Notice of Marriage Case Study

Summary

467
Notice of Marriage appointments booked between April and December 2019.

56%
of Notice of Marriage appointments were booked online in 8 months.

38%
of Notice of Marriage appointments were booked online within its first full month live.

Merton's Challenge

With a growing and diverse population of over 200,000[1], Merton Council have consistently set out to innovate their existing processes to best deliver services to their local residents. With services from library book renewals and council tax payment already available on the existing council website, Merton's registration service set out to modernise their own booking processes to meet the growing demand for digital services in the service area.

To achieve their objectives the service would require a user-friendly booking system that worked in tandem with a highly functional electronic diary system. This would provide residents with quick and simple booking journeys for a number of appointment/ceremony types, while completed bookings would automatically update localised office diaries for registrars. This would aim to:

- Facilitate channel shift to online booking
- Increase accessibility to services
- Reduce interaction costs [2]
- Minimise pressure on reception staff
- Increase customer satisfaction through shorter phone queues
- Streamline booking processes

Stopford's Solution

Benefiting from its adaptable framework, Merton Council chose Stopford's agenda for registrars appointment booking system. Working alongside the Stopford team, Merton's registration service was able to condense celebrants notice of marriage journeys into a few quick and easy to follow steps online. Complete with a combination of multiple choice options, open answer sections and date finding functionality, Merton's registration service would be able to tailor their processes to their users needs and requirements.

Including modules enabling payment and communications, Merton Council made clear their intention to improve their service delivery for foreign nationals and those who had divorced abroad during the drafting stage. In order to do this, the system would need to support applicants by providing additional information, requesting verification documents and making additional fees clear based on residents individual situations. Through features like these, those hoping to provide notice of marriage would be able to prepare in advance for their appointment, streamlining the process and optimising service delivery.
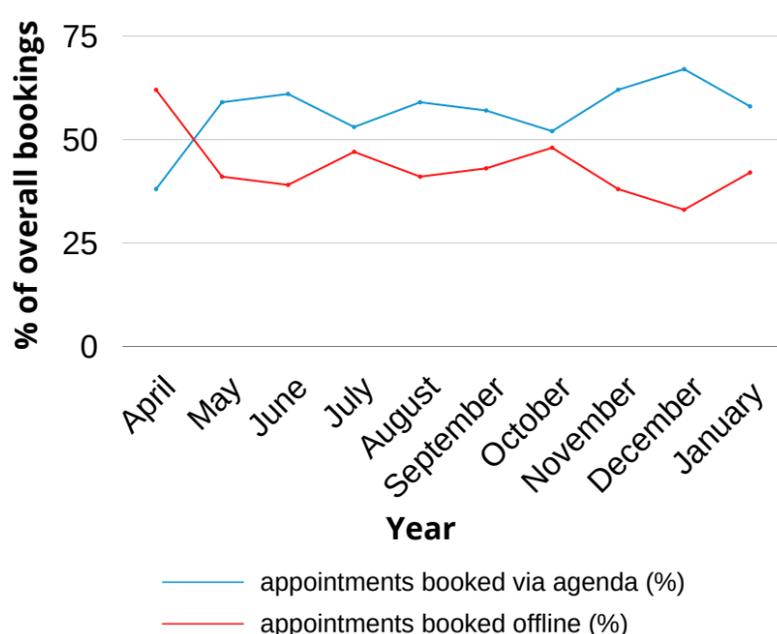
The Impact

From the system's first full month of operation in April 2019, 467 notice of marriage appointments had been booked online as of the 1st January 2020, accounting for 56% of all notice of marriage bookings within the London Borough of Merton.

This is a promising sign from the newly implemented system, with agenda's first full month live contributing to almost 40% of notice of marriage bookings received. Since then online booking for this appointment type has become popular amongst couples taking their first step toward marriage, with agenda contributing to over 50% of all notice of marriage bookings month-on-month since, reaching its peak in December where 2 in 3 appointments (67%) were were booked online.

The channel shift to digital has presented Merton with a variety of benefits during its short tenure, with substantial long-term cost savings based on a reduction of telephone and face-to-face interactions. Following a promising early performance, agenda's implementation acts as a starting point for long term cost reduction for years to come.

Notice of Marriage appointments booked online (%)

Line chart. Y-axis: % of overall bookings (0 to 75). X-axis: Year (April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December, January). Legend: appointments booked via agenda (%); appointments booked offline (%).

Sources

[1] Merton Council, Merton: Meet The People, 2014.
https://www.merton.gov.uk/healthy-living/publichealth/jsna/merton-the-place-and-the-people/merton-the-place-and-the-people

[2] GOV.UK, Digital Efficiency Report, 2012. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-efficiency-report/digital-efficiency-report

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