

Preston City Council website usage focus groups

For Preston City Council

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This research has been carried out in compliance with the International standard ISO 20252, (the International Standard for Market and Social research), The Market Research Society's Code of Conduct and UK Data Protection law

1. Introduction

This reports sets out the key findings from two focus groups conducted by Qa Research on behalf of Preston City Council. The groups concerned the design of a 'customer portal' on the Preston City Council Website.

The customer portal would be a place where customers' information was held and reused each time they filled in a form or wished to contact the Council so that they would not have to keep supplying the same information (e.g. name, address, Council tax number) each time. In addition, the portal would collate useful information (e.g. details of local MP, local councillors, local doctor) that are bespoke to the customer.

Following the initial design and internal testing of the portal, Qa was commissioned to test it with customers; this involved setting a series of tasks, observing these tasks being carried out, and also a group discussion about the reactions to the portal and its potential use.

Two focus groups were conducted, and the findings from each have been synthesised into this overarching report.

2. Aims and objectives

The objectives of the research project were to:

- Test the usability and design (both functional and aesthetic) of the customer portal from a customer's point of view
- Uncover any shortcomings of the design of the portal and to what extent this would impact customers' ability to use it
- Understand the degree of potential usage of the portal and what, if any, features it lacks that would encourage greater usage.

3. Methodology

Participants in the focus groups were recruited from membership of the Preston Citizens Panel, specifically those who had indicated that they would be willing to take part in focus groups. In order to ensure that the time in the group was spent constructively, only members of the panel who were internet users were recruited so that time was not spent trying to educate non-users about the basics of online access.

In order to ensure that a broad spectrum of people were consulted minimum quotas were set on gender, age, and ethnicity and to encourage participation, and as a thank you for attending, recruits were given £20 as an incentive. In total, 20 people were recruited (10 for each group), with 14 attending on the day.

The focus groups consisted of two distinct halves; the first involved respondents being seated at computers and carrying out a series of tasks whilst being observed by Qa staff and volunteers from Preston and Lancaster City Councils. For the second half, respondents gathered around a table in the typical group discussion format to discuss the tasks they had completed and also the features and potential usage of the customer portal more generally.

4. Key findings

This section of the report details the key findings from the consultation.

The structure of this section is designed as a conclusive summary.

Within over-riding section headings the reader will see:

- A themed header that reveals an overview of each mini section
- Succinct analysis that explains the conclusive theme
- Where appropriate, anonymous quotations from across the focus groups to give life to the findings.

The key findings are designed as a synthesis of the outcomes of both focus groups and therefore report on common themes emerging from them. They also highlight where there were any differences in opinion by demographic profile, if this was significant.

In addition, where it is felt to be relevant or useful, recommendations about how the key findings could be applied to the ongoing process of refining the website have been included. These recommendations are shown in a light blue box, such as this, to differentiate them from the key findings.

4.1 Respondents' usage of IT

As a warm up before the groups began the computer tasks, respondents were asked a few basic questions about their usage of IT. Specifically, they were asked what the main things they used the internet for were, how they tended to access the internet, and examples of 'good' websites.

Respondents used the internet for a variety of things, with information consumption, shopping, and social media being the main activities.

- The majority of respondents felt confident about using the internet and carried out a variety of activities online. The majority (but not all) used it for social media and/or email, and this was true across the age groups. Information consumption, for example news or events, was also a common usage.
- Some participants also used the internet for shopping and banking and felt comfortable doing so; a small minority did have some concerns over privacy and security online, and this was cited as a reason not to do these activities (banking in particular).
- Despite respondents' belief that they were all competent users of the internet, there was disparity in the observed level of their ability when using the customer portal. This

ranged from users who could confidently and instinctively navigate the portal and carry out tasks to those who took longer and got confused. This difference was notable in terms of age, where (in general) older respondents completed tasks more slowly than younger participants.

Participants accessed the internet through a variety of different mediums.

- The internet was accessed primarily through desktop or laptop computers and smartphones, and for some individuals the majority of their access was through the latter. In addition, some users were also using tablets.
- It is worth noting here that the computers on which the participants tested the customer portal were comparatively old machines (running Windows XP and an older version of Internet Explorer) and this caused some minor issues such as banners floating in front of menus or aspects of the webpage not rendering properly. In addition, the monitors used were of low resolution and therefore users had to scroll down to find some buttons or links.

The key feature of a good website was deemed to be its ease of use.

