Case Study: Taxi drivers online knowledge test

Smarter Digital Services (SDS) were asked to assist the Sevenoaks, Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Licensing Partnership to create and implement an online knowledge test for taxi drivers to include user testing sessions with taxi drivers.

The partnership identified that the process of setting written tests which needed to be marked and sending officers out with drivers to drive routes in their vehicles was creating a lot of avoidable contact and using valuable officer time.

The partnership had been struggling with a high level of contact from customers via expensive channels (primarily face-to-face and over the phone). Over 60% of calls to the Licensing Team relating to taxi licensing.

Drivers are typically calling to find out whether they have passed their test as well as queries relating to the application process and collection of plates. Face-to-face visits also related to collection of plates as well as making payments in cash.

SDS were able to review the partnership's main processes with key internal stakeholders and make a series of recommendations tod:-

- *enhance* the user experience
- *improve* customer satisfaction
- *focus* on *digital* service delivery
- *reduce* processing time
- *reduce* avoidable contact
- *free up* officer time

Developing and implementing a new online knowledge test would save time, reduce contact, improve customer satisfaction and ensure the quality of new drivers entering the trade. It may also deter some drivers, reducing competition and enabling increased income for existing drivers.

SDS liaised with Shepway District Council who had implemented an online knowledge test using a system called Classmarker.

The team visited Shepway and observed a 'live' taxi driver knowledge test. Shepway were happy to share questions, especially around common elements, such as Highway Code, numeracy and safeguarding.

The new online knowledge test consists of 60 multiple choice questions and candidates are given 90 minutes to complete the test.

There is an overall pass mark of 80% as well as minimum required pass marks in specific categories, eg. Safeguarding and route knowledge.

Drivers are set questions relating to their statutory obligations and specific Council conditions including:-

- the **difference** between hackney carriage and private hire
- fare **charges**
- details relating to the use of the **licence** and **badges**
- **assisting** passengers with luggage (customer care)
- **safeguarding** of children and vulnerable adults
- **disability** awareness

Drivers are also required to show local knowledge, including streets and locations that a resident or visitor might wish to go to as well as shortest routes.

The tests are set up to take place at each LA's offices. Groups of 6 drivers can take the test at one time using tablets (one with a keyboard). Results are not given to drivers immediately to enable final checks and back office processes to be completed. Drivers are informed of their result a few days later, with details of any areas they may need to improve to pass the test.

Measuring the impact of the new online test:-

SDS are collecting current data to show how much time is spent in the current end-to-end process so that future reductions in time spent can be measured.

There will also be ongoing analysis of results to ensure the passmark is fair and achievable and to make necessary adjustments to the question bank to cover changes in legislation and policy.

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