a more streamlined approach. This could be a consolidation of various information within a local authority, or to be shared between a local authority and other parties. A single consolidated form completed online by a user can then be de-composed into its component parts and each handled in accordance with existing processes. This is shown in overview in the diagram below.



A Note for Developers

The Government Gateway uses entirely open interoperability standards, based on recommendations from the W3C and IETF. It is effectively an XML in/out-based system, which supports HTTP and HTTPS together with the use of SOAP for its web services.

More detailed developer information can be found at:

www.govtalk.gov.uk/gateway_partnerlink

Next Steps

Please contact the Office of the e-Envoy if you are already undertaking or planning e-government services. Our email address is:

gatewayservices@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk

With the use of the common e-government components provided by the Government Gateway, we will be able to save you money, speed up your delivery time and reduce the risk associated with delivering online services. You will also be able to direct more of your existing resources into online services, rather than in the common components needed to build them.

A substantial further benefit is that you will also help drive the overall joined-up government initiative by being part of the same framework used by other local authorities, central government departments and other government-related organisations.

More Details

More details are available from the Office of the e-Envoy (www.e-envoy.gov.uk). Departments requiring assistance in developing or launching Gateway-enabled services should send an email request to:

gatewayservices@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk

Queries from partners or developers, and comments about the site structure or content, of the Gateway Partnerlink site should be sent to:

gatewaypartnerlink@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk