

# USE AND INTERACT WITH ONLINE SERVICES

## SCENARIO 7



Original materials created on behalf of the Education and Training Foundation  
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### Relates to:

Using online services

### Refers to Standards:

Using online services



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**This Scenario deals with the place of technology in managing civic and supporting family-life interactions online.**

Interacting with online services is the middle of three areas of web activity that differs in purpose, approach and type of activity:

- Work/professional
- Civic/Community
- Social/Personal.

This Module specifically relates to interactions online for administrative and civic purposes. It does not deal with financial interactions characterised by buying, selling and completing financial transactions online that are dealt in the Scenario of that name.

A list of the services that have moved online from being paper-based includes:

Insurance, Road and personal tax

Planning, voting, bin collection, TV License, Job applications, supporting charities,

It also includes new interactive services including media and TV streaming services,



### TEACHING TIP

**Consider the following activities with your learners:**

1. Accessing and completing an online petition
2. Finding the name and contact details of your MP and how you can contact them (Entry level)
3. Find the regulations for installing a garden hot tub from your local council
4. Find out what the different options are and the costs to subscribe to a media streaming service (Level 1)

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### Characteristics of interacting with online services

**There are a number of characteristics for users to bear in mind in using online services.**

**Online services operate within the perimeters set by the service Compliance**

Using an online service is first and foremost a personal service concerned with meeting individual and perhaps customised needs. At the same time, using online services normally requires the user to follow instructions and give personal information that may not be optional in order to access the service. It is personal but reliant on following instructions.

It forces individuals to conduct their interactions within rules of the service offered and the amount of information the provider requires to interact. It often presents in the shape of ‘form-filling’, very similar to the paper-based approach it has replaced.

From the website perspective, this acts as providing a screening service to all requests made by placing them in the same format and often within the confines of agreed routes of enquiry. From this the streamlining of processes follows.

One way of looking at this compliance requirement is that it prevents what could otherwise descend into a host of individual (and occasionally creative) interactions, rendering the return of service far less efficient.

For this reason, online services are very clear from the outset what is possible in using the service.

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### Information shared

Online services need information from the user to function. Depending on the service it can range from an email address (Government petition) through to detailed tax affairs (HMRC tax online return). Users who use online services do so by exchanging sharing personal information against the perceived added value of using online services.



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### Learning activity:

Ask learners to think about the information range required in two settings:

- setting up an electricity account
- setting up a car insurance policy (Entry level)

Ask learners what information they think a company would want from users if they were offering a window cleaning service. (Level 1)

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### Security of information

One of the problems solved in using online services is that papers cannot be lost or go missing in the post. Large home filing cabinets are no longer needed and the loss of sensitive information in paper that is not secured correctly is much reduced.

#### **This doesn't mean that electronic data is completely secure.**

Providers must do two things concerning information shared:

- They need permission and justification for the information they ask for
- They must protect it under penalty of law for any breach caused by sharing beyond permission settings or due to hacking.

Information remains the property of the user even when shared with an online service. Permissions can be withdrawn and permission to keep personal data after an account is closed is needed.



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### Problems of complexity at scale

Interactive services work best when there is an accommodation between what is required, wanted or asked for, and the ability of the provider to meet those requirements.

### But things can go wrong...

When the customer base is so big, and the information is so broad there are just too many variables to make the interaction work.

Experience has shown that the only solution is to have differentiated services.

Good design of services and webpages is needed to help providers get the balance right.

This is why, for example, your local council separates out services into different areas; waste, environment, planning, elections, charges, parks and recreation etc.



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## Learning activity

For examples of too many variables, consider the NHS online database as an example and the difficulties with introducing Universal Credit.

