

Stop your .gov.uk domain from getting hijacked

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) is seeing [increasing incidents of DNS domain hijacking](#). A domain hijack could mean:

- your critical citizen-facing services becoming unavailable
- malicious interception of your email at scale without your knowledge
- your website content disappearing or being replaced

The Government Digital Service (GDS) and Government Security Group (GSG) are working together to help you address this risk. As an owner of one of the UK's most visited government websites, we invite you to sign up to our new pilot "Registry Lock" service.

The Registry Lock service



Request

Request a change to a .gov.uk domain - your registrar will pass it to the registry operator

Example: HMRC request a name server change for hmrc.gov.uk



Verify

The registry operator will verify by phone if the change is approved

Example: Jisc call a pre-agreed security contact at HMRC to verify the change is valid



Notify

The registry operator will make the change and email all relevant contacts

Example: Jisc make the change and email security, technical, and support contacts at HMRC to let them know

Benefits of the Registry Lock service

Most organisations have a change control process to prevent unauthorised changes. However this does not prevent changes being made by:

- current or former staff in your organisation with the right credentials
- compromise at your registrar

Registry Lock is a free service that will protect you from unauthorised changes to this critical data without impacting your day-to-day DNS management by:

- preventing changes being made to your domain records and contact details in the .gov.uk registry, until they are verified by an authorised team in your organisation
- notifying other nominated roles in your organisation when changes to these records have been made

The Registry Lock service will check any changes to the .gov.uk zone file for your domain as well as your contact details held at the registry. The zone file will generally just contain your name server records but can occasionally include other records as well. It will not prevent changes to individual DNS records like A, MX, and TXT held with your registrar.

How the Registry Lock service works

Your name server records and contact details are held in the .gov.uk registry by [Jisc](#). To change these records, your IT infrastructure team raises a request with your registrar and they raise the request with Jisc.

By using the Registry Lock service, Jisc will now contact your operational security team directly to confirm that the change request is genuine. Jisc will not make the change until it has been verified by your operational security team.

Your organisation needs to make sure:

- your operational security team understands its role in the Registry Lock service and is included in your change control process
- there is separation of roles between your operational security team and the team that manages DNS records
- you agree that the registry operator will no longer make changes to your nameserver records or contacts details for the domains specified until the change is verified with your operational security team

Jisc will:

1. Contact your operational security team by phone within 1 working day of receiving the request. If the request is marked as urgent Jisc will contact your operational security team by phone as a matter of priority, during working hours.

2. Stay in contact with your operational security team while they are confirming the request.
3. Escalate to GDS if they cannot reach your operational security team within 3 working days.
4. Confirm the details of the authorisation by email with the operational security team and GDS.
5. Send a notification within 1 working day of the change being approved, to all addresses that have requested such notification. This may include GDS and NCSC.

GDS will:

- handle escalations by contacting senior staff within your organisation
- protect your contact details in accordance with our [privacy notice](#)

You should be aware that the Registry Lock service:

- will reduce your risk of domain hijacking, but it does not eliminate this risk entirely - you are still responsible for the protection of your .gov.uk domain
- is a pilot. GDS will consider user feedback, effectiveness and availability of funding to improve the service, and establish whether and how best to provide it in the long term
- is provided at no cost to the customer
- is transparent to the registrar and does not appear in your WHOIS records

How to sign up

You must be a senior member of your IT or security organisation to sign up to the Registry Lock service. Your Registry Lock contacts must be different from any published in your WHOIS records.

1. [Complete this form to sign up to the Registry Lock service.](#)
2. We'll check that you're the right person and activate the request domain in the Registry Lock service.
3. We will also send you a copy of the current records for the domains you sign up so you can check and fix any existing issues. Depending on how quickly you do this you may find the Registry Lock service is already in place and you'll need to verify any changes first.

GDS will not accept personal email addresses like '[your-name]@gmail.com' or workplace email addresses of individuals like '[your-name]@[your-organisation].gov.uk' for any of the domain contacts.

How to get support

You can contact GDS for service support questions and issues at domainmanagement@digital.cabinet-office.gov.uk.

How to stop using the Registry Lock service

If you decide to stop using the service a senior member of your IT or security organisation can cancel the service by emailing domainmanagement@digital.cabinet-office.gov.uk, including your contact details and the domains you wish to remove from the service. Bear in mind this will significantly increase the risk of domain hijack, and you will need to reflect this in your security risk and governance process.

Improving the service

We want to develop the service to better meet your needs, and we can improve it with your feedback. If you have any questions or comments about the Registry Lock service, or the other work that GDS and GSG are doing to improve the security of .gov.uk domains then please contact us at domainmanagement@digital.cabinet-office.gov.uk.