

Channel Shift Case Study

Guidance Area #2:	Getting Users To Try Digital For The First Time
Provided By:	Chelmsford City Council
Sector:	Local Government
Service:	Senior Railcard Renewals

Chelmsford launched an online service for renewing senior railcards in October 2012 and now, one year later, 40% of applications are being made online.

What They Did:

Chelmsford decided to develop an online railcard renewal service in response to the number of customer complaints they received about the offline service, in particular the time it took to be seen when presenting evidence at the customer service centre.

The online service replicates the existing offline service and it is not an end-to-end digital transaction because staff still have to rekey the data into their back office systems. However, the online service does not require the production of evidence for renewal applications where there are no change of circumstances. The introduction of online railcard renewals is, therefore, as much more about changing internal processes and is not simply an online replication of the existing service.

Every year Chelmsford writes to existing railcard holders shortly before their railcards are due to expire to invite them to renew their railcards. It was, therefore, relatively easy for Chelmsford to *identify the way that the current service is promoted and use this to promote the new online service*. Chelmsford produced a leaflet, with clear illustrated instructions, which explains how to use the new online service. In this way it is possible for service users to see how the online service works – without turning on a computer – and showed service users that the online service was as easy to use as the offline service.

Chelmsford *worked with their delivery partners to ensure that all points of contact* understood the new online service and, where necessary, knew how to use the online service. They also worked with their *internal stakeholders including frontline staff* so that they all understood the changes being made about evidence production and how renewals could be done online without evidence. In doing so, *frontline staff knew the advantages of the online service and would encourage service users to try the online service*.

Lessons Learnt:

Chelmsford identify one of the critical success factor of online railcard renewals as timing – getting the message out at the right time. Using renewal letters not only promotes the service at the right time but also ensures that the right people receive information about the new online service.

Providing clear illustrated guidance helped service users understand the new online service and explained how to use the service – they could see that the online service was almost identical to the offline service. However, the online service offered one critical advantage over the offline service – time. Removing the need to go the customer service centre and wait to be seen – giving the service users more time for other things – is the key benefit for service users.