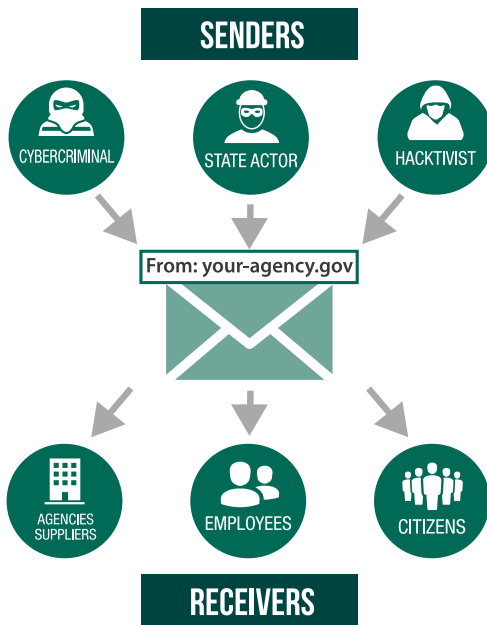


DMARC in the Public Sector

The key to eliminating phishing and safeguarding email communication.

The Problem

Email is the #1 attack vector that cybercriminals use to target citizens and government employees.



WHY IT WORKS

Email lacks built-in authentication

Attackers can easily spoof or impersonate anyone in your organisation using free tools.

Attackers need to be right just once

With billions of emails hitting government inboxes, odds are in the attacker's favor.

Email gateways can't solely solve the problem

Attackers rely on social engineering tactics and identity deception, not malicious content or URLs that traditional tools were built to detect.

WHAT IS DMARC?

DMARC (Domain-based Message Authentication Reporting & Conformance) is an open email authentication protocol, established in 2012 by organisations including Google, Microsoft, Agari, PayPal, and others to protect the email channel. DMARC is the best way for email senders and receivers to determine whether or not a given message is legitimately from the sender, and what to do if it isn't.

"Business Email Compromise (BEC) attacks represent more than 50% of all incidents and this number has been doubling each year since 2017, which makes it especially noteworthy."

— Verizon's 2023 Data Breach Report

"Phishing e-mails remain the primary method used by cybercriminals to gain unauthorised access to a computer or network... [and] can reach huge numbers of people directly whilst hiding..."

— National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC)

PUBLIC AGENCIES WITH DMARC ADOPTION



Cabinet Office



HM Revenue & Customs



Government Digital Service

The Solution

DMARC functions like an ‘identity check’ for your agency. It prevents spammers and criminals from hijacking your valid organisational domain names and brand for email.

BENEFITS OF DEPLOYING DMARC FOR YOUR AGENCY

Stops email phishing attacks using your agency’s reputation

Agencies reduce the likelihood that their domains and brand will be used in an attack.

Reduces account takeover risk

By preventing delivery of phishing and malware-laden messages directed at your employees or constituents, you can reduce the number of account takeovers.

Increases email deliverability

By deploying DMARC, you ensure that legitimate email from your agency gets delivered and is not blocked at the receiver.

Provides visibility into cyberattack risk

Do you know every third-party company that sends email on behalf of your agency? DMARC provides this critical visibility, allowing you to ensure that anyone sending on your behalf complies with email best practices.

THE PUBLIC SECTOR PERSPECTIVE

Fact: The NCSC recommends DMARC records in place for all domains, regardless of whether the domain is used for email or not.

Fact: The NCSC’s Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF) recommends a DMARC policy of Reject (“p=reject”).

Fact: The Government Digital Service (GDS) requires that all government departments adopt DMARC with the strongest DMARC policy (“p=reject”).

The NCSC’s tool, Mail Check, helps organisations assess their email security compliance. Mail Check has an enforcement rate of 60% (percentage of domains protected by a DMARC policy of Reject), but when using solutions lacking in visibility we often find domains pushed to Reject prematurely, potentially causing more damage than good with blocked legitimate business-critical mail!

A DMARC Primer

DMARC is a complex and potentially lengthy journey, requiring vast visibility and expertise. Often customers in the public sector find themselves stagnated in their authentication progression, lacking in the tools they need to reach “p=reject”. What steps does my agency need to take to use DMARC?



