

G-Cloud 12 - Service Definition Document

BECS Online Discretionary Payments Application and Assessment Solution



Improving people's lives and creating the best possible solutions for our clients is what drives us. We look to lead and create solutions that will last. Since 1999 we have been creating core technologies that enable the rapid development of complex enterprise level Internet systems for business and government.

Our BECS platform is recognised as the UK's leading online Revenues & Benefits solution and is a DWP National Product in use by over 70 UK Local Authorities. Team Netsol has a solid track record of successful delivery, having worked on major innovative projects for the Cabinet Office, DfES, DCLG, DWP, Scottish Government and Local Authority groups.

We supply Enterprise solutions across the whole of local authority Revenues & Benefits departments, either direct or via our established partners. All our services are delivered online and are aimed at offering the customer the best possible solution. We provide intelligent services that assist with claims for benefits, applications for funding or help with council tax and business rates. By integrating with other core suppliers and their systems, BECS is a full-service offering.

An overview of our service

Part of the BECS suite of online services providing self-service that allows for a customer to claim for Discretionary Housing Payments and other such welfare payments. Staff can manage claims and assess validity. Integrated with back office systems to automatically deliver effective workflow and streamline services.

We aim to target help where it's really needed and deliver comprehensive advice and access to funding whilst reducing customer contacts. BECS DHP allows for the application of a legal framework for assessing exceptional award qualifications.

BECS DHP is an online system for self-service and channel-shifted delivery of Discretionary Payments, including Housing and Council Tax Hardship, application, assessment, decision support and budget management. It was designed by our DHP User Group to greatly reduce the workload on assessment staff, ensuring a consistent, legal policy approach to fair distribution of budgets to priority groups.

Our solution combines two areas that can be implemented together or separately. The customer can complete all data entry, which is passed on to the authority, but we then provide an assessment tool that allows for review of the completed applications.

Features include:

- Capture of relevant personal details and circumstances in line with the authority's processes
- Customisation to local authority branding
- Intelligence questioning delivered in a structured way to ensure the best possible customer responses
- A personal budgeting tool that allows for the collation of financial information. This can be customised per authority to include / exclude specific headings
- Summary of responses and ability to edit these throughout the questionnaire
- Field validation for responses, such as mandatory postcode within address
- Single / multiple choice options

- Question based help and guidance throughout the process
- Responses collated into a single easy to view document
- Retrieve partial applications and continue where it was left off allowing the customer to come back and complete their entries
- Customer notifications for completion of forms via email, along with unique reference for review
- Applications are stored within the system for administration in the 'Assessment' module
- Simple in-tray and out-tray management of applications for decision support and workflow
- View applications and assessments in easy to read pdf outputs
- Provide documents for FOI requests
- Integration to local authority EDMS systems so all documents can be transferred into existing workflow
- Access to historical applications
- Points based rules can be applied to aid decision making
- Store award amounts and payment periods
- Override facility to ensure discretion can be applied to either reject or accept prior decisions
- Policy editor to allow customisation of priority groups, score weighting and conditionality
- Monitoring to ensure that policy is working and to identify patterns
- Easy to amend so that changes in policy can be implemented in minutes
- Filtering of assessments to view things like completed/pending/allocated, or those overridden
- Budget reporting, to look at historical awards and aid with forecasting
- Full reporting of assessments with export facility
- Output records to automate the payment process within other systems
- Detailed audit trail for review or appeals
- Full GDPR compliance with data removal policies

Implementing the system

Installation and implementation are included within the pricing. The implementation phase is documented and project planned with the buyer. This includes configuration of the system to the buyer's requirements, integration with their back-office systems, secure connectivity, customised branding, and localisation of the rulesbase and text content.

Onboarding

A UAT instance of the system is provided to the buyer for further customisation and optimisation prior to deployment to Live production. Onsite or Web-based training is included, depending on the buyer's preference.

Upon receipt of an order and acceptance of the contract, the following process is followed:

- The order is acknowledged and our Product Manager requests implementation resource
- Our Support & Implementation Manager provides resource and the buyer is contacted to discuss detailed requirements
- Our Project Manager mobilises the implementation team, agrees requirements and timescales with the buyer, and forms a project plan for approval
- Our implementation team then liaises with the buyer throughout the implementation process, agreeing integration requirements, working with their IT and other stakeholders throughout all areas of the implementation
- Our Account Manager will oversee the process and engage with the buyer where necessary
- The UAT system is configured and set up for testing once localisation has been completed
- A defect backlog is managed via our Kanban change management process
- Any system integrations are then end-to-end tested to ensure successful transfer of information to the buyer's systems
- Product users are identified, added to the system, and training is arranged and carried out
- Go-live timescales are agreed and roll-out is commenced upon sign-off

Training materials and reference guides are provided to the buyer for reference and for wider distribution within their organisation.

BECS supports all modern browsers including Internet Explorer 11, Microsoft Edge, Firefox, Chrome, Apple Safari and Opera. It is designed to work unaltered on mobile devices including smartphones and tablets.

Offboarding

In respect to offboarding, data is generally transferred to the buyer's back office systems in realtime or batched within 1 day, depending on preference. Partially completed data that reaches its data retention lifetime is securely deleted automatically from production systems. Any partially completed, un-transferred data or generated documents that exist when the contract ends are transferred securely to the buyer in an encrypted compressed archive prior to secure deletion of all buyer data from our servers.

When the contract ends, the secure connection to the buyer's back office systems is terminated, and certificates and user accounts are revoked. Buyer data is securely deleted within 30 days.

Technical Requirements

The system and supporting processes are fully compliant with ISO27001 and Cyber Essentials Plus, an ISMS is maintained and ISO 22301-compliant business continuity is provided. Access to the system is secured over the Internet by HTTPS (TLS 1.2+) using certificates with strong cryptography. Where a VPN is used for back office integration, strong cryptography (e.g. AES-256, SHA-256, large key sizes, DH14+) is employed. The system is protected by highly available firewalls with threat protection and all data at rest is encrypted within a trusted subnet zone. Penetration testing is performed daily by Team Netsol on our entire infrastructure and the BECS system hosted on it.

The system runs on dedicated application servers and is designed to be invulnerable to cross-site scripting exploits, SQL injection attempts and other OWASP vulnerabilities. Network intrusion, anti-DDoS and anti-flood measures are in place and the system is actively monitored and alerted in the event of an incident, degradation of service or failure of a system component.

Data storage conforms to FIPS-140-2 and FIPS 197 (AES 256) and multiple levels of physical security are employed within the secure datacentre. Digital access to stored session data is controlled by roles and permissions, and authentication is by means of strong credentials and multi-factor authentication (e.g. 2FA) where appropriate.

Accessibility

The system is optimised for mobile, tablet or desktop use. It is designed and tested to satisfy all Government guidelines and standards, including the WCAG 2.1 Accessibility Standard to at least AA level.

Integrations

BECS has numerous integrations readily available to exchange information with buyers' core systems. BECS readily integrates with:

- Govtech – tight integration into their core eCapture and webCapture solutions for advanced processing automation with Revenues and Benefits systems
- Agilisys – integration into their digital platform with single sign-on and application status updating
- Capita – integration into their core housing benefit solution, using national eBenefits standards to automatically transfer claim details into their system for processing and to retrieve existing claim information for pre-population of BECS
- Civica – integration into their core housing benefits product, using national eBenefits standards to automatically transfer claim details into their system for processing, to retrieve existing claim information for pre-population of BECS and to transfer documents and indexing into their EDMS system
- Northgate – integration into their core housing benefits product, using national eBenefits standards to automatically transfer claim details into their system for processing, to retrieve existing claim information for pre-population of BECS and to transfer documents and indexing into their EDMS system
- TransUnion (previously Coactiva and CallCredit) – integration with their RBV, credit reference and identity verification solutions via their standard integration APIs
- Xantura – integration with their RBV solutions via their standard integration API

- Multiple EDMS systems including Northgate Information@Work, Civica, Capita EDM, Documentum, Idox, OpenText and others

We can also facilitate integrations into other customised housing benefits, revenues and EDMS solutions on request.

