



Case Study

Waverley Borough Council – Usability testing April 2008

The Brief

Waverley Borough Council (WBC) was redeveloping its website and wished to get feedback from users about how easy or difficult the prototype was to use, in order to make any changes before the site went live. The timescales of the project were extremely tight – there was a two week timeframe between undertaking the usability research and launching the new WBC site.

The site is aimed principally at owner-residents of WBC, WBC local authority housing tenants and visitors to the WBC area.

How we responded to the brief

Because of the need to achieve a quick turnaround of the project, we proposed testing the site with 3 testers in a single day's observed usability testing followed by a facilitated discussion of the issues and to agree actions.

In order to ensure buy in to the research results, key WBC stakeholders actively observed users on the site in real time in order to gain a shared understanding of the issues. By following this with a facilitated discussion it would enable the WBC stakeholders to identify and agree the key issues and actions in a single day.

What we did

We recruited 3 testers: 2 testers who were representative of owner-residents and visitors and 1 WBC local authority housing tenant.

The testing was conducted in our state of the art studios in Chippenham, where WBC staff watched the testing through a one way mirror. Eye tracking, on the latest eye tracker – Tobii T60 – was used, allowing the observers to see, in real time, where the testers were looking on the screen.



The WBC participants were 'active' observers, writing issues on post-its as they occurred. Following the testing, a discussion was facilitated by a WUP consultant to agree the issues and appropriate actions.

The testing sessions were recorded (audio recording and screen capture with tester

picture-in-picture), allowing for analysis and to enable the client to watch the sessions at a later date or to share with other stakeholders who were not able to attend the observed session.

The outcomes

The research identified a over 40 usability issues, over 30 of which were rated as 'major' or 'moderate' and would have interfered with a satisfactory user experience. During the facilitated discussion WBC staff gained a shared understanding of these issues, and actions were identified and prioritised in order that changes could be made to the big 'problem' areas could be made in the 2 week period before the site went live. As a result WBC was able to act quickly to make significant improvements to the site usability the site before launch.

"Conducting this usability study before launching our new website was invaluable as it enabled us to identify and address any major usability issues. The WUP did a fantastic job and their facilities in Chippenham are great - it was worth every penny." - Vanessa de Chazal, Website Manager (Waverley Borough Council)

Timing

The project was conducted in spring 2008, over a 3 week period at a cost of approximately £5,000.