Implement Authentication Standards

The DMARC protocol builds on existing standards like Sender Policy Framework (SPF) and Domain Keys Identified Mail (DKIM).



Authorize/Validate Approved Senders

You need to understand and authenticate all legitimate email messages and sources for your email-sending domains, including owned and third party domains. It is crucial to ensure you don’t block legitimate mail, that is sent on your behalf.

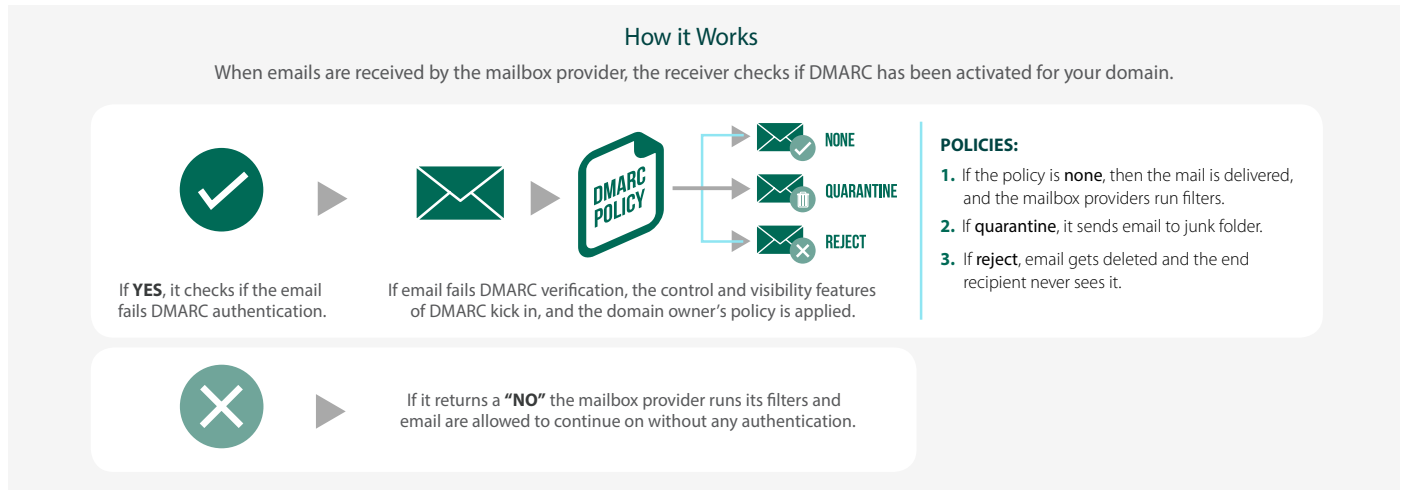


Set DMARC Enforcement Policy

This is a key milestone in the DMARC journey. Publishing an explicit policy tells mailbox providers what to do with email messages that are determined not to be legitimate. This is how you can block all fraudulent emails before they reach employees, constituents, and citizens at large.

What is a DMARC Enforcement Policy?

When you set a DMARC policy for your agency you, as an email sender, are indicating that your messages are protected. The policy tells a receiver what to do if one of the authentication methods in DMARC passes or fails.



Here's a typical policy in DNS. Note that this domain is configured with a policy of Reject DMARC record for agari.com:

```
v=DMARC1; p=reject; sp=reject; ri=3600; rua=mailto:agari-data@rua.agari.com; ruf=mailto:agari-data@ruf.agari.com; fo=1
```

How Do I Get Visibility and Reporting from DMARC?

Once your DMARC policy is implemented, you will start to receive thousands of reports every day, depending upon the number of emails your organisation sends. Because it's difficult to process the reports manually, you can work with a commercial vendor to display and process the data. Commercial vendors such as Fortra's Agari can help with DMARC policy creation and hosting, third-party sender identification and alignment, and ongoing visibility as you progress through your DMARC implementation. In fact, Fortra's Agari DMARC Protection ensures companies reach Reject confidently and securely, boasting an enforcement rate of 78%.

Learn More: www.agari.com/products/dmarc-protection

¹ NSCC Annual Review 2023, p. 9: <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/collection/annual-review-2023/resilience>



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