



## Case Study: Eye tracking user testing

### Definition

**Eye tracking is the process of measuring either the direction of an individual's gaze or the position of the eye relative to the head. Eye tracking is most beneficial when it is used in combination with other user testing methods, such as recording or videoing users as they perform certain tasks and interviewing users once the task has been completed.**

The information gained can explain:-

- **why** participants had problems performing certain tasks
- **where** participants expected to find certain information
- **whether** certain elements are distracting in a negative way
- **how** participants read
- **whether** a particular design is more effective than another

Eye tracking can also help testers to identify behaviours which participants themselves find hard to articulate.

Another great benefit of eye tracking is its ability to **provide compelling visual outputs**. These representations can be shown to area specialists as well as customer service and communications staff, highlighting problem areas in a clear and unbiased manner.

Smarter Digital Services (SDS) invited its partners to send in letters, correspondence and web pages which they wanted to test.

There were a variety of reasons for these requests:

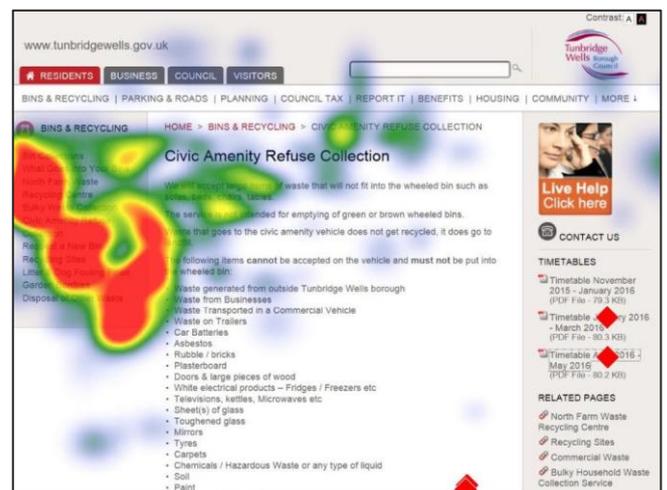
- to **reduce** the number of calls
- **encourage** a specific action
- provide **information** clearly
- **content** editing (e.g. use plain English)
- **reduce contact** from demand failure

### What we did

SDS invited 28 volunteers to test a variety of letters, communications and web pages during a testing week in March 2016 in Maidstone, Ashford and Tunbridge Wells.

Volunteers completed over 300 tests, with eye tracking glasses and website recording software which recorded their eye movements.

SDS staff recorded each participant's navigational choices, task completion times, comments, overall satisfaction, questions and feedback.

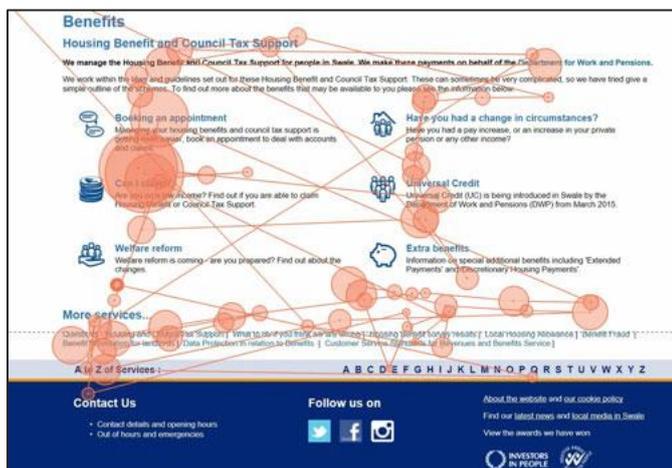


Typical questions asked of the participants were:-

- What is the letter trying to tell you?
- What would you do if you received this letter?
- Do you think this letter is clear?
- How easy was it to find the information from the homepage?
- Are you happy that you found all the information you need?
- Do you have any ideas of you would like to add?

## Website testing:-

Five partner councils submitted web pages for eye tracking.



Across all websites tested during the testing week, the Shepway District Council website was deemed the easiest to use, with the least amount of writing. Testers said they often felt that there was far too much information given.

The lesson to be learnt from this is that people generally **don't like lots of writing**. It is important therefore, to make sure that the key messages and calls to action are placed near the top of the screen for easy access and to avoid being missed.

Providing a link to **'Top Tasks'** on the homepage helped testers get to their goal much quicker and avoided them having to 'search' using the search box or A-Z of services which on the whole were more

frustrating for the testers and much less satisfying.

The **attention span** of testers was low. They generally started reading the first paragraph but were then seen to very quickly start scanning the rest of the page, often overlooking important information.

## Letters/correspondence:-

Six partner councils submitted letters and correspondence for eye tracking.

Participants felt that letters could be improved by taking out **unnecessary or irrelevant wording**.

Overall, our testing revealed that participants like **boxes, reversed out text** and **colour boxes** to emphasise detail. These could be used to draw attention to key points or further emphasise the distinction between alternatives, e.g. different payment options.

Testers generally read blocks of text at the top of the letter, but were less inclined to read large blocks of text towards the bottom of the page or overleaf.

In many instances, testers felt too much jargon was used and by applying the use of **plain English** and some **MINDSPACE** principles, improvements can be identified.

Partner councils who took part in the eye tracking user testing have all received their reports and are now identifying areas for improvement.

SDS recommends **'redesign workshops'** for staff, giving the video outputs from the eye tracking exercise as a prompt to start thinking about possible changes.

SDS is keen to support partner councils to implement these recommendations.

SDS will endeavour to work in partnership with participating councils after implementation of the changes, to monitor relevant calls and face to face visits, in order to establish the impact of any changes made.