Transforming the customer experience in SEND

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west sussex county council

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Introductions

- Sarah Bullard – Customer Experience Digital and Service Improvement Manager, Customer Experience
- Laura Goman – Business Analyst, Transformation Portfolio Office
- Jo Hill – Service Manager, Special Educational Needs Assessment Team

Background

- The council signed up to a Customer Service Vision in November 2014:
  - We shall provide an excellent Customer Experience
  - Our customers will received a consistent, connected and easy to use service
  - We will improve customer satisfaction and make it easier for staff to deliver a great customer experience across all channels
- We had been developing our digital offer to enable channel shift and new ways of accessing services
- As part of this work, we had been working with our Special Educational Needs Assessment Team (SENAT)

EHC Needs Assessment

- Process of considering the needs of pupils with SEN&D

- A small proportion of the pupil population have an EHCP (3%) with an additional 10-12% having their needs met at School Support

- West Sussex was receiving increasing numbers of request for EHC Needs Assessment

- Legal threshold is low

- Our priority was to ensure requests made were mainly appropriate, we got the right information on which to base the decision and that parents, careers and settings have access to the right information

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LGA Bid

- We had three (parent, young person and professionals) request for assessment e-forms in place which had already seen a significant reduction in processing time for SENAT

- Our project bid was to build on this work and to design and develop an end to end e-form with workflow to continue to support the business in meeting the statutory deadline whilst remaining customer focused

Our approach

- Working closely with the service and customers we:
  - Mapped the as is customer journey
  - Mapped the as is end to end business process
  - Agreed a design challenge
  - We held a multiagency workshop (40 participants)
  - Created a to be customer journey
  - Created a to be end to end business process
  - Baselined the current process and agreed measures of success
  - Worked in an agile manner

Review of scope

- Originally awarded £15,000 to design and develop an end to end e-form solution

- Funding reduce to£7,000 due to reduced scope

- Project started in March 2017

- E-forms launch in October 2017 under a beta banner and were finalised in February 2018

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Checklist development

- Co- designed the checklist with the local Parent Forum and Service

- Developed a six question checklist signposting customers to relevant information at each stage

- Carried our user testing with Flashback software

- We launched under a beta banner which allowed us to gather further feedback and made several iterations

- Revised the website to improve the customer journey

E-form development

- Taking the feedback from the multiagency workshop we set out to improve the three e-forms we already had on the website within the constraints of our current technology. Changes included:
  - PDF summary of what the customer had submitted
  - Email notification to inform them that their form had been received
  - Broke the form down into sections to provide a clearer pathway through the form for professionals

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Benefits

- 64% of parent/carers and professionals submitting applications for an EHCNA have used the checklist
- The number of new requests for assessment has continued to drop as has the number of new assessments (against a national trend of increasing numbers) 770 Sept 16-Aug 17, to 741 last year.
- The rate of refusal has also dropped from 54% in Sept 16 – Aug 17 to 42% last year. All these time savings impacted positively on our end to end timescales (currently achieving over 65% consistently from 38% in Sept 18)
- Changes to the e-form saw a reduction in the average time spent on the application page from 302 seconds to 150 seconds, 50% time reduction
- Improved the customer experience by ensuring that we are signposting to the correct support and processing applications in a timely fashion

Service view of project

What worked well?

- Support of Customer Experience and families – true coproduction
- Move to electronic/paperless working enabled other areas of work to follow (saves time and money)
- Engagement of school staff/improved understanding of our processes with colleagues

What didn't work so well?

- Time pressures – difficult to prioritise but worthwhile doing so
- Misconceptions about what we were trying to do i.e. trying to stop people applying – had mechanisms in place to challenge this
- Limitations of IT function

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Lessons learnt

- Parents state of mind when accessing the process
- Co- design was uncomfortable at times but delivered a product fit for all
- Heads of Service attendance at the Customer co design workshops showed we were listening and valued their input
- One school has installed the checklist to every teachers laptop so that they are aware of eligibility
- Parents are informed and discuss the Childs eligibility jointly. Joint School applications are up, Parents are down.
- Parents didn't understand the concept of MVP
- Be brave and take a chance - eligibility checker
- Technically a small deliverable but a wide impact

Key messages to take away

- We had ambitions to improve the end to end process through workflow, what we were able to achieve was an improved front end form for customers

- Customer engagement and co-design was key for our project and enabled us to develop a checklist which has been positively received and supported customers to get the right support at the right time

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Website links

- EHCNA Checklist: '[What happens if you think your child has SEND](#)'
- Request an EHCNA (parent): https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/special-educational-needs-and-disability-send/what-happens-if-you-think-your-child-has-send/request-an-education-health-and-care-needs-assessment-parent/
- Request an EHCNA (young person): [https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/special-educational-needs-and-disability-send/what-happens-if-you-think-your-child-has-send/request-an-education-health-and-care-needs-assessment-young-person/](#)
- Request an EHCNA (professional): [https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/social-care-and-health-information-for-professionals/children/request-an-education-health-and-care-needs-assessment/](#)
- Further information can be found in our case study: [https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/channel-shift-westsussex-soep%20WEB.pdf](#)

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