Service Levels & Support

SLA for service availability is 99.9% and for packet delivery is 99%. Service Level Credit is calculated as: $(\text{Annual Price} \times \text{Outage Minutes}) \times \text{SLA\%} / (365 \times 24 \times 60)$ Service Level Credits must be requested within 5 days of an outage and are subject to a monthly maximum.

We provide user support with ticketing via phone or email with response times applying Mon-Fri 9am-5pm, excluding UK public holidays. These are:

- Critical - 1 hour response
- High - 4 hour response
- Medium (default) - 8 hour response
- Low - 1 day response
- Cosmetic - 1 day response

Out-of-hours monitoring of support requests is performed and response times then apply from the next available work day, unless a Critical issue is alerted that requires our business continuity call tree to be activated in which case response will be as soon as feasible.

Team Netsol is committed to providing excellent support for its services. We operate an ITIL-like Kanban issue resolution process that triages issues based upon their scale and impact:

- Critical - Service unavailable or many users affected - Resolution within 1 day
- High - Parts of service unavailable but still functional - Resolution within 1 week
- Medium - Low number of users affected but still functional - Fix available for UAT within 1 month
- Low - Minor issue with available workaround - UAT of fix within 3 months
- Cosmetic - UAT of fix within 3 months

Customers log issues with our helpdesk via a dedicated email address or phone and are issued with a 'Support Ticket' which is visible to Support engineers. Outside of standard helpdesk hours, there is monitoring of support requests and an emergency call tree process in place.

Bug fixes, security patches and issue resolution are included in the contract price. Customer Change Requests are subject to assessment to identify whether there is an associated cost that then needs to be approved by the customer.

We provide technical account management via our Support & Implementation Manager, escalated to our Product Manager and Infrastructure Manager as appropriate.

Software upgrades, comprising feature enhancements and bug fixes, will be tested and released to Test and Live systems as required. The system will endeavour to be accessible 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, 365 days per year, subject to agreed uptime SLA. The only exceptions are during Planned and Unplanned Maintenance windows.

Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery

The system is vertically and horizontally scaled with ample capacity for a significant increase in use by individual or all customers, well above the peak processing periods normally experienced. Several shared system components, e.g. storage, databases, etc. are configured for high availability and sized with future demand in mind.

Each system instance is re-sizeable and isolated from the resources of other instances. Monitoring and alerting facilitates pre-emptive action by support staff when an instance's available resources fall below the acceptable threshold. Resource availability is reviewed weekly during Infrastructure Team meetings and planned accordingly.

Data is stored within a private cloud within known UK processing locations. Penetration testing is carried out annually as a minimum by approved qualified providers and daily by Team Netsol. The system is protected against data loss and loss of infrastructure by means of data backup procedures and offsite replication. The application servers, databases and data storage are replicated offsite to enable the service to be restored after loss of the primary site. ISO 22301 compliant procedures are activated in the event of a service loss, security incident or physical event (e.g. fire, terrorist threat, etc.)

Team Netsol's services are designed to be resilient. Email, SMS and private Twitter alerts are sent to Team Netsol engineers for any sub-optimal events or incidents. Outage reporting to customers is performed by email by our support staff to designated customer contacts once an event is confirmed by our engineers as an outage or another significant incident that affects customers.

Our policies and procedures are detailed in our ISO 27001 compliant ISMS. All security patches are deployed within 14 days of notification, in accordance with Cyber Essentials Plus guidelines. Threat management is operated via a mix of automated facilities from our infrastructure vendors, our own research of security bulletins and weekly review of CVE databases.

Team Netsol's protective monitoring approach is described in its ISMS policies and procedures which may be inspected on request. Potential compromises are assessed as a critical priority and any actual breach will be reported in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Information Commissioner's Office guidelines. Incidents are responded to within the timescales determined by our ISMS based on their scale and impact.

Team Netsol implements a risk management approach to security and any system changes are assessed for risks, known threats and vulnerabilities. We implement a Secure Development Policy which includes OWASP guidelines, SOLID and DRY principles for code development.

We have firm change management procedures and use Scrum for new development and Kanban for ongoing support and implementation, supported by industry-standard tools for issue tracking, configuration management and deployment.

Service Constraints and Customisation

BECS services may be customised, including (but not restricted to) the following:

- Styling and branding customised in accordance with corporate guidelines where possible
- Buyer-specific content may be changed
- Policy schemes are localisable
- EDMS document indexing is customisable
- Supporting evidence requirements are localisable
- Custom management reports can be added
- Administrative user accounts can be self-managed by the Buyer

Buyers localise and customise the services during the implementation phase by working through the agreed implementation plan. After go-live, customisation is handled as part of normal support or as a Change Request, depending on the nature and scale of the customisation.

All customisation is performed by Team Netsol's staff on behalf of the buyer and is released to production systems once UAT has been performed by the buyer and approval given to proceed.

An out-of-hours planned maintenance window is reserved for security patching and infrastructure upgrades once every 7 days. Buyers are notified in advance if a reserved window is to be used and end-users are notified before and during maintenance to minimise disruption.

To operate the BECS product, the buyer may need the following:

- Back office integration may require a secure reverse proxy or VPN connection
- Back office integration requires the appropriate licensed and activated APIs from core system suppliers

The above web services/APIs are often already available to the buyer but if not, they can be purchased from their supplier and BECS will then communicate through the standard interfaces.

Pricing

BECS services are not provided on a per-submission basis. Instead, each service adheres to a Service Level Agreement and Team Netsol contracts to provide an outcome to its clients in accordance with the defined service level. This enables clients to process as many applications as they wish without incurring additional costs and Team Netsol ensures that it has sufficient resources and capacity to meet the service levels irrespective of usage.

Each service attracts a Base Price and a Unit Price. The Base Price ensures that adequate capacity is available for the service and the Unit Price reflects the different support and hosting costs for different sized organisations.

The Unit Price is charged per Council Tax Chargeable Dwelling in the Local Authority (as identified in England via MHCLG's "Council Taxbase local authority level data" published in November, in Wales via StatsWales' "Council tax dwellings, by local authority" published in January, and in Scotland via Gov.Scot's "Chargeable Dwellings" published in September.)

As an example for BECS DHP, Local Authority A has a base price of £4,000 and a 'Chargeable Dwelling' number of 10,000 properties with a charge of 3p per dwelling, this would carry an annual cost of £4,300 + vat. Initial standard setup and configuration would be included in these costs.

How to order?

All BECS services are supplied on an annual subscription basis which includes licencing, installation and localisation, hosting, integration with EDMS and core Revenues & Benefits systems (where available), support and maintenance. Buyers subscribe to each BECS service they need for a term of not less than one year. Invoices are raised annually and payment due as indicated within the 'Terms and Conditions Document'. Additional services and training can be purchased at the rates indicated within the 'Pricing Document'.

Buyers should follow the G-Cloud 12 guidelines for procuring Team Netsol products and services.

Contract Termination

There are no exit fees at the end of contract, as there is no pro-rata return of any unused part of the subscription period and final data transfer and service decommissioning is included within the pricing.

There is a notice period indicated in the 'Terms and Conditions Document' that should be adhered to within the contracted period, which is used to trigger the exit and decommissioning process.

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