- The majority of respondents felt that ease of navigation and ease of use were the key factors in a website's appeal, not aesthetics. It would seem then that function is more important than form and one respondent summed this up as follows;

"It's the clarity of how to navigate [that makes a good website]"

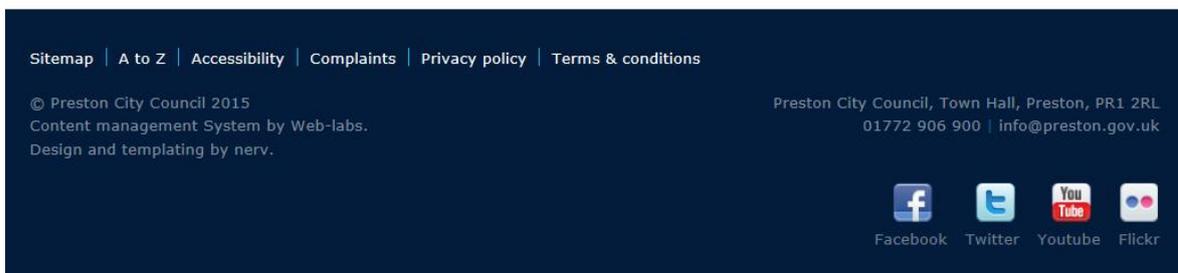
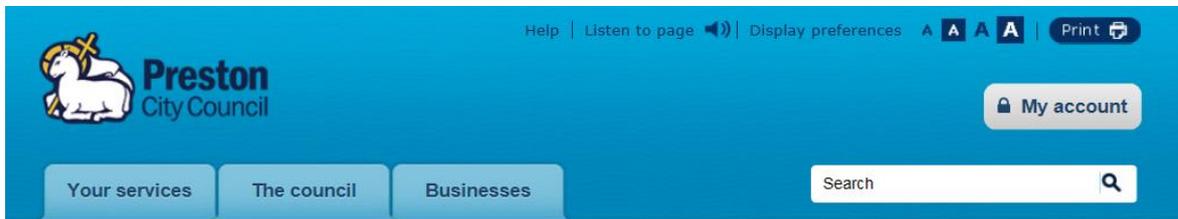
- Online banking and shopping websites, for example NatWest or Amazon were given as examples of well designed websites. Again, ease of use and navigation were cited as the reasons for this.
- One respondent gave the HMRC website as an example of bad practice; this was because there was too much information available and it was therefore hard to find what one was looking for. This reinforces the idea that ease of navigation is key to the appeal of a website.
- Despite only occasional use, the Preston City Council website was generally liked and was noted as being easy to navigate. Specific comments relating to the PCC website included;

"It's easy to navigate 'round; if you know what department you want you can get straight there"

"[I use the PCC website for...] what bin day it is and checking buses to the leisure centre"

4.2 Initial thoughts on the customer portal

Respondents were then shown the login page (see image below) for the customer portal and then asked about their initial thoughts on the page.



The login page was perceived to have a few minor issues

- A lack of instructions on the first page was a problem for some respondents. They felt that the page lacked clarity and that they did not understand what they would be registering for. This lack of clarity was to become a running theme in the groups.
- Some respondents had issues with the prominence of the Twitter and Facebook logos on the login page, and didn't understand why they were there.

"Facebook and Twitter...why are they there...why does Facebook have to have such prominence?"

4.3 Task 1: Registering for the customer portal

Respondents were then asked to complete their first task, which was to create an account on the portal. Note that as the portal was still in beta at this stage respondents were not required to confirm their email address, which would be required should the portal go live.

Whilst all respondents managed to register, there were some issues with this, although some of these were down to user error or software/hardware issues.

- A number of respondents had issues with the way in which the portal was displaying. For example, the low screen resolutions on the monitors some were using meant that the register button or next buttons were not visible and had to be scrolled down to.
- There was also a rendering issue on the first registration screen if respondents were required to re-enter their password or email address (because they did not match or did not meet password requirements), where a box would appear to re-enter this information but with the label (i.e. 'password' or 'email') not shown. This caused confusion amongst respondents who had to re-enter either of these strings.
- In the first group all respondents used the Microsoft Internet Explorer browser, but in the second they used Google Chrome and the above problem did not occur. This was true for a number of other minor rendering issues, and suggests that the issue was with the browser and not the design of the portal. None of these issues occur in Internet Explorer 11, and so it may be down to the outdated version of Internet Explorer used on the venue computers.
- The registration process also required respondents to enter their postcode, however this had to be entered in all capital letters or it would not be accepted. There was no error message that explicitly stated this, and several users needed multiple attempts to enter a valid postcode or needed to be told to enter it in all caps. An example of this error is shown to the right; if the postcode entered is changed from 'pr2 2yr' to 'PR2 2YR' it will be accepted.
- In addition, the next page in the registration process asked respondents which email subscriptions they wished to sign up to. Again, in Internet Explorer the tick boxes and the email subscriptions did not line up properly, making it hard to tell which option the box was for. Whilst this issue may be down to screen resolution, it did not occur in Chrome (or IE 11, which the image to the right was rendered in correctly).

My address

2

Change your address

Errors found - please see below
The following errors occurred

All fields marked with an * are required.
Invalid Postcode

pr2 2yr

My address can not be found in the list

Email subscriptions

3

Select the topics you wish to subscribe to

<input type="checkbox"/> Planning	<input type="checkbox"/> Leisure Centres
<input type="checkbox"/> E-Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Community
<input type="checkbox"/> Test_Training_Topic	<input type="checkbox"/> Parks
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Prestonian	<input type="checkbox"/> Environment
<input type="checkbox"/> Events	<input type="checkbox"/> Jobs & Volunteering
<input type="checkbox"/> Business	

- As an aside, it is worth mentioning that no respondents objected to The Prestonian being selected as a default subscription and a small number actually selected additional subscriptions.

4.4 Reaction to registering

Some respondents took issue with having to register, but others saw benefit in doing so.

- There was agreement amongst some that having a single centralised account would be beneficial and time saving, as it would have all their details in one place.
- Others objected that they had to register to view information on the portal. When it was explained that the portal was not a replacement for the current PCC website, and was a bolt-on to that site, this objection abated however.
- Some did say they had found the registration process difficult, in particular those in older age groups. It is not clear to what extent issues with the portal rendering in Internet Explorer influenced this difficulty.
- A lack of instructions was again cited as an issue, for example;
 - There was no mention that the password had to be a minimum of six characters until it had been entered with less than seven
 - There was no explanation as to what any of the email subscriptions were for beyond the name of the publication, and so users did not know if the subject matter would be of interest to them
 - There was no explanation that the postcode had to be in capital letters.

"I didn't find it easy"

"I object to having to register when I just want to look at something on the site"

"As long as you can still access all the other bits with having to create an account"

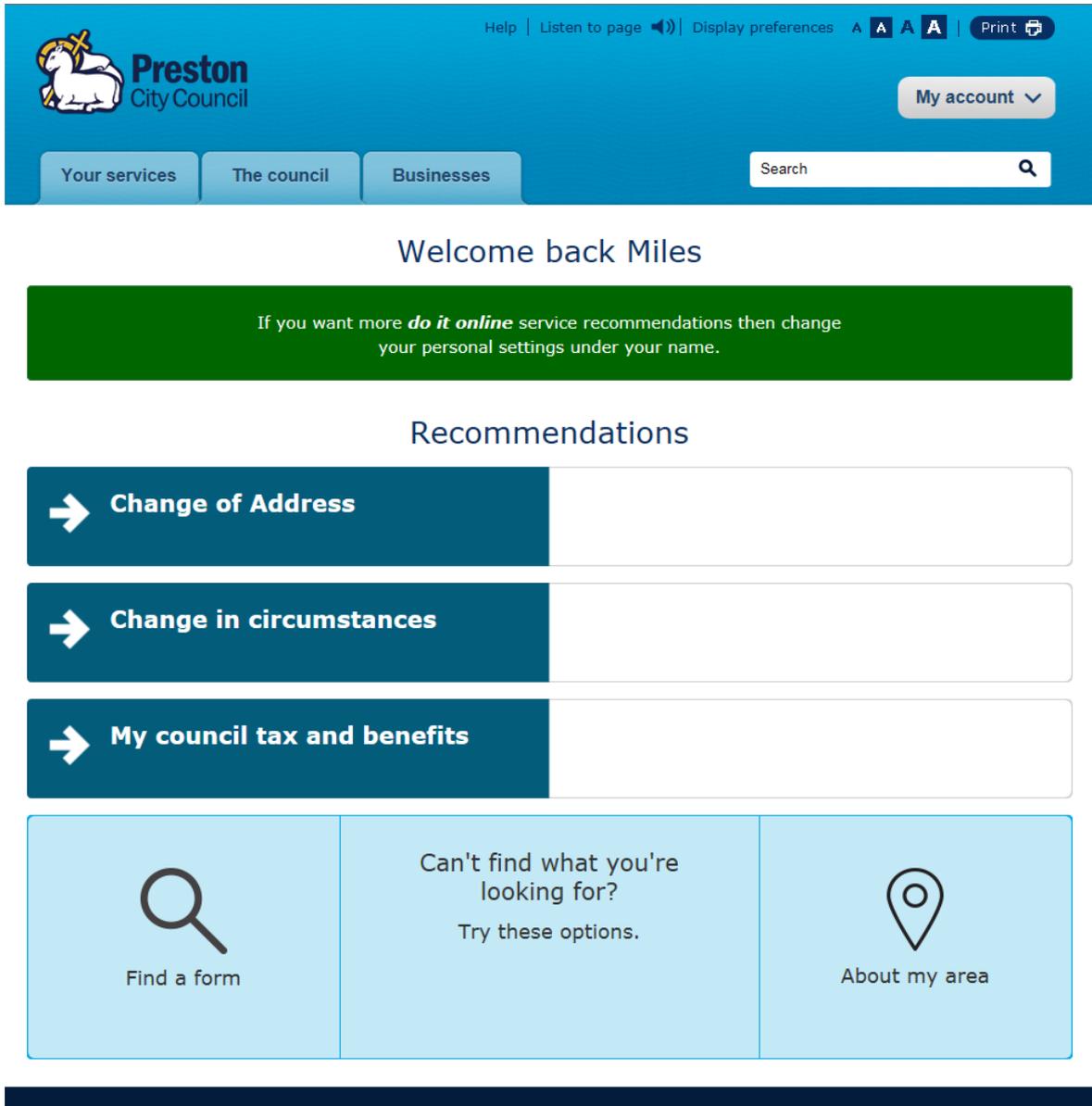
"It wasn't clear right at the top that you were registering for email updates"

"There wasn't a very clear log out button"

- Whilst there are obviously a few tweaks to be made, the fact remains that all respondents did manage to register for the customer portal. Whilst respondents did tend to dwell on some minor negative aspects of the concept and process of registering, these were minimal and do not represent a significant barrier to usage.
- For the majority of people, and given that registering will be a one-time event, the registration process is generally fit for purpose.

4.5 Reaction to the Portal home screen:

Having registered, respondents were asked for their opinions on the portal home screen before they moved on to the next task. The home screen is shown below.



Reaction to the portal home screen was mixed, with some feeling it was bland and others that its simplicity was a strong point.

- Older respondents were more critical of the aesthetic of the portal home screen, and felt that it lacked information, detail, and that it was overly utilitarian. This was a common criticism of the portal in general from this age group.

- Younger respondents were more positive about the design, and one felt that it would be easier to use for those that are not very computer literate. They saw the simplicity of the screen as conducive to ease of use.
- The feeling of younger respondents that the simplicity of the home screen would be easy to use for the less computer literate is arguably countered by the criticisms of it by the older respondents, who were in general, less comfortable using the website. However, as only two groups were conducted this cannot be generalised to the wider audience for the portal.
- The lack of instructions was again a problem for some, a common theme throughout the groups. For subsequent tasks involving navigating through various parts of the portal this lack of instruction did become apparent and did impact on the usability of the site in some cases.
- One respondent noted that clicking the PCC logo in the top left took them to the home page of the main PCC website and not the home page of the portal, and that this was counter-intuitive. No others explicitly mentioned that they had this problem however.

"Not really a lot of information on it"

"If you're used to going on a lot of websites, I'd expect it to look a bit better"

"It's a bit stark"

"I thought I was very basic looking"

"I think it needs a few more basic instructions"

"It should match more the original website"

"It's not very friendly"

"For somebody who just wants to change a few details, I'm not bothered what it looks like it can be as basic as it likes so I can get the job done quickly"

"I didn't see anything about help, so if you did get stuck or weren't sure there wasn't anywhere to go".

The three recommended links on the home screen were seen as not used frequently enough to be useful, and more regularly used links could be substituted instead.

- The links immediately available on the home screen ('change of address', 'change in circumstances', and 'my Council Tax and benefits') were felt to be things that would

not be used very often and it may be better to have links to more commonly used services.

- Suggestions included links to specific bits of the information found in the 'forms' and 'about my area' sections of the portal, such as bin collection days or regularly used forms.

"I go on here to find out what day my bins are collected or what colour bin, and that seems to be hidden; the overriding thing is three things I'd only do once in a blue moon"

"You're not going to change address very often so there's no reason for it to be out there at the top"

"It's a portal for what, changing my address?"

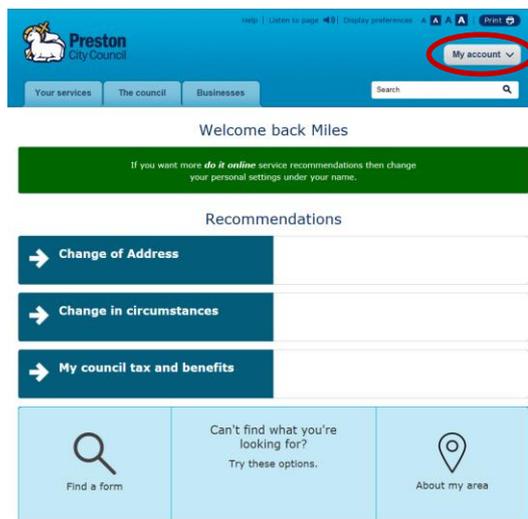
"I'm probably going there for about four reasons so I want the things at the top to be for what I'm probably just about to try and do, like find a form, complete a form, or find my bin"

4.6 Task 4: Changing account details

For their next task, respondents were asked to find their account and change one of their details, such as their postal or email address.

Some respondents found this task initially confusing and had trouble getting to the correct section.

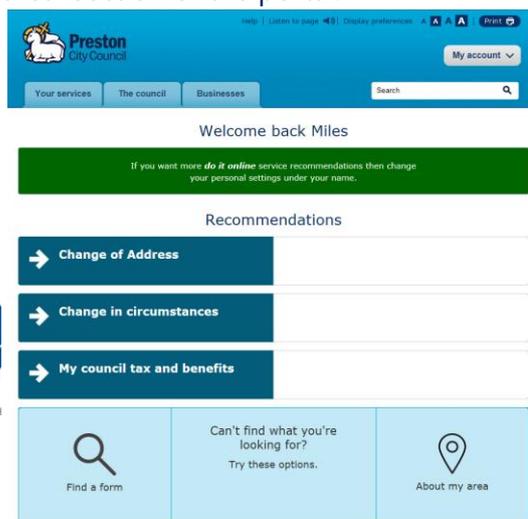
- Some respondents clicked on the prominently displayed 'change my address' link to change their address that is registered with the Council rather than that tied to their portal account. Instead, the correct series of steps was to go to 'my account' (in the top right, highlighted in red in the image) and select 'account settings' from the drop down menu.
- There were also problems with viewing the drop down menu when running the portal in the older version of Internet Explorer, as the green banner floated in front of the menu and obscured the option for 'account settings'. This was not a problem in Google Chrome.
- Once respondents were on the 'account settings' page they found the process of changing details easy; the only difficult part was getting there as this was not intuitive for many.
- One respondent noted that they could not change their name in the 'personal details' section and this was seen by them as a problem if it had been originally filled in incorrectly or if they changed their name. Only this one respondent raised this however.



4.7 Task 5: Finding their bin collection day

For their next task, respondents were asked to find their bin collection day on the portal. This was intended to lead them to the 'about my area' section of the portal.

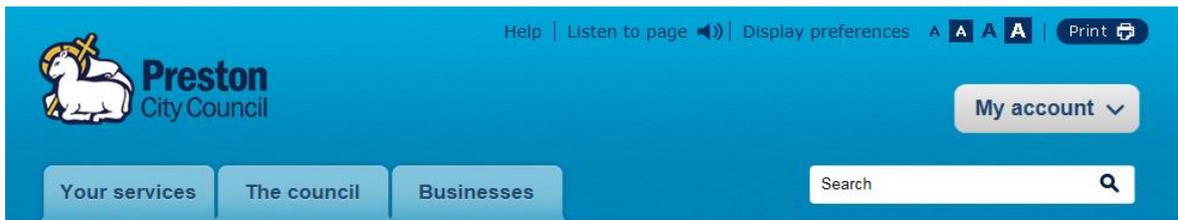
Almost all respondents selected the 'services' tab that took them to the main PCC website rather than the 'about my area' section of the portal.



- The first thing that almost all respondents did to find their bin collection day was to click on the 'services' tab in the top left (highlighted in red). This took them out of the portal and into the main website.
 - What they should have done was to click the 'about my area' button in the bottom right of the home screen (highlighted in green), which would take them to the 'about my area' screen where this information could be found.
 - It is worth noting that although most respondents went the 'wrong way' and clicked the 'your services' tab taking them out of the portal, some did still manage to find their bin collection day through the main site rather than the portal.
 - A small number of respondents searched for 'bins' using the search bar rather than going to the 'about my area' section.
- If the intention is for customers to use the portal to find information such as their bin collection day through the 'about my area' section rather than through the main site, then the positioning of the 'your services' tab is potentially a fundamental flaw in the design of the portal and it takes customers away from it and into the main site.
 - The position of the link to the 'about my area' section at the bottom left of the page is perhaps not prominent enough. Indeed, on screens with low resolution or low height (e.g. laptop screens) the 'about my area' button does not appear without scrolling down the page. If it was higher up, above or below the 'change of address' link for example, then it's possible that more people would have gone there first.
 - In addition, the lack of directions or instructions on the portal, which were a consistent source of complaint in both groups, may have contributed to the difficulty in finding the 'about my area' section.

4.8 Reaction to the 'about my area' section

All respondents were shown how to get to the 'about my area' section of the portal (if they were not able to get there themselves in the previous task) and were then asked to look around the section and click on the various headings.



About my area



Respondents were overall very positive about the 'about my area' section and it was the best received aspect of the portal.

- The information in this section, which was personalised to the account based on postcode, was seen to be a useful and clever addition to the portal. Respondents liked having all the information in one place and bespoke to them.
- The section was seen as highly useful for those who had just moved to a new area as it would give them a lot of useful information. Some felt it was a little less useful for those who had lived in their local area for a long time, but in general at least some of the information there would still be valuable.
- This section was almost universally liked to some extent, although some participants did suggest potential tweaks or improvements, and these included;
 - The ability to change the postcode that the information was based on, so that they could search this section on behalf of someone else
 - The inclusion in this section of information about local events, transport links, community centres, schools, village halls, etc.

"My MPs, councillor, bin collection, that was straightforward, that was laid out well"

"If I were moving into the area and I click on my area it wouldn't tell me any of the things that I would want to know; schools, churches, village halls"

There were a few minor points of criticism however, most of which related to the name of the section.

- In the previous section of this report (4.7) respondents did not automatically go to the 'about my area' section of the site to look for their bin collection, and comments made about the name of the section suggest that that may have been a contributing factor.
- Respondents felt that 'about my area' was not necessarily the best name for the section and that it did not accurately describe the contents. One respondent suggested 'your services' as an alternative.
- One person highlighted that some of the information may not be useful in some circumstances, for example, the nearest doctors might not be the one that people are registered with.

"I wasn't sure what 'my local area' meant"

"Local events, that's what I thought I was going to"

"It's the name 'your area', I don't think I'd have gone to 'your area'"

"It should be called 'your services'"

- This section was well received and only needs a few minor tweaks to make it an excellent addition to the portal. PCC may wish to consider the positioning of the link to this section on the home screen to make it more prominent in the hope that more are drawn to it.

4.9 Task 6: Find a form

Due to time constraints in the focus groups and the longer time that it took one group to work through the tasks, only one group got onto the final task before the focus of the session shifted to the group discussion. The following findings are therefore based on one group only.

Respondents were directed to the 'find a form' section of the portal. Due to the site being in beta this section was not yet fully functional and therefore respondents could not view or fill in forms. They could try out the directory of forms and test the ease of navigation however. The 'find a form' screen is shown below;

Help | Listen to page | Display preferences | Print | My account

Your services | The council | Businesses | Search

Find a form > Letter A

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

Abandoned vehicle report | Abandoned vehicle report Revised

Area Forum - ask a question | ASDA Sporting Chance registration

Assisted refuse/recycling bin collection

My saved forms | Can't find forms you've already started or completed? Try these options. | My completed forms

Sorting the forms by first letter made finding them harder for many respondents.

- Forms were sorted by their first letter and this did not always correspond to the subject of the form. This could make them hard to find and limited the ease of navigation of this section. For example;
 - 'Large wheeled bin request' was sorted under L rather than B for bin or R for request
 - 'New recycling box request form' was sorted under N rather than R for recycling or request.
- Respondents suggested that forms should be sorted under multiple letters. For example, 'large wheeled bin request' would show up under L, B, and R. Others suggested having a keyword search that would bring up all results concerning 'bins' or similar.

"You should just be able to type in bins and it should come up with a list of forms with bins in the title, so a keyword search"

4.10 Potential usage of portal

Following the end of the tasks section of the focus groups, the session shifted to a group discussion about the tasks customers had just done and their potential usage of the portal. Discussion about the tasks has been integrated into the sections of this report that describe them, but findings from the group discussion about potential usage of the portal is presented here.

Potential usage of the portal was low, as customers would only access it on a 'when needed' basis.

- Residents tended to contact the Council only when they needed something, be it information, to complete a form, or to make a complaint. This did not happen very often anyway and so the portal would not be used on a particularly regular basis.
- In addition, for important communication with the Council most residents would still prefer to make contact via telephone, as they perceive that their query will be more likely to be actioned if they have spoken to someone.
- Some respondents pointed out that a lot of the information on the portal, especially in the 'about your area' section, was available on the PCC website without having to register for the portal or could be found easily using Google, and that this reduced the perceived need to register for the portal.

