

USE CASE

Creating a waste and recycling online bookings system for the local authorities during COVID-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Abavus has been working with many of our local authority customers, providing them with the technology they need in order to meet their immediate business needs and to manage their pandemic response.

The reopening of waste and recycling sites

All UK local authorities were required to close their waste and recycling centres around 24 March 2020 in line with the government's COVID-19 restrictions. After the government began relaxing of some of the lockdown measures in early May, waste and recycling centres were allowed to reopen if they could do so safely.

The challenges faced by local authorities when reopening their sites

Local authorities were confronted with numerous challenges when planning to reopen their sites. For example:-

1. Many centres were still not at full staff capacity because operational staff were shielding or self-isolating
2. Having been closed for almost two months, sites risked being deluged with customers as soon as they reopened
3. Local authorities still had to put in place suitable social distancing measures to protect both the public and their own staff before sites could reopen
4. Local authorities had to ensure that public roads were not blocked due to vehicles queuing to get into busy centres
5. Local authorities had to ensure that all customers would have a fair and equitable opportunity to use the centres

How Abavus supported local authorities in reopening their waste and recycling centres

Immediately after the announcement to re-open was made, Abavus was contacted by an existing My Council Services user. This Council wanted its customers to be able to pre-book timeslots for visiting the waste and recycling centre. Abavus was asked whether the My Council Services appointments and bookings functionality could be used to create such a process, and whether it could be built in the two weeks before the sites reopened.

Scoping and building a suitable bookings process

Abavus quickly convened an online meeting with colleagues from the authority in order to fully understand and scope out their requirements, so as to ensure that our technology would do what they needed. Abavus designed a process map detailing the necessary process flows and, given the incredibly tight timescales, agreed what a minimum viable product needed to look like in order to go live. Abavus and the client assessed the requirements, identifying any potential challenges, in order that we could be confident of meeting the Council's deadline

Building the process

The My Council Services platform is highly configurable and generally we encourage our customers to conduct all of their own platform configuration, once fully trained. However in this case, because the Council in question had only been using platform for a short period and because of the extremely tight deadline, they asked us to complete the configuration for them whilst they conducted the testing themselves.

Sharing best practice with other UK Authorities

Abavus knew that many of their other customers with responsibility for waste and recycling centres would face the same challenges. Therefore, Abavus contacted all of them to let them know what they were doing and to ask whether any of them would like to do the same.

Within three hours of sending out the customer email Abavus were contacted by five other authorities, enquiring whether they could use a similar solution. These authorities were Newport City Council, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Anglesey Borough Council and Monmouthshire County Borough Council. All of these customers had responsibility for waste and recycling centres, and all had similarly tight deadlines within which to get appropriate solutions live.

Meeting the deadline

With six customers now wanting to go live within seven days of each other, the pressure was very much on. To alleviate this, Abavus deployed a full internal team to support the project. Those customers who were already familiar with the technology and who had resource available were happy to build their own processes with minimal support and guidance from the Abavus team, whilst others needed more extensive support. Abavus were responsive to everyone's needs and tailored support accordingly.

"We did not have the functionality nor in-house skills to build a solution that would be seamless for both our residents to self-serve, and for our contact centre agents to populate bookings into a single repository. Without the help from the Abavus team, the local authority would not have been able to offer a full end-to-end solution, and we may have experienced additional third party costs, or delays."

Shaun Hughes, Strategic Transformation Manager at
Blaenau Gwent Council Borough Council

Go live

Abavus knew the week of go live would be interesting and would throw up some last-minute curve balls. Abavus advised customers to stagger their respective go live timings as far as possible because we knew that the loads on the system would be immense. One authority had over three thousand customers hitting the database simultaneously within one hour of the service going live, and at one point during the first week when all customers were live, the system had a five-fold increase in traffic. As a precaution Abavus increased the central processing unit (CPU) capacity to cope with this increased demand. Despite a few fraught moments along the way, all the go lives were successful.

"The waste and recycling teams have been really pleased with the roll-out success of the bookings capability. With such a short timescale in which to get this live the launch went as well as could have been expected. The success of this deployment has given us confidence that we may be able to apply these booking principles to other council processes where we need to adapt and change the way we work during this COVID-19 crisis."

Karen Gregg, Functional Team Manager at
Newport City Council

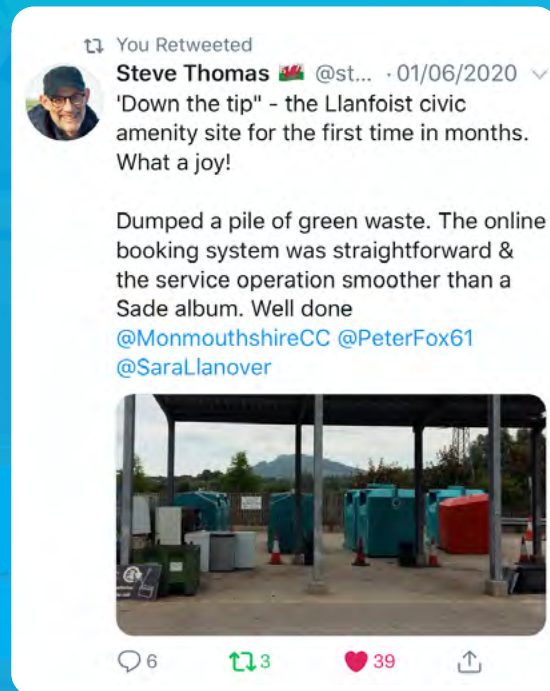
Results

Within two days of going live, all authority customers had between 500 and 2,000 bookings for their waste and recycling centres (depending on their capacity). Within two weeks of go live, an average 3,000 bookings had been made by customers at each authority with over 7,000 bookings at one site alone.

"The HWRC bookings has been received well and enabled us to open our HWRC site in a manageable and socially distant manner. From roll-out date of 26 May 2020, we have received 1,879 booking requests [as of midday 07/06/20], with no downtime enabling our residents to book at a time that suits them."

Shaun Hughes, Strategic Transformation Manager at
Blaenau Gwent Council Borough Council

Feedback to date from all authorities has been extremely encouraging and, importantly, residents are adapting to this new way of working. Social media posts from satisfied customers highlight the success.



The future

As we all continue to deliver business in this 'new normal' COVID-19 landscape, adapting traditional business processes to meet new demands will be key to successful service delivery.

Over the last few months it has become clear that this approach is the way forward. All the councils with whom we are working are likely to continue using the booking capability for the long term now as it has become clear to both councils and users that having people book slots is better than having people just show up at random. This has evolved into a longer term project that will encompass other aspects of waste management from being alerted to people dumping trade waste without permission to ensuring the tip is used correctly by residents.

Based upon the success of these deployments, Abavus's customers are looking at other innovative ways in which they can deploy this and other technology from the My Council Services product range.



About Abavus and My Council Services

Abavus is a partner to iTouch Vision and the exclusive certified partner for My Council Services. Over the last five years Abavus has delivered operational consultancy alongside accredited training and development to UK public sector organisations. During that time Abavus has also been involved with the implementation and setup of IT platforms.

iTouch Vision is a leading innovator in the development of technology applications focused on increasing efficiency and improving the customer experience for both public sector and commercial organisations.

My Council Services is the flagship of its current development activity.



myCouncilservices



For more information about My Council Services and to book your free demo:

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