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Service User Perspective Review: Online Services – **Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council**

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Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is also available in Welsh.

The team who delivered the work comprised Colin Davies, Alison Lewis and Richard Hayward under the direction of Jane Holownia.

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Summary

What we reviewed and why

- 1 Councils are making changes to how people can access services. They are creating communication channels and self-service options for customers to access services online. This is called 'channel shift'. Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council are channel shifting more services online. Because this is an increasingly important element of customer interaction we decided to review the approach that the Council is taking in this area and get perspectives from service users.
- 2 We undertook the review in two parts. The first part was a review of the Council's approach to channel shifting services online, looking at how service users are involved in the process. The fieldwork for part one was undertaken in July and August 2018. We gave interim feedback to the Council in November 2018. The second part of the review asked service users for their views. For this we undertook a service user satisfaction survey to ask citizens for their views about the Council's online services. The survey was available from 19 November 2018 to 8 February 2019. The Wales Audit Office and the Council promoted it via their websites and social media channels. We received 79 responses. Key information from that survey is attached in [Appendix 1](#).

What we found

- 3 Our review sought to answer the question, 'Do the needs, experiences and aspirations of service users inform the design and delivery of services to more closely meet their needs?' Our focus in this review was on the Council's approach to channel shifting services online.
- 4 Overall we found that, **most service users in our survey were satisfied with the Council's online services but the Council is not gathering user satisfaction data on the individual services it has shifted online**. We reached this conclusion because:
 - the Council has undertaken some involvement of service users in the design of its online services and most service users in our survey said the Council's online services were easy to use;
 - the Council is successfully shifting services online and most service users in our survey said they would recommend the Council's online services;
 - the Council is extending its range of online services while still allowing people to access services through more traditional means; and
 - most service users in our survey said it was easy to let the Council know about issues with its online provision, but the Council is not capturing user satisfaction data for individual services it has shifted online.

Proposals for improvement

Exhibit 1: proposals for improvement

The table below sets out the proposals for improvement that we have identified following this review. We expect the Council to take action in response to these proposals for improvement.

Proposals for improvement	
Service user involvement	
P1	The Council should develop a systematic approach to involving service users in the future design and development of its online/channel shifted services.
Service user satisfaction	
P2	The Council should develop additional ways to generate more service user feedback on its online services, so that it can continue to make improvements.

Exhibit 2: opportunities for the Council to explore

The table below sets out opportunities that we have identified following this review that the Council may wish to explore.

Opportunities for the Council to explore	
Accessibility of online services	
O1	Explore the use of assistive technologies to improve access to digital services, for example 'text to speech'.

Detailed report

Most service users in our survey were satisfied with the Council's online services but the Council is not gathering user satisfaction data on the individual services it has shifted online

The Council has undertaken some involvement of service users in the design of its online services and most service users in our survey said the Council's online services were easy to use

5 In reaching this conclusion we found that:

- eighty per cent of service users in our survey said that they found it very or quite easy to complete the process online;
- eighty-three per cent of service users in our survey said that they found it very or quite easy to find the services that they needed on the Council's website;
- the Council is seeking to develop easy to use online services, so people naturally choose digital over the more traditional channels;
- the Council looked at best practice across the UK when developing its approach to channel shifting services;
- the Council has considered how switching to digital will potentially improve the experience of service users;
- the Council has undertaken engagement with services users over the design of its initial online forms, for example the forms for bulky waste;
- the Council has examples of where online services have changed as a result of engagement with service users: for example, changes to the colour scheme for the online refuse collection timetable; and
- the Council's focus on the service user extends to looking at how it can help address digital exclusion (it is working in partnership with the third sector on this).

The Council is successfully shifting services online and most service users in our survey said they would recommend the Council's online services

6 In reaching this conclusion we found that:

- sixty-nine per cent of services users in our survey said that they were very likely or quite likely to recommend the Council's online services to family and friends;

- seventy-nine per cent of service users in our survey said that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the overall quality of the online services (where additional information was provided by respondents the majority of the negative comments related to not receiving the service requested rather than the ease of using the online service);
- the survey results from the Council's consultation work on its new digital strategy reported that 90% of the 103 respondents rated the experience of using the Council's online services as very good, good or fairly good;
- the Council's website has been improved to make it easier for people to access digital services;
- demand for digital services is increasing (in 2017-18 online take-up of services ranged from 33% for pest control appointments to 86% for van permits);
- the Council is seeing a reduction in the number of visits to its one stop shops (from 71,589 in 2016-17 to 65,259 in 2017-18). The Council report that this reduction correlates with an increase in the use of their online services.

The Council is extending its range of online services while still allowing people to access services through more traditional means

7 In reaching this conclusion we found that:

- the Council has not made any services online-only, digital channels have been created to be options alongside the traditional channels;
- the Council is actively engaging with the third sector to promote digital inclusion and improve digital skills in the community;
- IT facilities in the libraries are well used to access online services;
- the corporate website is fully device responsive and bilingual (website content is tested with the Digital Accessibility Centre);
- the communication and marketing campaign for digital 'Switch' uses innovative ways to help promote online services; and
- the Council's new digital strategy 'Smart and Connected 2018-2022' has as amongst its key actions to: extend the range of services and information available online, promote 'Digital First' in all communications, establish a citizen account to help people use the online services, and extend the range and participation in the Council's online services.

Most service users in our survey said it was easy to let the Council know about issues with its online provision, but the Council is not capturing user satisfaction data for individual services it has shifted online

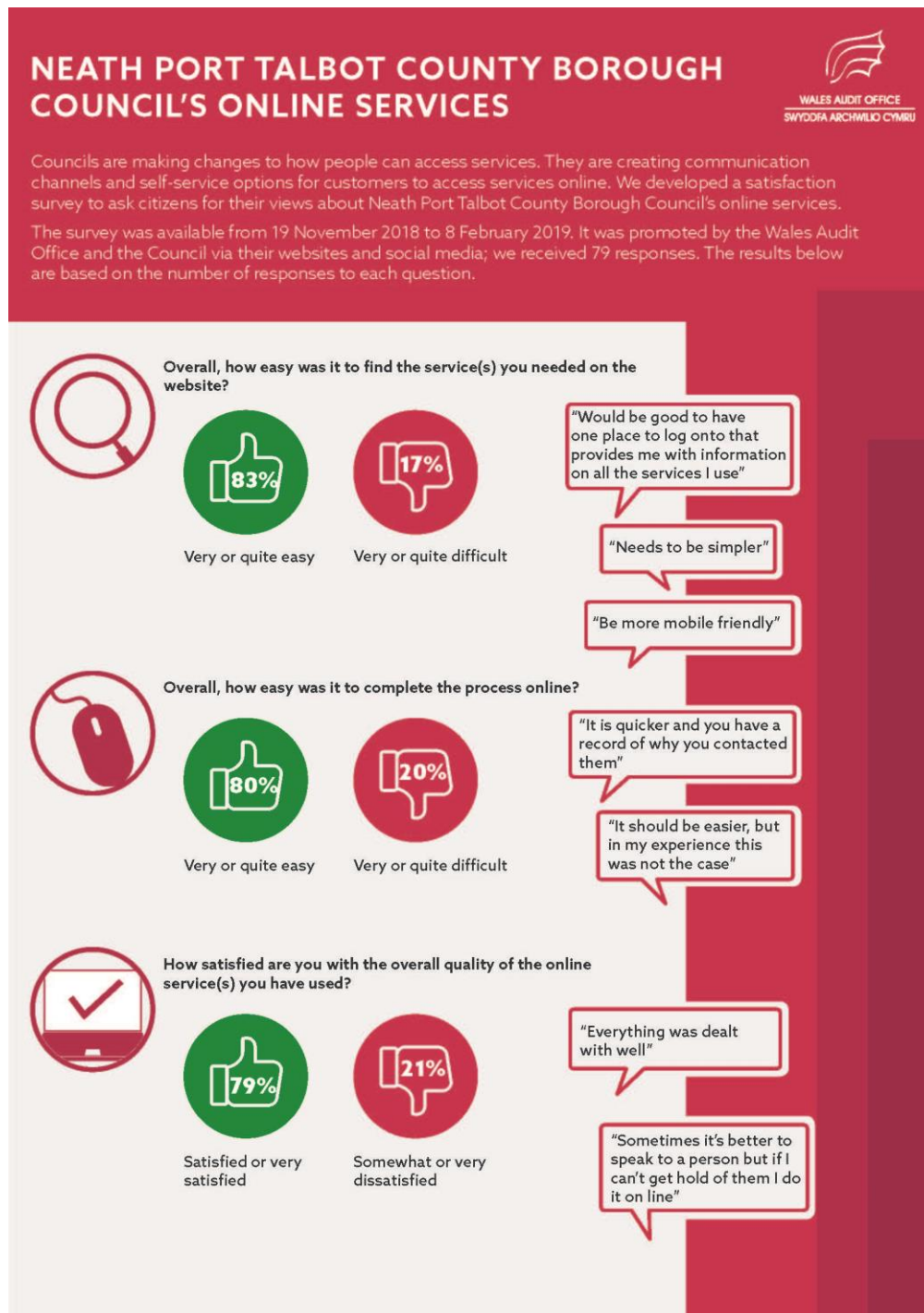
8 In reaching this conclusion we found that:

- seventy per cent of service users in our survey said that they found it very easy or quite easy to let the Council know about any issues with its online services;
- in our survey services users were divided on whether they thought the Council was good at letting residents know about the Council services that are available online
 - fifty-four per cent thought they were very good or good;
 - thirty-eight per cent said that they thought they were poor or very poor; and
 - eight per cent said that they did not know;
- feedback on individual channel shifted services is not routinely requested or reported upon;
- the annual website survey is the main way the Council collects service user views, but service users can also provide feedback via social media and through traditional channels;
- service users can rate website pages and provide feedback; and
- the Council is exploring using a live online web chat and text messaging service.

Appendix 1

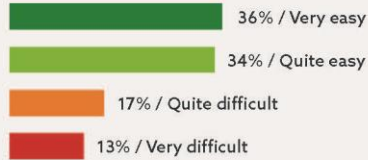
Key findings from the service user survey

Exhibit 3: key findings from the service user survey





How easy is it to let the Council know about any issues with its online services?



"Should be easier to complain if service didn't work not just 'rate this page'"

"Sometimes a conversation with a person helps to clarify a problem"



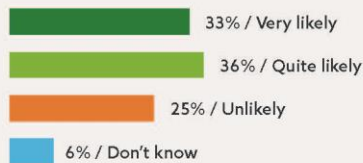
53% of respondents said the main advantage of using online Council services compared to completing them in person or over the telephone was having access 24 hours a day 7 days a week



Overall, how good do you think the Council is at letting residents know about the Council services that are available online?



How likely are you to recommend the Council's online services to family or friends?



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