"There isn't a buy in for me to use it; I don't need to use it"

"You register first so you can get in and do this stuff, and ok it takes two minutes to register, but then you might never use it again."

"It would be easier to have it all in one place, but it's no great deal if I don't use the portal"

"Hate to say it I don't think I'd bother, if I wanted to know something really important I'd just ring you up"

"I'm not going to log in just to see if Preston Council have tried to get hold of me"

"If it's just a way to reduce your interactions with your citizens to save labour costs then I have a problem with it"

"Most of the information you can get through the portal you can get through the website without registering"

There was a small minority who would use the portal, and others would if it offered more functionality or improved aesthetics.

- There were a small number of respondents who felt that they would definitely use the portal however, principally because of the perception that it would save them time or effort.
- There was also some interest in using the portal for booking leisure facilities, as the current booking systems were seen as inadequate.
- Criticism of the aesthetic of the portal was a consistent theme in the discussions, despite earlier assertions that ease of navigation was the most important aspect of a website. In particular, the portal was seen as stark and bare, and the addition of more pictures or graphics may make it seem 'friendlier'.

"I would probably use it"

"If you wanted to get something sorted...you might have to wait on the phone for half an hour... just going online is much easier"

"If the leisure stuff was in there, because booking a leisure class is really poor at the moment, it's not very good, it's really hard to do on a mobile as well it always crashes all the time...if leisure was on there as well and I could book things without having to enter my card number every time, I probably would use it"

"It could do to snaffle some stuff off other websites, like bus timetables...they could try and channel stuff from different websites to one place"

"Just a bit basic, needs a few more instructions and a bit better looking"

"It's terribly stark, and horribly Bauhaus and utilitarian; I don't want it to be all frills and fancy and flourish but there's nothing not even lovely trees or a picture of the Harris or something to warm it"

"More aesthetically pleasing"

"A bit more information on why Preston are doing it and what it will do for you"

- The finding that respondents would generally use the portal only on a 'when needed' basis is unsurprising, based on other research conducted by Qa, typical of the usage of the websites for local authorities and indeed most service providers (e.g. housing associations, utilities, etc.).
- It may be expected that the majority of users of the website may only use it a few times a year, and for many the immediacy of telephone contact means that for so few occasions it is not worth registering.
- Preston City Council therefore may wish to look at features that will drive users to the site in addition to functionality and aesthetic improvements. Based on discussions in the focus groups, leisure booking facilities would be one such feature.

5. Conclusions

1. The portal was met with a mix of responses, with some aspects praised (such as the 'about your area' section) and other aspects disparaged (such as the aesthetic). Some issues may have been down to the limited functionality of the portal in beta testing state, and the legacy computers that the test was conducted on may also have had an impact to some degree. Nonetheless, some negative issues would still have been present without these factors and it is clear that, in the eyes of customers at least, some aspects of the portal need to be improved before it is launched.
2. Whilst respondents were quick to criticise certain aspects of the portal, this criticism never went so far as to include a redesign of the site. Indeed, it is likely that small tweaks to some aspects would be sufficient to move the portal from its current state into one that would be far more acceptable to the customers. In this sense, most of the hard work of designing the portal has been done and it is just final polish that is needed.
3. Respondents indicated that overall use of the portal was likely to be low, and this is typical of the usage seen for websites comparable to the PCC portal in other research. There may be strategies to increase usage however, such as the integration of booking facilities into the portal.
4. No respondents spontaneously mentioned that they would use the portal to, or that they communicated with the council to, access benefits (e.g. housing, council tax reduction, etc.). People who do this may communicate with the council on a more regular basis than those who do not and therefore may be regular users of the portal if they were transitioned to it. Following final tweaks to the portal, it may be worth conducting research specifically with groups that are identified as regular communicators with the council to explore the ease of transitioning them to the site.

6. Appendix

Preston City Council website usage focus groups – November 2015

This script provides a guide for the focus group and wherever possible the moderator will seek to keep questions in order. However, feedback from the audience may require them to adjust the nature of the questions and the sequence of questioning.

Section 1 Introduction (5 mins)

Thank you for coming along to this group discussion today/tonight, my name is I work for a company called Qa Research - an independent research company and we've been asked to complete this research on behalf of Preston City Council.

Moderator to go through focus group instructions...