Share on a projected screen the following newspaper story concerning the difficulties of introducing an NHS database. (Entry level)

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/sep/18/nhs-records-system-10bn>

Lead a discussion on the evident problems, when things get too big on trying to place 'personal' and 'standardisation' in the same sentence. (Level 1)



## TEACHING TIP

**The clue is not the size of the database, but the nature of uniqueness of the entries and the need for accurate recording of it, in terms of what is meant by 'personal'.**

<https://www.ukauthority.com/articles/problems-persist-with-nhs-screening-databases/>

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## The benefits of online services

**There are clear benefits from using web-based communication as replacement for public/civic services.**

### Cost and security

From a taxpayer's perspective, the costs of the administration of civic order are greatly reduced. Much time is saved, and technology allows the complexity of personal circumstances to be managed at scale.

Additionally, from the provider side, there are benefits in running administrative and civic affairs online by saving time in producing correspondence, confusion in handling volume of papers and security risks through lost papers or sensitive stationery not properly and securely destroyed.

### Immediacy

The speed of cloud computing enquiries means that information available on websites and the interaction with users means that arrangements can happen almost in real-time.

It promotes the immediacy of information, of service and ability to adjust or revise requests.



### TEACHING TIP

**Propose the following statement to learners about the purpose of technology in a particular relationship to interacting with websites in the Cloud.**

“The purpose of managing technology to great effect is having more time available for the pursuit of higher purposes, and pleasures found in but also beyond technology.”

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### Equity for all

The way online forms are set up requires all users to follow one or more prescribed routes into the service. No special options are available.

Some argue that using online services in this way proved a sense of equality in provision for all based on need and provision available rather than on personal considerations.

### Leaving a paper trail

The benefit of having account so users of a repeating shrive are recognised on each visit saves time and can even pre-empt some of the request by auto-filling boxes.

This is perhaps best seen on commercial websites that say, 'previous search' or 'customers also bought'. These are considered more fully in the buying online scenario.

Accounts therefore stop the need to be reintroduced to the service on each and every visit.



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### Working with interactive websites

**Compliance in approach gives a sense of treating everyone the same with the same degree of access, information and opportunity to apply, ask or register. The sense of civic equality is maintained.**

#### Accounts

In order to create a relationship and pre-empt needs and provide preferences to known users, shivers online accounts will ask, on first visit, to establish an account. An account is a mechanism of holding personal information in readiness for next visit, to provide the provider with data about demand for its services and, possibly, to explore marketing opportunities. This assists in finding previous stored details and preferences and choices, preventing the need to repeat the process (often a problem in paper-based approaches).



#### TEACHING TIP

**Accounts and issues relating to their security are health with in detail in Scenario 9 - protecting personal privacy, devices and data online.**

This scenario deals with the role and function of accounts in on-line interaction

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### Learning activity:

Ask learners to go through the process of setting up a free Skype account. It need not be finalised.

Ask learners to consider the amount and detail of information required to set up the account. What degree of variation or choice is provided?

(Entry level)

As part of a discussion, show the privacy policy and security details that are available.

Explain that every site will have privacy and security details and should be checked ass part of setting up an account.

(Level 1)

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### Profiles and preferences

Having an account brings two benefits - settings and preferences.

The settings remember personal details and previous enquiries and interactions meaning they do not need adding on each visit. Enquiries can be picked up where they left off previously.

Preferences means the account adjusts how it presents information to meet previously set preferences, making the account operate in a consistent personalised way.

### Revision of accounts

The immediacy of access and the provision of an account means that it is possible previously entered options can be queried, updated, renewed, or revised without having to start from the beginning.

