



Academy eBilling

Academy eBilling helps local authorities to reduce the environmental impact and cost of their billing operations whilst increasing choice for customers.

The council tax billing operation is an expensive and resource intensive operation. Not only are there the costs of paper, printing, envelopes and postage there is the cost of folding bills, inserting into the envelopes, managing the postage and resending lost documents.

After all this effort the ultimate product, the bill, will shortly end up in landfill or possibly a recycling centre.

At a time of focus on both the efficiency and environmental impact of local government, Academy eBilling provides an alternative to the paper-based bill for both council tax and non domestic rates.

By visiting a local authority's website and using Academy Self Service, customers can go online and opt to receive an eBill rather than a paper-based bill.

Customers may choose from the following options:

- Email link to bills online – Customers are emailed a link to their bill which is stored securely within Academy Self Service on the authorities website.
- Email bills as an attachment - Customers are sent an identical bill to their paper based bill as a PDF (Portable Document Format attachment). This option requires Academy ProPrint (if unavailable, a cost effective 'lite' version can be supplied purely for the purpose of eBills).
- Paper based billing – Customers can choose to revert back to paper based billing if required.

Customers are able to change their billing preference at anytime as well as the email address their eBill is delivered to. This can be done online without the need to call the authority.

Benefits

- Customer choice – Customers who do not sign up for an eBill will still receive a paper bill, whilst those who prefer the paperless approach will only receive an eBill.
- Meet customer expectations – Many commercial companies already use eBilling, customers are increasingly expecting these services from their local authority.
- Reduced costs – The cost of paper, printing and posting is eliminated for eBilling customers. The re-occurring costs of maintaining eBilling are very low.
- Reduced environmental impact – Fewer paper bills are produced reducing the impact of the billing run on the environment.
- Less wastage – Fewer bills need to be disposed of; helping authorities responsible for waste to meet their 2010 targets for landfill reduction*.
- Multiple copies - Each person named on the bill can receive a copy of the bill in their inbox, improving communication in shared houses and aiding prompt payment.
- Identical eBills – Bills sent as a PDF attachment look identical to printed bills, ensuring that the authority communicates the same consistent message. Links may be included to useful website content rather than sending expensive printed communications.
- Immediately available – Bills may be accessed from anywhere as soon as they become available. Bills do not spend time in the postal system or on the door mat whilst the bill payer is away, aiding prompt payment.
- Improved tracking – Access to bills through Academy Self Service is recorded allowing the authority to prove a bill has been viewed, whilst error messages returned by mail servers allow the authority to identify those customers not receiving their eBill and take appropriate action, such as reverting them back to paper billing.

Cost savings

- The production of a typical paper bill costs around £1, with one being issued to each dwelling ten times a year.
- An authority with 50,000 properties that managed to switch 10% of its customers to eBilling could save £50,000 per annum.

Environmental Savings

- A typical council tax bill weighs around 50g, with one being issued to each dwelling ten times a year.
- An authority with 50,000 properties that managed to switch 10% of its customers to eBilling would avoid the production of 2.5 tons of waste per annum.

eReminders and Final Notices

Building on the success of eBilling Capita are currently developing eReminders and Final Notices, enabling authorities to issue reminders and final demands at minimal cost.

eReminders and final notices will be available during December 2007.

To find out more about eBilling please contact your Account Manager.

*Meeting the EU targets requires a reduction of at least 3.5 million tonnes of biodegradable waste sent to landfill by 2010, and a further 3.7 million tonnes by 2013. Exceeding Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme allowance allocations in 2010 could lead to local authorities receiving Scheme penalties totaling £40 million a year, rising to £205 million a year for exceeding allowance allocations in 2013.

Source National Audit Office. <http://www.nao.org.uk/pn/05-06/05061177.htm>