- *Has anyone been to a focus group before? Explain what focus groups are.*
- *Housekeeping (toilets and fire exits)*
- *Incentives*
- *Refreshments*
- *Confidentiality*
- *There are no right or wrong answers we just want to hear what people think*
- *Please respect each other's opinions even if you do not agree with them*
- *Please do not talk over each other – but feel free to make comments or opinions in response to each other's points*
- *Last no more than 75 minutes*
- *You are free to leave at any time although we hope you'll be able to stay until the end*
- *I'd like to record this so I don't have to scribble down notes – any objections? Only I will hear it back, please ignore it!*

Warm up question: please can we go round the group and introduce ourselves giving your name, who you live with and hobbies/interests?

Section 2 Warm up; your usage of IT (5 mins)

- Just as warm up, what main things do you tend to use the internet for?
 - How would you each describe your usage of the internet?
 - 'Strong' users, 'moderate' users, just email/social media?
- How do you tend to access the internet – PC, laptop, mobile, etc
- What would you say is a good website that you visit – and why?
- How often do you currently visit the Preston Council website? – if at all?
 - If not, why not?
 - What do you like/not like about it?

Section 3 IT section

(35mins)

- Introduction to IT section

Tasks:

Registering/signing in

- Is sign up process clear and easy to understand?
- Is it clear what you are registering for?
- How do you feel about having to register?
 - [probe to see if this may be a barrier to use]

Homepage

- What do you think the Home Screen is about?
- What do they expect to be able to do there?
- From the homepage can you find your account and change a detail e.g. email or address?
 - [Observe very closely here, try to note steps taken]

Carry out a few tasks

- Find your bin collection day (participant should end up here)
- Report that your bin hasn't been collected
- Find your nearest doctors
 - [Observe very closely for each, try to note steps taken]

About my area

- What do you think about this area?
- Is this information useful

Find a form

- [Links won't work] How easy is it to find the forms you are looking for?

Group discussion section:

Section 4 Initial Reaction to the customer portal

(10 mins)

- What are your initial impression to the overall feel and look of the customer portal? Why is this?
 - [PROMPTS: Positive? Negative? Like it? Don't like it? Colours, font, layout?]
- What aspects of the site did you like most / least? Why is this?
 - Navigation

- Terms / descriptions used
- Layout
- What, if any, impact has the website and customer portal had upon your impressions of Preston City Council?
 - [PROMPTS: Positive or negative? More or less likely to visit?]
- Does it improve your impression, as you expected from Preston CC or better than you expected?
 - [may be general negative towards Council, so need to get perspective]
- How does it compare with other customer accounts you use e.g. banking or Amazon – better, worse the same?

Section 5 Feedback on tasks

(10 mins)

For each task ask...

- How easy/hard did you find this task?
 - Were there any aspects that particularly contributed to it being easy/difficult?
- Do you feel that you would be happy doing this online or you prefer other comms methods?
- What would encourage you to do this task online in the future?

Section 6 Potential usage of the customer portal

(10 mins)

READ OUT BACKGROUND; *PCC are trying to have a place where customers' information is held and used each time so that they don't have to keep supplying the same information e.g. address, name, Council Tax account number.*

To begin, they'll just be Council Tax information and neighbourhood information available here, but the plan is to introduce appointment booking, leisure bookings and reporting street cleaning issues. We'd like to know if participants think these are the right services, are there others, etc.

- Thinking about tasks you've done today and your first impressions of the customer portal, do you think that it is something you would use in future?
 - [PROMPTS: Yes/No? Frequency of use?]
- How likely are you to use to the customer portal for carrying out tasks such as setting up a direct debit, rather than ringing up or calling in?
 - [PROMPTS: If not, why not? What would encourage you to do so?]

- Are there any features that would encourage you to use the PCC website or customer portal more often?
- Are there other services participants would expect to see here?
 - [PROMPTS] PCC thinking of introducing reporting a dirty street, booking a pest control appointment and making a leisure booking.
- What would you do to encourage people like yourself to use the PCC website more often for tasks such as these?
- How does the PCC website and customer portal compare with other websites you use for services and information?
- Are there things that PCC could learn from other websites and customer accounts?
- How likely are you to access the customer portal from a mobile device?

Section 6 Summary

(5 mins)

- What is your overall opinion of the customer portal that we've discussed?
- Three key improvements to make the customer portal more interesting/appealing
- Three things that you really liked
- Do you have any further comments to make in relation to the customer portal?
- Before you go can I just ask what you thought about the session? How could we improve in the future?

**Thank you for help with this research your time and opinions are very much valued
by Preston City Council and Qa Research.**