

Digital Identity for Vulnerable People

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Etive is working with the Government Digital Service (GDS), Post Office, DWP and Tower Hamlets Council on a leading public and private sector project to implement highly assured online identities for hard to reach customers, that are fully interoperable with GOV.UK Verify.

This Beta project will support vulnerable citizens who lack a digital footprint, to achieve an assured digital identity and enable them to access public services quickly and efficiently. Local authority (LA) data, collected and stored in Etive's personal data store, the Digital Log Book (DLB), will be used by Identity Providers (IDPs), in this case the Post Office, to create identity accounts aligned to Government standards. From these accounts, citizens will be able to access and complete a range of Government and local authority online transactions.

"The Post Office is committed to building an inclusive digital identity ecosystem that makes it easy for citizens to access local and national services" said Martin Edwards, Managing Director, Identity Services from the Post Office.

"Often applications for services require a lot of effort and information, so avoiding having to duplicate that time and again really helps to simplify the process. Sharing information just once removes unnecessary barriers and makes it much easier for people to access key services. This project comes at a great time with the new, more flexible version of the government verification standards being published, making identity services accessible to more people."

GOV.UK Verify

GOV.UK Verify is a secure way to prove who you are online. A GOV.UK Verify digital identity can be used to access a variety of government services, such as DWP benefits, without having to go through the identity checking process each time. A spokesperson for DWP Digital said "DWP is intent on ensuring it provides modern, secure, and easy to access digital services for citizens. As part of this, we will always look to take advantage of new and current solutions and technologies as they evolve. The world of digital identity is a key part of any digital service meaning that DWP, in line with our general approach, will look to explore a range of solutions right across the spectrum of identity and trust - known as the "pantry" approach.

"The Verify solution is part of the suite of products offered in this area, and forms part of DWP's pantry approach."

Assured identity and local authority services

Tower Hamlets is working to use assured identity as a single trusted login for its website for services and first use cases include housing, Workpath, education and employment opportunities and tackling poverty, as data sources. Standards implemented by GOV.UK Verify are the only standards for digital identity verification in the country and are aiming to reduce the complexity of accessing multiple services provided by both public and private sectors. Tower Hamlets Council is making more customer services available online so residents can get what they need through the click of button. A reliable solution for online identity will make the delivery of these services more efficient for the council, and more streamlined for their customers, supporting wider digital inclusion.

This innovative project follows on from the success of the Etive/Tower Hamlets Discovery and Alpha projects which assessed the use of local authority data, collected and stored in a Digital Log Book, to create highly assured online accounts by IDPs. Stuart Young, Etive's MD said that "with only 38% of Universal Credit applicants, for example, getting through the Verify application process due to a lack of digital footprint, this project really helps us to



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understand ways in which we can better support the most vulnerable in society, who are high users of public services in times of greatest need. Proof of identity is a prerequisite to being able to access critical services and to participate in modern social and economic systems".

Don Thibeau, OIX President, commented that "Much is made of the importance of public private partnerships, and rightly so. The Etive project demonstrates the possibilities and practicalities of collaboration at the local level.

"Change often comes from the edge. More often than not, innovation comes, not from central authorities, but from those who encounter problems first hand. The Etive Project's pragmatic approach promises progress on some of the most complex problems we face in our online lives.

"Working across departmental, jurisdictional and business boundaries is no job for the timid. The Open Identity Exchange was purpose built to encourage and support the search for solutions represented in the Etive project."

The Challenge for Digital Transformation

This Beta project will demonstrate how aggregated LA data can be used to help citizens register for an assured identity, with their consent. The project will assess self-asserted entry level accounts and trust elevation over time from a basic account up to a medium level and understand the user journey for customers setting up an assured identity for the first time.

Public sector transformation plans encourage customers to meet their needs through self-help and management. Fundamental to this is a digital first approach that provides customers with the tools and support they require to find information and carry out transactions online.

To deliver big transformation and change services need to be designed as web-based digital services. This can only be cost effective, timely and seamless if key digital components are built once and reused across every digital service. Online customer identity is one of the critical capabilities needed to underpin a comprehensive digital first offering.

Councils usually have several different customer facing systems, each with their own way of verifying and authenticating customers. Councils and Government ask customers to register for and use more than one online customer identity to access the full range of online services. There are many conflicting Internet Access Management Services (IAMS) with differing levels of security and interoperability which makes it difficult and complex for customers to access online public services.

Adopting Government standards has the potential to deliver savings and efficiencies by off-loading the complexity and cost of running a graded, federated and trusted customer solution in-house and being tied to proprietary systems.

Mayor of Tower Hamlets, John Biggs, said: "This project is extremely important for residents in our borough as many are financially excluded and digital identity aligned to government standards will help give them the opportunity to have a digital presence to access services online. We are committed to reducing inequality and as more services move online, we want to make sure all of our residents are digitally included."

For Further Information

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