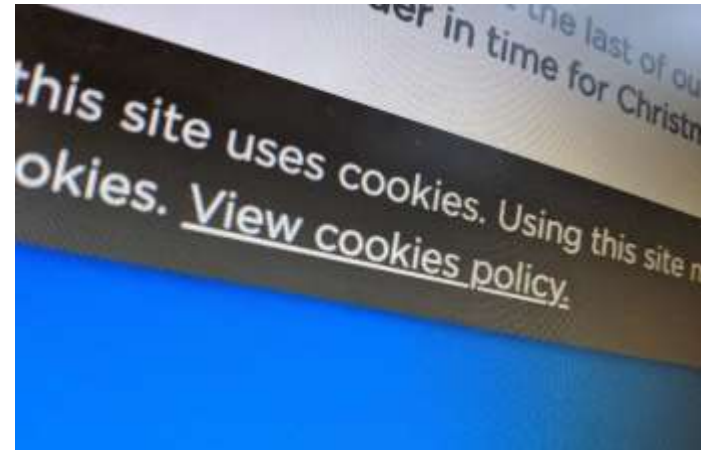
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### The role of cookies

Cookies are small pieces of code that are placed on a device then a user visit a site for the first time. On the next visit the stored cookie sends the information contained in that cookie back to the site.

The site then 'knows' that the user has been there before, and in some cases, tailors how the site responds to take account of that fact. Cookies are helpful in avoiding having to make each visit seem like the first time, rather the than the tenth for example.







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### Learning activity:

Point to the BBC bitesize explanation on the role of Cookies.

(Entry level)

Cookies have a part to play in improving the service from repeated website visits and the running of accounts.

A discussion on the level, degree and range of cookies will help learners decide how they might like to adjust settings to provide a balance between protecting privacy and getting detailed information.

(Level 1)

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### Thinking about security in managing accounts

#### Information exchange

An important feature of managing an account is knowing what information must be shared, can be shared and needn't be shared.

#### Privacy policy

Every website by law will protect data shared by users and will seek permission in explaining every purpose for which personal data is used.

The rule is to never share more information than the minimum necessary to transact the businesses.



### TEACHING TIP

**Ask learners to consider examples of the three types of information sharing that are needed to make accounts viable.**

**Users must give permission to share all three types. With-holding permission for the 'must be' would stop the service being offered.**

**must be** = needed to complete the purpose of the transaction

**can be** = shared to improve understanding of needs

**need not** = personal information that has no bearing on the purpose of interaction



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### Learning activity:

By law, websites that hold personal data are required by law to seek permission to do so, explain what is held and why it is necessary and how they will protect it.

Ask learners to visit civic website and find and share how this information is made known to users.

(Level 1)

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### Is it possible to have too much information?

In other scenarios, we have discussed the problem of the sheer volume of information overwhelming users, leading to wasted time and unnecessary browsing.

It is important to remember that dealing with interactive services requires some planning and settled intention before starting.



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### Summary

**There are undoubtedly huge benefits for both sides of a website from transacting online with services rather than relying on paper-based systems and postage in terms of immediacy, ability to revise, make enquiries and find information.**

The cost is compliance and the handing over of personal information that requires a degree of awareness.

This is particularly important if the data or account is hacked so care must be taken in making personal judgements about the security and necessity of information exchange

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### Extension activity

Ask learners to complete one or more of the following exercises in pairs (Entry level) or individually (Level 1):

1. Find and sign a petition of their choosing at <https://petition.parliament.uk>
2. Go to their local council and find out about the council recycling policy
3. Go to their local library and find out about services offered
4. Explore the website of a club or society they have considered joining and find out what personal information is needed to open a membership
5. Go to the open learning environment used for their course and find out what account information is used

In each case, what personal information was necessary to complete a transaction and is this too much or too little or just right

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### Further resources

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Notes on four issues in teaching good online contributions	<a href="https://ico.org.uk/your-data-matters/">https://ico.org.uk/your-data-matters/</a>
Information on the legal position of personal data protection from the Office of the information Commissioner	<a href="https://www.wikihow.com/Set-up-a-Skype-Account">https://www.wikihow.com/Set-up-a-Skype-Account</a>
Information on setting up a Skype account	<a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/guides/about-cookies">http://www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/guides/about-cookies</a>
All about the role of cookies from BBC bitesize	<a href="https://ico.org.uk/your-data-matters/">https://ico.org.uk/your-data-matters/</a>

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