**GOVERNMENT CONVERGENCE FRAMEWORK (GCF) EXIT – UPDATE FOR USER ORGANISATIONS IN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND THE WIDER PUBLIC SECTOR**

**BACKGROUND**

The Government Convergence Framework (GCF) is the pan-government secure communication system for over 500 central government and wider public sector organisations. GCF was introduced, and first contracted for with Cable & Wireless, in 1997. C&W were subsequently acquired by Vodafone and the GCF procurement framework expired in 2014. Subsequent contract renewals have taken place via GCloud and the Network Services framework. Outstanding contracts expire in March 2019.

**Government and Vodafone have the agreed target that the GCF platform will be decommissioned before the end of 2019.**

Technology evolution means that there are service and commercial benefits to replacing GCF. Therefore, a programme of replacement is now underway.

The ideal outcome is for all GCF users to transition away from GCF as early as possible and, preferably, before the end of March. New solutions are in development by GDS. However, CCS and GDS recognise that not all users will be able to migrate to these by the end of March 2019.

To support these users, CCS and the Crown Rep, sponsored by Gareth Rhys-Williams, have commenced commercial re-negotiation. This has the goal of allowing users to transition from GCF in an orderly fashion with service continuity, if required, on fair commercial terms from Vodafone.

The renegotiations take place against a backdrop of good co-operation from Vodafone; there is now increased senior level engagement crossing commercial, project management and technical functions. Vodafone has dedicated resource to enable both a straightforward roll-off process and service continuity where users are unable to leave GCF before the end of March.

**It should be emphasized that the post March 2019 Vodafone GCF service will not be available indefinitely. CCS and GDS are currently agreeing the shutdown timetable for individual services with Vodafone and this will be circulated immediately when finalised. GDS will be able to advise on replacement services and migration. However, there will be an end date by which all users will have to leave the GCF service.**

We expect to advise on this end date by the end of November, in line with the target end date for commercial negotiations.

**Vodafone is currently polling all users with a short questionnaire on their requirements for service continuity after March 2019. The response rate is currently low at less than 10%.** **It is imperative that users respond to this as soon as possible to allow Vodafone and CCS to assess and agree serviced continuity and timescales. Please can you pass this information to your senior technical management in order that they prioritise this task.**

CCS and GDS are providing commercial frameworks and technical guidance on migration. However, users are expected to manage individual procurement and technical migration activities themselves. To assist with these tasks, a GCF exit workshop, open to all organisations, takes place monthly. There are also bi-weekly technical drop-in calls hosted by GDS. Contact points for participation in both of these are at the end of this briefing.

**SCOPE OF VODAFONE GCF SERVICE POST MARCH 2019**

The GCF continuity service from Vodafone for after March 2019 will include only the following core services. These form a new GCF core service set for which there is no viable commercial alternative. The descriptions for the new services are in the section on the new solution development:

1. DNS
2. Email Relay, including x.gsi email relay
3. Peer-to-Peer service, including TESTA-ng gateway

The following services from the expired GCF framework are excluded. Users can re-procure these from either Vodafone (including the renewal of existing services) or a third party via the Network Services framework (RM1045).

* Network connectivity
* Internet connectivity/ gateways
* Mail hygiene, mailboxes, managed firewalls
* NTP services
* Hosting
* Remote access
* Departmental WANs and gateways

**An update for technical management follows overleaf….**

**UPDATE FOR TECHNICAL STAKEHOLDERS**

**PROGRESS ON NEW SOLUTION DEVELOPMENT**

The following updates are a brief development status for the new core service. They are intended for user technical functions.

**Please note that Vodafone is currently polling all users with a short questionnaire on their requirements for service continuity after March 2019. The response rate is currently low at less than 10%**. **It is imperative that users respond to this as soon as possible to allow Vodafone and CCS to assess and agree service continuity and timescales.**

**DNS migration**

GDS is re-procuring a slimmed down “minimum viable product DNS” from Nominet. This reuses NCSC's protective DNS, so it is a better use of existing NCSC funding. It supports any PSN name that can be put on the internet, but not all PSN names can be put on the internet.

There are around 30 public sector organisations that need to address this issue. The preferred option is for co-funding of a shared additional PSN DNS service.  If your organisation has PSN DNS names that cannot be put on the internet then contact CCS via the contact at the end of this update.

**GSI Email Re-direct**

To continue to receive email at GSI addresses after you have migrated to your new email service, “GCF email to Cloud Email relay transition” should be ordered from Vodafone on RM1045 or G-Cloud 10. This is ready to order at a price of £1,395 per batch of up to 30 domains.

**Take up by government departments and wider public sector currently remains small and it is key that users with GSI addresses take this step.**

**TESTA Migration**

On schedule. Internal MoUs between GDS and government departments either signed or in progress. Obtaining migration support from Vodafone.

**Peer to Peer (P2P) Service**

PSN-assured and PSN-Protected flattening are complete. This will mean that many customers will stop needing the Peer-to-Peer service. Note however, that Customers who access Police networks, Testa and N3 from PSN will still need the Peer-to-Peer service.  This latter service is in the scope of the Vodafone renewal organisation.

**FURTHER COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT MEETINGS**

Regular update communications will be issued on at least a monthly basis.

There are two regular calls which customers are encouraged to attend.

1. **The Customer Working Group (CWG)**  
     
   This is a monthly call chaired by CCS and with GDS and Cabinet Office involvement. Commercial and technical verbal updates will be provided and attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions of CCS and GDS.

The next call will take place during week commencing 19th November. The exact date will be known shortly. Please email [GCFWithdrawal@crowncommercial.gov.uk](mailto:GCFWithdrawal@crowncommercial.gov.uk) to join.

1. **Bi-weekly Technical Drop In Call**This call is led by GCS and is a drop in call that all technical functions with an interest in GCF migration can attend. The next call will take place on 19th November at 2pm. Please email [kam.nijjar@digital.cabinet-office.gov.uk](mailto:kam.nijjar@digital.cabinet-office.gov.uk) to join.

**CONTACTS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

For commercial updates and participation in the monthly Customer Working Group: [GCFWithdrawal@crowncommercial.gov.uk](mailto:GCFWithdrawal@crowncommercial.gov.uk).

To join bi-weekly technical drop-in calls: [kam.nijjar@digital.cabinet-office.gov.uk](mailto:kam.nijjar@digital.cabinet-office.gov.uk).

Detailed information on migration options to new solutions will follow.