



Beginner handout

www.fastershire.com

Finding and using public services

This activity will help you use the Internet to find out what services and benefits are available to you.

What will I learn?

- How you can use the Internet to find out about local services
- Which services you can use online
- How you can pay for services online

welcome to
*faster*shire
Faster broadband for Herefordshire and Gloucestershire



How do I do it?

Be safe! If you're using this hand-out on a shared or public computer, remember to:

- **Log on using a 'strong password': one that includes upper and lower case letters, numbers, and isn't something that someone else could guess.**
- **Never share or write down your password.**
- **Log out when you're finished.**



The web links referred to throughout this document can be found in the Useful Links section at the end.

How can I use the Internet to find out about local services?

1. The Internet can help you access local and public services, from reserving a library book to paying your TV licence or council tax. You can also find lots of information and advice on areas ranging from recycling and waste collections to consumer advice.
2. Use a search engine to find your local council or authority, for example 'Lambeth Council' or 'Edinburgh Council'. Click on your council's web link to go to their home page:
 - Look carefully at the home page and find out what services you can access. See if you can find:
 - links to each main service, such as education or libraries
 - quick links to the most popular pages or topics
 - links to help you find things, like your nearest sports centre or recycling centre.

3. Every local council or authority's website will be different, but here are some things for you to try and find:

- the names of your local councillors
- the dates for your waste and recycling collections
- details of your nearest swimming pool or leisure centre, so you can exercise and stay healthy
- advice or help for someone with a disability, or a carer
- your local GP's surgery
- a list of local museums and art galleries.

What services can I use online?

4. You can use a range of local public services online. Every local council or authority's website will be different and not all offer the same services online.

5. Browse your local council or authority's website to find out where you can:

- search the library catalogue and reserve a library book
- make a planning application
- report a nuisance, like noise, fly tipping or a pothole
- apply for a blue badge for disabled drivers
- contact your councillor to have your say about local decisions
- apply to be a school governor.



Example of local council web page: Lambeth Council

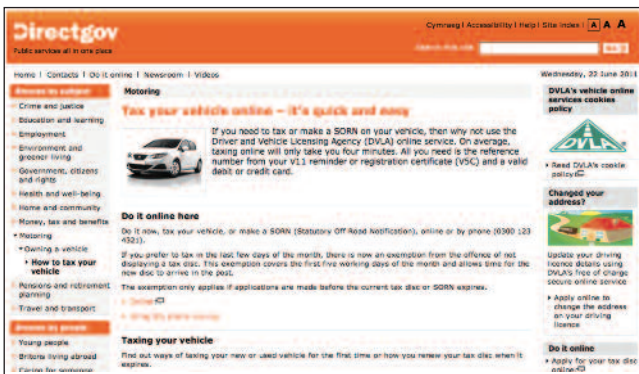


Example of local council web page: Edinburgh Council

6. You can also access national services online.

Here are some examples to try:

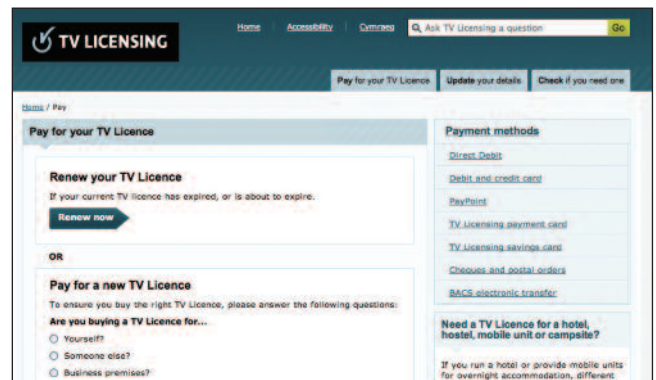
- Go to the directgov website in the Useful Links section. Use the 'Search this site' facility to find out how to do one of the following, using each one as your search term:
 - tax your vehicle
 - apply for a passport.
- On the site's search results page, find and click on the link that describes what you want to do.
- Read the instructions to find out how to do this task online and what you will need.
- What else could you search for?



Directgov web page: taxing a vehicle

How can I pay for services online?

7. The Internet allows you to pay for some services online, like the ones you have searched for above. Your local council may let you pay for your council tax online:
 - Return to your council's home page and search for 'council tax' and follow the links given, or
 - On the Directgov website, search for 'pay your council tax' and use the web page that comes up to find your local authority and follow the links given to find out how you can pay.
8. You can also renew your TV licence online:
 - Go to the TV licensing web link and click on 'Pay' to find out the information you'll need to have with you.
9. To pay online you will need to have a valid payment card, such as a debit card, or your bank details (your bank's name, the name of the account holder your account number and sort code).



TV Licensing web page



Remember to close your web browser program afterwards if you have filled in personal information on a shared or public computer.

Quiz yourself

- How can I find out when my recycling collections are?
- Where is my nearest swimming pool or leisure centre?
- How can I reserve a library book?
- How can I renew my car's road tax?
- Can I pay my council tax online?

Try your new skills

- Search for a book on a topic that interests you, or by your favourite author, and reserve it online.
- Find out what's on at a local gallery or museum and enjoy a trip to see it.
- Find advice on a local issue that concerns you.
- Think of a public services bill you want to pay online and find out how to do this.

Write down any notes that will help you:

My learning checklist

- I can find information from my local council’s website.
- I know where to find out what local and national public services I can access online.
- I can fill in online forms to access and use a public service.
- I can find out if I can pay for a public service online.
- I know how to do this safely on a shared or public computer.

Top tips

If you’re using a shared or public computer to access public services:

- Think about how much time you might need.
- Try to do this at quiet time of day.
- Try to find a computer that isn’t overlooked.
- Remember to save any documents you download onto a memory stick, or print them out. Don’t save personal information onto a shared computer.
- Remember to close your web browser program afterwards if you have filled in personal information on a shared or public computer.

If you’re using your own computer:

- Bookmark all the web pages for the public services you want to use online.
- Organise your bookmarks in a ‘public services’ folder in your bookmarks.
- Save the documents you download into folders for each service you use. Put these folders in one called ‘public services’.

Where next?

- Spend time browsing your council’s web site to find out all the services you can use online.
- Use the Do it online web link (in ‘Useful Links’) to find more national public services you can access online – there are lots.
- Find out about local learning and training opportunities provided by your council.
- Use Beginner’s guide 6.1 to find out about and apply for benefits.

Write down any notes that will help you:

Useful Links

You may want to use these links in your session:

Directgov:

<http://www.direct.gov.uk>

TV Licensing

<http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk>

Do it online:

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Dio11/DoltOnline/index.htm>



Connect with us on:

