

# Taxi licensing applications discovery - fixing complexity, inefficiency and risk

User research report, recommendations and summary

Friday 29th March 2019

In collaboration with:



Funded by:



# Introduction

Gateshead, Northumberland and Sunderland Councils ran a collaborative discovery phase with Orange Bus to explore Taxi Licensing services.

The discovery phase was funded by the Local Digital Fund and aimed to understand if there is a need for a digital service, and if so how to move the service forward.

This document summarises the research findings and recommendations to progress beyond the discovery.

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# One page summary

## Is there a need for a digital service?

Yes, there is a need for a partially digital service.

**Applicants** would receive an improved experience with reduced waiting times and less duplicated or unnecessary effort.

**Licensing staff** would gain greater job satisfaction as they receive fewer unnecessary enquiries and follow an efficient process. This would free up their time to focus more proactively on public safety.

## Main pain points of the service today

1. Time that the overall application process takes
2. Limited resources available to support the service
3. Requirement for multiple face-to-face meetings
4. Complex language makes self-serve difficult
5. Making payments causes additional delays and frustrations

## Is there appetite for a digital service?

Yes. There is a desire for a simple and efficient digital process from all user groups (licensing team, taxi drivers and operators).

## Long-term ambition

We aspire to create hassle-free, efficient and open solutions which release resources to be proactive about public safety on a national level.

## Vision for the service

We want Taxi Licensing to be seen most as:

- proactive in protecting the public
- robust and authoritative to enforce safety
- consistent across touchpoints and local authorities
- accessible to all

## Challenges

- Standardisation across local authorities
- Digital inclusion
- Internal culture change
- Applicants and third party influence on timeframes
- Infrastructure, technology and resources required

## How to move forward with the service

A second, more focused discovery will explore the new driver application process. This would look at the feasibility of digitising the service. Providing this discovery is a success, an alpha phase would experiment with standardising the service on a small scale.

# Objectives and scope for Discovery

Discovery began with all three local authorities gathering to establish the research objectives, project scope and purpose statement. This aligned everyone's understanding and expectations.

**The purpose** of the Taxi Licensing project

**Is to provide** a digital, standardised application process

**For** all applicants

**That is** accessible, lawful, efficient and scalable

**So that** we continue protecting the public so they can travel safely.

## Objectives

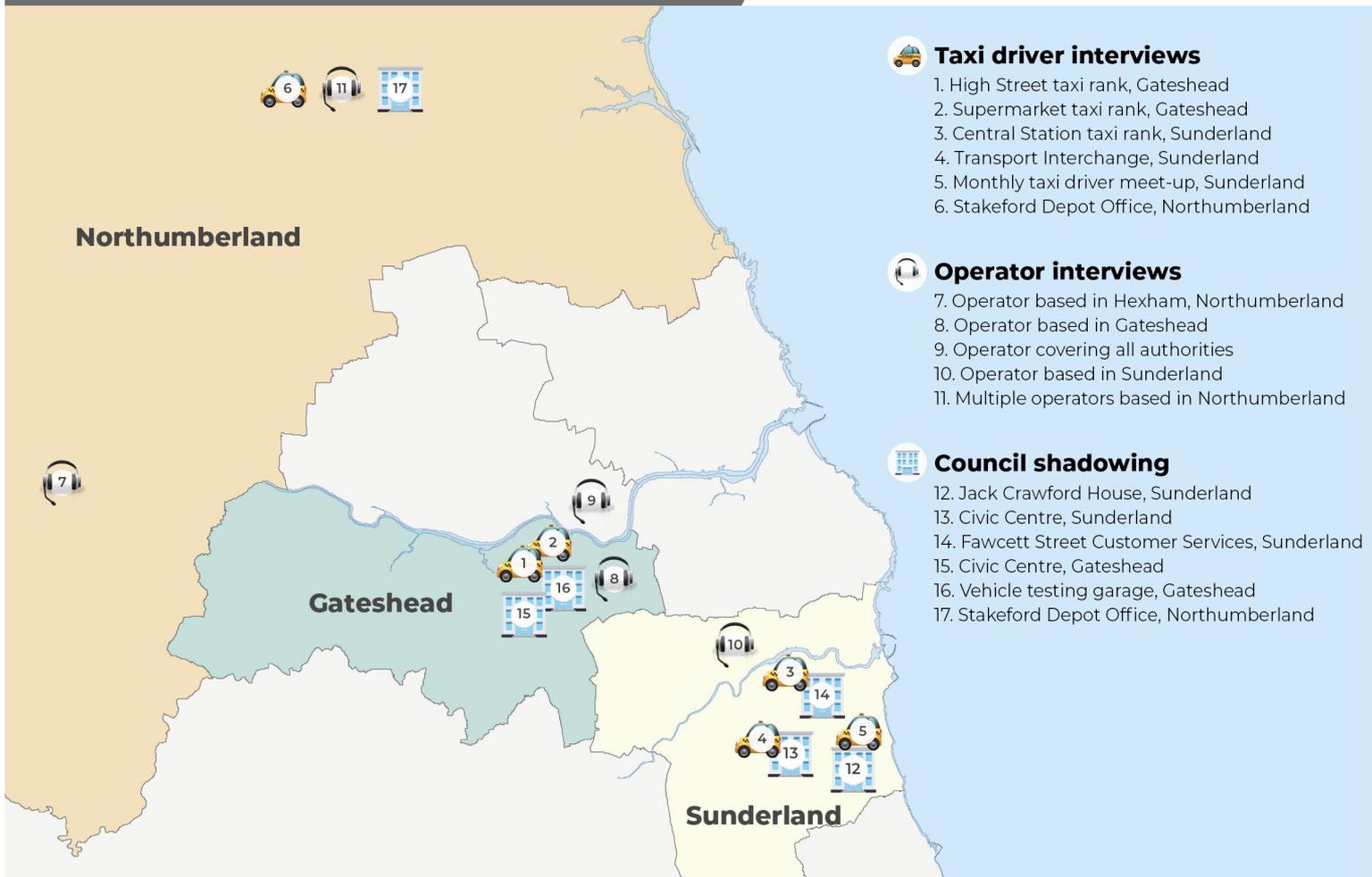
- Understand business and policy requirements and constraints
- Establish initial user needs
- Identify opportunities and potential benefits

## Project Scope

- Identify the pain points in the user journeys
- Find a common solution for all three local authorities
- Understand the potential national impact



# Discovery took us to



# Who we spoke to

## **Applicants**

### **34 Taxi drivers**

- 50% split of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire.
- 32 males, 2 females
- Years within industry: 1 - 40+ years

### **6 Taxi Operators**

- 2 operators for each local authority

## **Survey**

### **98 Local Authorities**

- Completed the Local Authority survey

### **532 taxi users**

- Completed the Taxi User survey open to the general public

## **Council employees**

**11 Licensing officers** (including Licensing assistants) Across the three local authorities

### **9 Digital transformation team members**

Across the three local authorities

Job roles and responsibilities varied between the local authorities. We spoke to the relevant employees when necessary, including:

- Customer services
- Business administrators
- Council mechanics

# Discovery Research

[Download the discovery research poster \(pdf\)](#)

The Discovery research began with a Kick-off Workshop mid-January 2019 and ran until mid-March 2019.

Research activities included:

- shadowing staff from participating Councils to understand and see first-hand how taxi licence applications are processed
- focus groups
- interviews with taxi operators and drivers to understand their motivators, attitudes and barriers with the application process
- collaborative design and service scope workshops with the participating Councils





**What the service  
looks like today**

# The service today

Across all three councils the current taxi licensing services are heavily paper-based. They rely on multiple points of face-to-face contact.

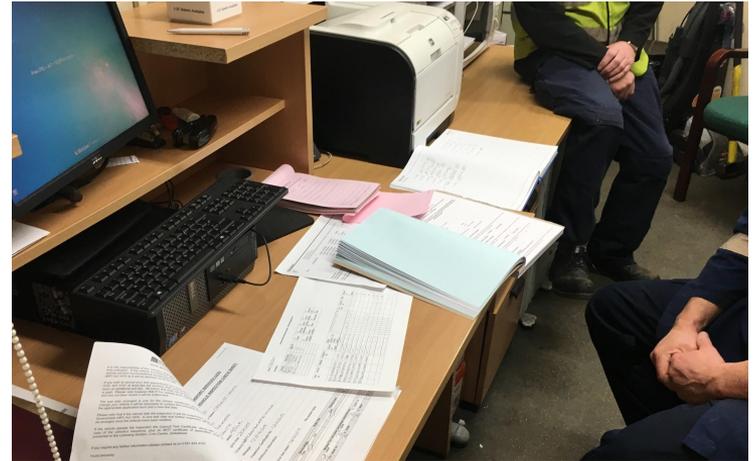
Most of the service steps are consistent across all three councils, with the exception of the Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) course.

However, each council's processes, policies and order of activities differ. They also use different systems and staff roles to support the service. Each council is also at a different stage of digital transformation and adoption.

This presents a great challenge to standardising the service nationally.

A previous workshop\* in 2016 looked at the use of GOV.UK Verify. This confirmed that these differences are likely to be replicated on a national scale.

- Taxi Licensing service is a cost neutral service and therefore each application fee varies per authority depending on the total cost of the licensing service. For example, the average national cost of a new driver licence is **£280** but this varies from £66 to up to £591.
- Approximately **68%** of authorities currently operate using only paper-based processes, with only **8%** fully digital.



\*[www.localdigitalcoalition.uk/resource/july-2016-discovery-findings-for-transforming-local-authority-taxi-licensing-services-using-gov-uk-verify/](http://www.localdigitalcoalition.uk/resource/july-2016-discovery-findings-for-transforming-local-authority-taxi-licensing-services-using-gov-uk-verify/)

# The service today

Taxi drivers perceive the current service as not good value for money. There is also disparity between the taxi drivers' and operators' expectations, and the council's responsibilities.

## Common pain points of the current experience

1. **Time** – This was the biggest pain point for both council staff and users. The licensing process and dealing with enquiries is a lengthy process. Operators reported applicants often find a different job because of the long wait.

The external Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) process, which councils can't influence, has the biggest impact on timescales.

2. **Limited resources** – Some service delays are caused by a lack of council resources, including MOT testing slots, meeting room availability, and CSE courses.

3. **Requirement for physical meetings** – The number of face-to-face meetings causes frustration, especially for users who have to travel long distances in rural locations.

Service users in urban locations often have to travel between multiple council locations to complete different tasks.

4. **Complex language** – Complex language makes it difficult to self-serve for certain tasks online. For example, finding the correct application form or sourcing information. Applicants can misinterpret vital details. They often complete incorrect forms because the online information is out of date. They are then further irritated by being told to repeat tasks.

5. **Payment** – All council services use a centralised cashier, one council supports payment direct to their licensing department, via card transactions. Payment is seen as a hassle, as users who need to see a cashier have to wait, causing additional delays to in-person appointments, or travel to another location when their preferred payment method isn't available.

# Key themes of the service today

The user research found key themes in the experience of applying for a taxi licence, vehicle licence, and the overall perception of the service.

## **Digital appetite**

There's a desire for a simple and efficient digital process from everyone involved. Each user group described a clear benefit to themselves, and in some instances, how they believed it would benefit the wider audience. Digital literacy of drivers varies. Some will need support if they struggle with technology or have limited access to the web.

## **Perceived unfairness within the service**

Perceived unfairness generates a lack of confidence in the service amongst applicants. Existing applicants often hear information second-hand fuelling rumours of unfairness, such as larger operators receiving preferential treatment.

Applicants are also sceptical about how licensing fees are spent and question the effectiveness of the current safety procedures they pay for – highlighting how they believed the DBS check was redundant as it isn't updated throughout the year.

## **Lack of confidence in the systems and process**

Internally, there is a lack of confidence in the processes which support the service, leading to multiple handoffs, double checking and additional steps for the applicant such as proof that they have picked up a licence.

## **Responsibilities**

Applicants are expected to complete the process independently, although some operators offer support to those who need it. Operators shared how they believe it is the Council's responsibility to screen applicants, ensuring they're 'fit and proper' to become taxi drivers.

It's apparent that each council distributes tasks and responsibilities differently among their staff. This needs to be addressed going forward to achieve a standardised process.



# Other themes we identified

[Download the research poster](#) (pdf)

## **Communications**

Applicants want better communication with the Councils and improved customer service.

## **Costs**

Applicants are confused around licence fees and types of licence, how to pay and when.

## **Council's appetite for change**

Council employees want a reliable system they can trust and a reduction of paper-based processes.

## **DBS**

There are inconsistencies with the DBS process and who is involved. The process can be very lengthy. Repeating it annually can be a pain point.

## **Duplication of effort**

Multiple reviews and checks of applicants can slow down the process, leaving it vulnerable to human error. The duplication of data in forms frustrates applicants.

## **Frustrations with vehicle licencing**

The process for applicants consumes time and resources unnecessarily; it is long-winded, involves repeatedly providing the same information each year and is unclear.

## **Safety**

Drivers often shifted focus to their own safety concerns. Only two out of three councils provide CSE training. They were prompted by a national incident.

## **Service is not value for money**

Service expectations vary between council staff and applicants. Independent drivers shared frustrations with how the cost of living has increased but not every council has raised the price of fares.

## **Standardisation**

Multiple parts need standardising to create a uniformed solution. These include stages in the process, requirements from applicants, employee responsibilities, and rules and regulations.

# Existing user journeys

The service across all 3 councils is lengthy, complex and inconsistent. To move forward, we used 'moments that matter' on both the taxi driver and vehicle licensing journeys. This helped to pinpoint the areas impacting the user experience most.

## Driver licence moments that matter

1. First contact with the council
2. Receiving application pack
3. Completing knowledge test and getting results
4. Attending CSE course

## Vehicle licence moments that matter

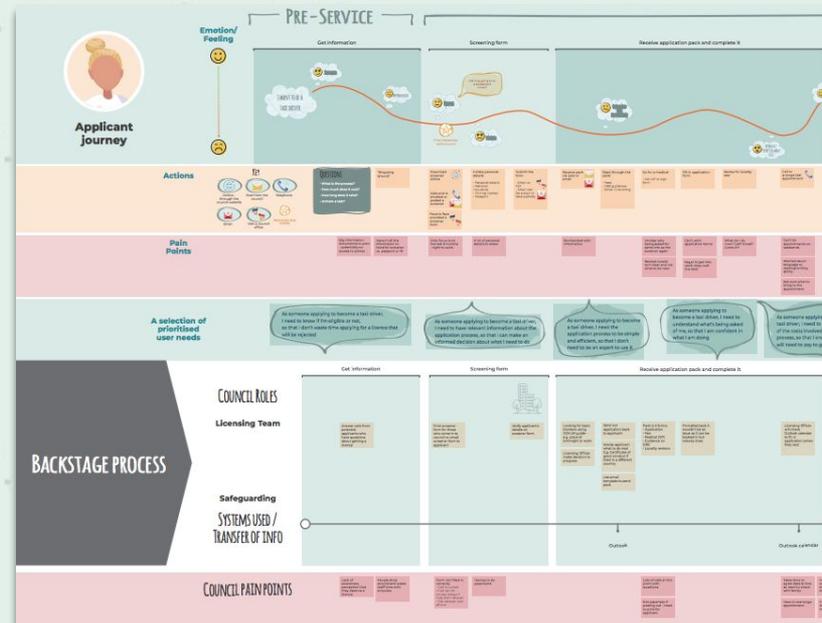
1. First contact with the council
2. Completing vehicle licence forms
3. Booking vehicle test
4. Vehicle test
5. Receiving licence from council

## Process maps

Gateshead Council also produced four process maps for driver and vehicle licensing, helping support our 'moments that matter' discussions.

[Skip to user journey maps for all 3 Councils](#)

[Skip to Gateshead process maps](#)



# User needs

Understanding user needs is vital to delivering services that people want to use. Needs can be practical and functional tasks. They can also include emotional factors such as needing more confidence and reassurance.

You can achieve a quality service with greater uptake and fewer inaccuracies by designing and delivering a service that:

- meets practical and emotional user needs
- Supports business goals

## User groups

Following our first-hand user research, we created user needs from the identified themes for both driver and vehicle licence processes. We categorised them into three user groups:

- **someone applying for a licence** (applicant),
- **operator**
- **Council licensing team**

Downloads

[All user needs from discovery](#) (pdf)

[User needs and moments that matter](#) (pdf)



# User needs

The initial user needs identified in this Discovery phase were created after the analysis and theming of the research findings, using insights directly from someone applying for a driver licence (or vehicle licence) operators, who are applying for a licence or supporting a potential taxi driver and council licensing staff.

All the user needs created in Discovery are documented in the [‘Initial user needs’](#) (pdf) document, categorised into three groups:

- **Prioritised user needs** - that were identified as important for any service improvement.
- **Additional user needs** - to also consider when designing and developing the service.
- **Potential user needs** - that require further investigation to be validated and refined.

## Going forward

These user needs should be revisited throughout the design and development of the service, to make sure the service reflects the users’ true needs. Any further identified user needs should be validated with user research and added to the spreadsheet.

**As someone applying to become a taxi driver,** I need to know the timelines involved, so that I know when I can start work.

**As a taxi operator,** I need to understand the total of costs involved in the various licensing processes, so that I know how much I will need to pay to licence drivers and vehicles

**As the council licensing team,** we need to be clear on the rationale behind application decisions, so that we can be confident in accepting or rejecting applications.

# Survey results

[View Taxi User Survey Results](#)

[View Local Authority Survey Results](#)

## Local authority survey

### Objectives

- gather a national picture of taxi licensing processes
- help gather statistics on service delivery nationally
- find out if there is an appetite for end to end digital application processes
- understand how users currently engage with authorities
- help understand how local authorities may be able to build better taxi licensing services in the future
- broaden our awareness, gain insights and open engagement with authorities facing similar issues



98 local authorities completed our survey, looking after a total of 18.5million residents



11 different systems are used by the local authorities surveyed to deliver taxi licensing services



Processing a new driver application takes 6 weeks on average. Results ranged between 1 week and 17 weeks



On average, local authorities have 4.3 licensing staff delivering their taxi licence service



68% of authorities have a fully paper based service for processing taxi licence applications

\*All statistics on this slide are based on answers provided from 98 local authorities and are not representative of a national picture.

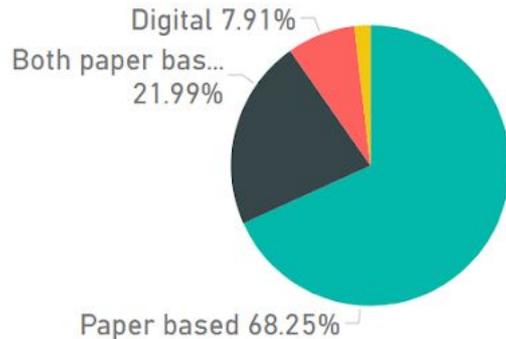
# Survey results

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## Local authority survey

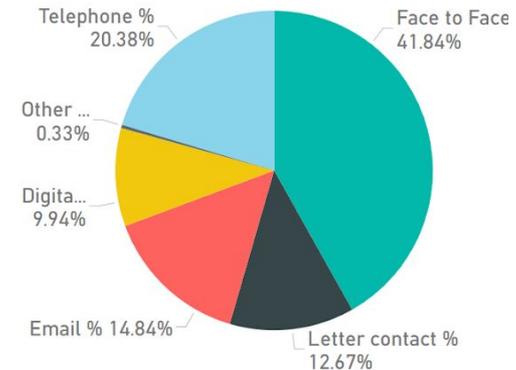
### How licences are processed

Survey results confirmed our assumptions. Most authorities operate paper-based application processes, with **68%** of 98 authorities surveyed, only using paper-based processes. Only **8%** of authorities surveyed offer digital application processes. A mix of paper-based and digital is offered by **22%**.



### Contact channels

We wanted to find out how applicants currently contact their council to apply for a taxi licence. This allows us to consider the effects of any channel shift in the future. Currently, applicants 'prefer' contacting authorities in **person** or by **telephone**. Only approximately **10%** currently contact their council through a digital channel.



# Survey results

## Local authority survey - Licensed drivers

Applicants tend to visit a council office up to **3** times throughout the application process. In some cases however, applicants attend council offices on 8 separate occasions. Some authorities streamlined their processes so an applicant only has to make one face to face visit throughout the licence application process.

Each council processes on average **427** renewal driver licence applications per annum. Some authorities range from 100 renewal application to a staggering 5500 renewal applications per annum.

On average it takes **6** weeks to process a new driver application. The shortest amount of time to process an application is 1 week and the longest is 17 weeks.

On average each council receives **88** new driver applications per annum. This ranges nationally from 2 to 742 new applications.

A new driver application costs applicants on average **£280**, but this varies from £66 to up to £591.

It's worth noting the taxi licensing service is a cost neutral service. Therefore each application fee varies per authority depending on the total cost of the licensing service.

\*All statistics provided on this slide are based on answers provided from 98 local authorities and are not representative of a national picture.

\*\* These statistics do not include any dual licences. This is something we would like to measure potentially in a future discovery project.

# Survey results

## Local authority survey

### Operator licences

Each council has an average of **50** operator licences on record. Some authorities licence as few as 3 operators, with others licencing as many as 314.

It takes an average of **2 weeks** to process an operator licence. Processing time takes between 1 week and 8 weeks depending on authority.

On average authorities process **7** new operator licences per annum. Figures differ between authorities processing 1 licence per year up to 43 operator licence per annum.

\*All statistic and quotes on this slide are based on answers provided from 98 local authorities. They are not representative of a national picture.

### Vehicle licences

Local authorities hold an average of **680** licensed vehicles on record. This number ranges from 114 to 4892 vehicle licences held across 98 authorities.

On average authorities process **139** new vehicle licences per annum. Our results show authorities can process between 10 and 750 new vehicle licences per year.

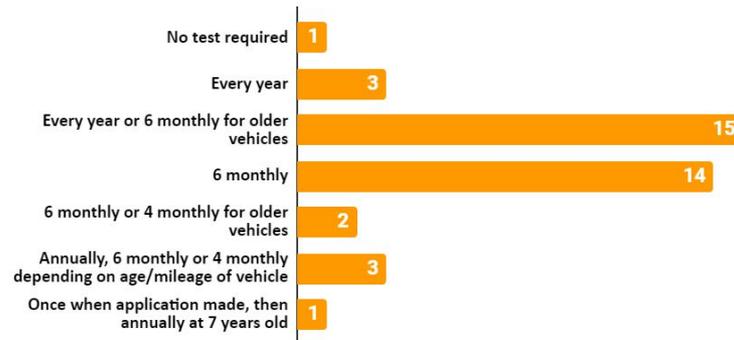
Councils process **594** renewal vehicle licence applications per year. Across our responses the minimum renewal number of vehicle licences was 94. The maximum number was 4200.

It takes, on average, **2** weeks to process a new vehicle licence.

We asked:  
***'How often do you require taxi vehicles to have a test/retest?'***

Out of 39 responses the majority of councils test taxi vehicles **every year or 6 months for older vehicles.**

### Vehicle testing



# Survey results

## Local authority survey quotes

### Digital appetite

**55.24%** of the 98 authorities who completed our survey would adopt a full digital service.

However, we believe **this number could be higher**. Comments from this question suggested that those who selected 'no' did so because they believed some aspects of the service could never be 100% digital.

**31** authorities showed interest in being kept up to date with findings from the project.

"It's not something we have considered so would need to be convinced. 'Maybe' would have been a better option."

"We will be looking to do this in due course."

"We would want to use the same licensing software to issue all licences. We are not interested in a stand alone module for taxis."

"We have MOT bookings online, and are shortly to go digital for all applications."

"We do not like our work being at the mercy of an electricity surge or our staff to be a risk of too much screen time."

"Must consider how any new end to end solution fits in with our existing back office."

"The process we have in place currently works for us and the trade"

"I am interested in your project. Good luck! .... I may be able to share more info with you, which may help."

"Not end to end. As part of the process some face to face contact is required to ensure fitness, identity etc. and at present we believe that is best done personally."

# Survey results

## Taxi user survey

An initial purpose statement, agreed by the three local authorities, focused on the safety of the taxi user. Therefore, it was important for us to collect information from taxi users to understand what safety means to them and how the licensing process affects them, even though they aren't directly involved in the process.

## Objectives

- help understand how taxi services are used
- help understand what safety means to taxi users
- help understand how we might build a better taxi licensing service in the future
- broaden our awareness and open engagement with the public

The results provide an insight into what taxi users believe to be important to them with regards to safety, such as being able to clearly see taxi licence plates and driver's badges, and how they react to situations when the licensing process has failed and they feel unsafe when travelling. **However, to gain more a more detailed understanding on specific responses further discovery would be required to follow up with respondents.**



532

532 people completed our taxi user survey. We received responses from a cross section of users across the North East of England.



11

11% of respondents have reported a taxi driver



83

83% of users normally travel in the evening



21

21% of users have experienced feeling unsafe when using a taxi



52

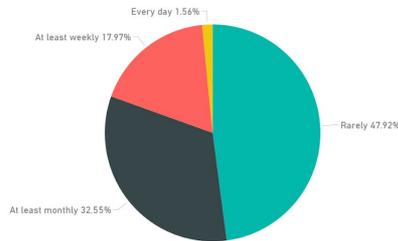
52% of users travel in taxis at least once a month if not weekly or daily.

# Survey results

## Taxi user survey

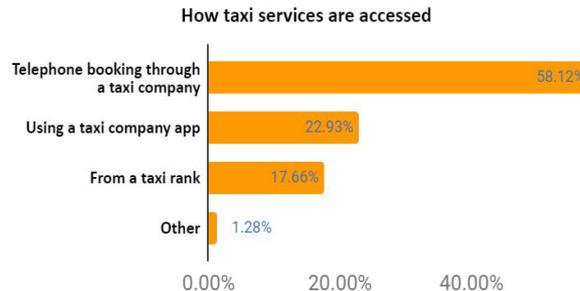
### How often do you use taxis?

Of 526 users, 252 people rarely use taxis, 171 use taxis at least once a month, 95 use taxis weekly and 8 use taxis everyday.



### How are taxi services accessed?

Of 492 respondents, 81% prefer booking a taxi through an operator via the telephone or a taxi company app.



**37%** of 496 people travel alone in a taxi

**39%** of people surveyed expect taxi drivers to know facts about tourism in the area

### Why do people use taxis?

- 29% when consuming alcohol
- 22% going to/from social events
- 20% airport journey
- 10% appointments
- 6% shopping
- 4% work
- 9% other (ad hoc occasions)

We asked: **'How often do you use taxis? If never, please tell us why.'**

"Do not trust them."

"Buses are easier and cheaper to get."

"I no longer feel safe getting taxis."

"I walk, cycle or use public transport or my own vehicle."

"No need."

"Not safe."

"There are not taxis to use in our area, nearest are in Alnwick so if you need to go short distances it's difficult to get taxis."

# Survey results

## Taxi user survey

### What reassures users that drivers are licensed?

- **37%** of users feel more assured when a driver has licence plates clearly attached on their vehicle (19% Female, 18% Male & <1% gender not disclosed)
- **24%** feel more assured when receiving confirmation of their driver & vehicle from an operator (18% Female, 6% Male & 0% gender not disclosed)
- **22%** are assured when they know the taxi driver works for a taxi company (12% Female, 9% Male & 1% gender not disclosed)
- **17%** of users feel more assured when a driver clearly displays their ID badge (6% Female, 11% Male & 0% gender not disclosed)

### We asked users to rank what the most important thing is to them when travelling in a taxi?

1. The driver is licensed and fully DBS checked (53%) (30% Female, 23% Male & <1% gender not disclosed);
2. The vehicle is driven safely and keeps to speed limits (37%) (18% Female, 18% Male & 1% gender not disclosed);
3. The driver speaks English (5%) (2% Female, 3% Male & 1% gender not disclosed);
4. The driver has good knowledge of the area (3%) (1% Female, 2% Male & 1% gender not disclosed);
5. The driver has good personal appearance (1%)
6. The vehicle has CCTV (1%)

# Survey results

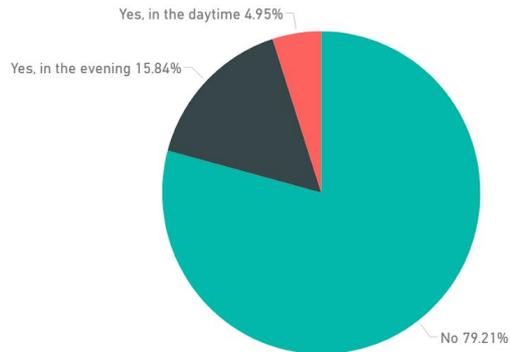
## Taxi user survey

### Public safety

We asked users 'Have you ever felt unsafe when travelling in a taxi?'

**21%** (15% Female & 6% Male) of users experienced feeling unsafe when travelling in a taxi.

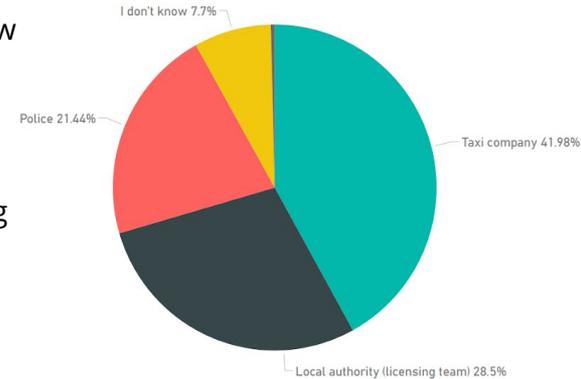
**16%** (12% Female & 4% Male) said they experienced feeling unsafe in the evening.



**7.7%** of users said they did not know who to contact if they needed to report a taxi driver.

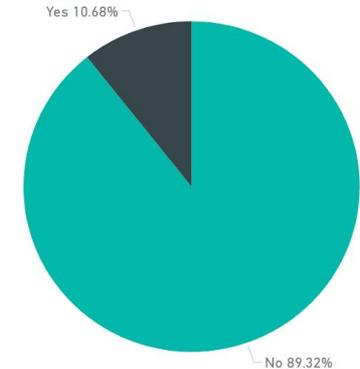
21% would contact the Police. 29% would contact the council's licensing team.

42% would go direct to the taxi company.



**11%** of users in our survey have reported a taxi driver. The main reasons for complaints are:

- the drivers behaviour towards a passenger
- dangerous driving
- vehicle breakdowns
- language barriers



# Survey results

## Taxi user survey

### Public safety

***'Please tell us why you felt unsafe and what, if any, actions you took after that?'***

"Bad driving, didn't use again"

"When travelling alone"

"Driver made me feel uncomfortable by starting a conversation about sex, I shut the conversation down. No action taken."

"Using a rank cab. Booked after that."

"Although I sometimes need to use taxis I try to avoid it unless absolutely necessary as I feel vulnerable in a car with another person that I know nothing about"

"Drivers were not aware of the routes to take and therefore made what I consider to be dangerous manoeuvres to get back on track"

"Only on one occasion, the driver used his mobile phone whilst driving."

"Poor driving, he struck pedestrian whilst he was crossing the road because driver drove through red light"

"I should have reported taxi driver but at the time didn't know how to."

"The standard of driving was appalling, drove too fast and pulling out in front of other vehicles"

"Don't know who the driver is."

"I dropped my mobile phone as I got into the taxi. The driver picked it up and put it in his pocket - saying he would give me it back once he received his fare. I paid my fare but he would not return my phone. He said I had to perform oral sex on him to get it back. I got out without my phone and rang the police. I didn't get his badge number as I was so shaken up so he got away with my phone and his perversion."

"Taxi kept breaking down on way home"



"Not driving safely or to speed limits. Not knowing where they're going. Various bangs and rattles coming from car."

"Language barrier"

"The driver could not speak English and did not know where my address was"

"The door locked when the car started moving"

"Will only ever use an app where taxi is tracked"



**Service  
vision**

# Our long term ambition for taxi licensing

We aspire to create **hassle-free, efficient** and **open** solutions which release resources to be proactive about public safety on a national level.

# Service scope workshop

This workshop was a collaboration between all three councils. It explored potential ideas to meet user needs at key moments within both the taxi licensing and vehicle licensing journeys. It also highlighted potential constraints and barriers to change.



# Our vision for Taxi Licensing – part 1

This is an agreed, collective vision for a future service. It captures what taxi licensing should be known for, using a set of service vision terms. During the workshop we discussed the nuance of certain terms, and notes from this discussion are included here.

## Best in class

Not important because the service should be standardised.

Less well known for...

### Value for money

It costs what it costs.

### Human

Only important for users who can't use digital.

### Customer oriented

Reluctance to have customers (drivers) see Council staff as "on their side".

### Friendly

Desirable but not essential.

Taxi Licensing should be known for...

### Conservative

### Innovative

Interpreted as doing something completely new rather than improving existing process.

### Efficient

(term added by the Councils)

Drivers pay for the service – let's not waste their time.

## Leading the way

Not important because the service should be standardised.



[Skip to a photo of the full diagram from the workshop](#)

# Our vision for Taxi Licensing - part 2

The labels 'National' and 'Local' were disregarded, as the Councils had different perspectives on what the terms meant for this project.

Taxi Licensing  
should be  
known for...

## Wise

Officers understand drivers needs and Council rules.

## Authoritative

Officers want drivers to respect their decisions, not just those of committees.

## Proactive

## Simplicity (term added by the Councils)

Avoiding unnecessary duplication or complexity.

## Digital first

Reducing paper trail is vital to improving service.

## Consistent

Drivers are told the same thing by every officer at every location.

## Accessible

Service easily accessible to non-digital users.

## Approachable

Drivers feel comfortable discussing their needs or issues with officers.

## Protecting public (term added by the Councils)

Passengers' safety is important to both the Council and drivers.

## Robust/Resilient (term added by the Councils)

More well known for...

# Prioritised ideas from the workshop

## **1. Develop online bookings**

Allow applicants to check availability and book appointments online. Let them easily find the most suitable time. Do this for the application process, knowledge test, CSE exam and MOT.

## **2. Digital application process**

Allow applicants to complete the taxi licence application form online, so that the effort to apply is reduced.

## **3. Content to support**

Support applicants' content needs at different stages of the application, so that they are clear about the process.

## **4. Shared vehicle database**

Standardise vehicle requirements and specifications to create a central database. This will be used to check if a make and model is compliant.

## **5. Digital knowledge and locality test**

Introduce a digital knowledge test for all councils to reduce admin, wait times and conflict.

## **6. CSE course**

Adopt an in-house, verified CSE course which can be used nationally across council departments. Over two thirds (70%) of Local Authorities require drivers to undertake training (Dft 2018). In house delivery will avoid dependency, cost and time delays caused by third-party organisations.

## **7. Make it easier to print licence plates**

Improve process and tools to be able to print licence plates at testing stations, so that vehicle applicants have their licence immediately.

## **8. More flexible vehicle testing**

Explore and test alternative approaches to vehicle testing, such as incentivising unpopular time slots and outsourcing.

# Prioritised idea 1

As an applicant I can make a \_\_\_\_\_ booking online

Allow applicants to check availability and book appointments online so they easily find the most suitable time.

## Priority user needs

I need to easily book appointments for a time that suits me, so that my application is not held up unnecessarily.

I need the application process to be simple and efficient, so that I don't need to be an expert to use it.

## Considerations

- How payments will be taken (if required).
- Working with third-party suppliers such as CSE course providers or other teams such as the Council garage.
- Notifications and reminders, for example emails and SMS.
- Back-end systems and processes to support room bookings, availability of staff.
- Council infrastructure to support a digital service.



# Prioritised idea 1

As an applicant I can make a \_\_\_\_\_ booking online

What it could look like		
Now - discovery required	Next	Future
<p>Investigate options to implement a standard solution.</p> <p>Employ quick wins using existing systems.</p>	<p>Licensing team (application) appointments.</p> <p>Knowledge test appointments.</p>	<p>Update or cancel appointments online.</p> <p>CSE appointments.</p> <p>Testing station appointments (vehicle licence).</p>
Potential benefits		
Now	Next	Future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Reduce waiting time</li><li>- Reduce phone calls</li><li>- Reduce paper/admin</li><li>- Improve communication</li></ul>	<p>'Now' benefits, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Improve Customer experience</li><li>- Streamline journey</li></ul>	<p>Indirect benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Encourage digital life skills</li><li>- IT systems fit for purpose</li></ul>

# Prioritised idea 2

## As an applicant I can complete the taxi licence application form online

Allow applicants to complete the taxi licence application form online so that the effort to apply is reduced.

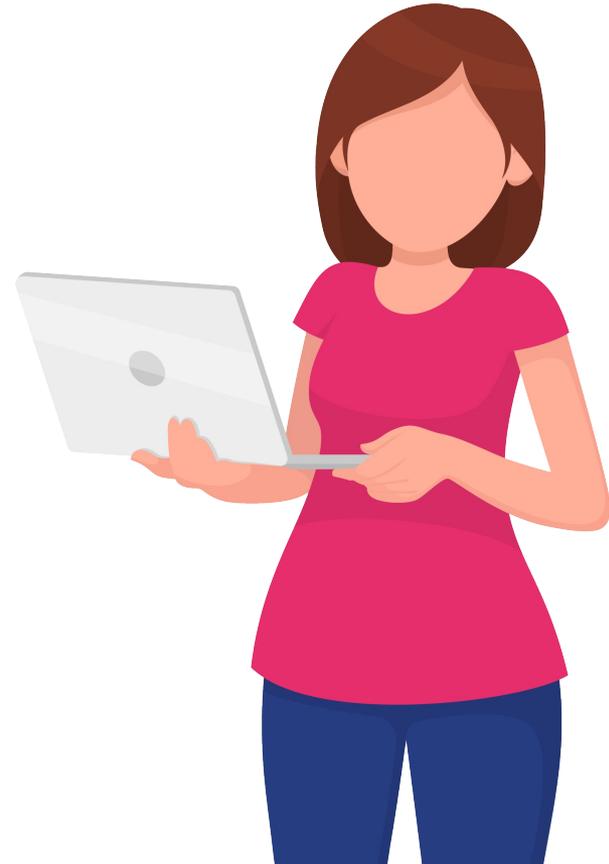
### Priority user needs

I need to minimise the amount of travel I have to do as part of the process, so that I'm not losing out on business.

I need the application process to be simple and efficient, so that I don't need to be an expert to use it.

### Considerations

- Communication plan for external awareness
- Changes required to internal culture and processes
- Content and signposting to digital application
- How payments will be taken
- Working with third-party suppliers such as identification services GPs and DBS
- Confirmation emails and SMS
- Policy changes required
- Council infrastructure to support a digital service



# Prioritised idea 2

As an applicant I can complete the taxi licence application form online

What it could look like		
Now - discovery required	Next	Future
<p>Investigate options to implement a standard solution.</p> <p>Improve form and capture basic information and ID.</p>	<p>Mandate electronic payments.</p> <p>Explore identification services.</p> <p>Multi-step process inc. GP certificate.</p>	<p>Review criminal records (DBS online).</p> <p>See status of application online.</p> <p>Automation of application process.</p>
Potential benefits		
Now	Next	Future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Reduce paper/admin</li><li>- Reduce errors</li></ul> <p>Indirect benefit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Better use and collection of data</li></ul>	<p>'Now' benefits, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Reduce checks/touchpoints</li><li>- Streamline the journey</li><li>- Improve customer experience</li></ul>	<p>Improve communication and reduce complaints.</p> <p>Indirect benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Digital life skills</li><li>- IT systems fit for purpose</li><li>- Improve staff morale</li></ul>

# Prioritised idea 3

## As an applicant I can find information about the licencing process online

Support applicants' content needs at different stages of the application so that they are clear about the process.

### Priority user needs

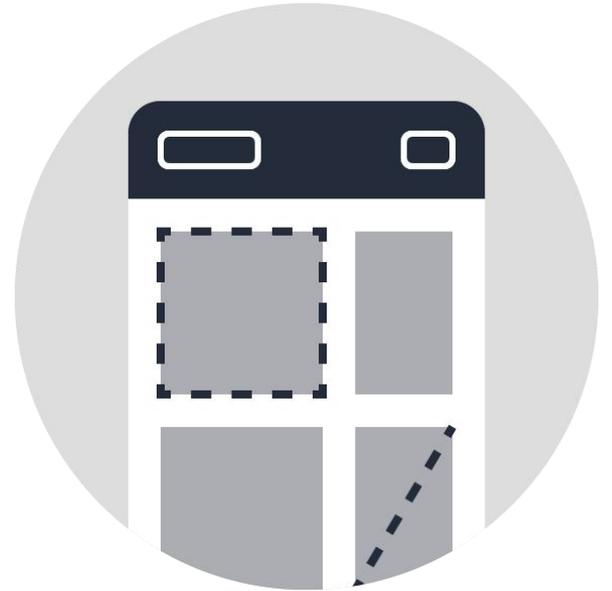
I need to understand what's being asked of me, so that I am confident in what I am doing.

I need to understand all of the costs involved in the licensing process, so that I know how much I will need to pay to get a licence.

I need a timescale, so that I can plan my time and arrange to start working.

### Considerations

- Communication plan for external awareness
- Changes required to internal culture and training required
- How to communicate complex policy in plain English



# Prioritised idea

As an applicant I can find information about the licensing process online

What it could look like		
Now - can be started today	Next	Future
Research to understand applicants content needs  Upskilling internal teams  Joint content review and re-write across councils	Test and iterate content. Improve policy wording in plain English  Update/create new content to support other service improvements	Explore and implement chatbot to answer questions
Potential benefits		
Now	Next	Future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Improve communication</li><li>- Improve Customer Experience</li><li>- Reduce phone calls</li></ul> Indirect benefit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Encourage digital life skills</li></ul>	'Now' benefits plus <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Streamline the journey</li><li>- Reduce checks/touchpoints</li><li>- Reduce errors</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Improve communication</li><li>- Improve customer experience</li><li>- Reduce phone calls</li></ul> Indirect benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Improve staff morale</li></ul>

# Benefits model

## Enablers

New tangible capabilities

Online knowledge test with checks and instant validation

Self-serve booking tool for customer to make and manage appointments with Council, Test Centre and CSE course

Provide customers with better guidance to complete all applications forms

## Intermediate benefits

Functional or operational benefits

Reduction in paper based communication and correspondence (cost)

Reduce time waiting for appointments (time)

Improved accuracy of applications (satisfaction)

Improved application processing time (time)

Reduced cost to administer application (cost)

Reduction in telephone/postal correspondence (cost)

Reduction in customer complaints (satisfaction)

## End benefits

Strategic benefits

Improved customer satisfaction

Efficiency savings

Cash related savings

# Potential impact of the digital service

Based on the top 3 prioritised ideas, the potential impact of digitising the service are:

## **Reduced waiting time for applicants**

It currently takes an average of 6 weeks to process a new driver application and an average of 2 weeks to process a new operator application\*\*.

Digitising appointment bookings will allow applicants to book at a time that suits them. Applicants can find appointments easily, which will fill available appointment slots more efficiently.

## **Reduce phone calls**

3.6 calls received (on average) per application\*

Self-service digital booking will reduce phone calls.

Improving information about the process and making application statuses available online will also reduce unnecessary telephone calls.

## **Reduced paper and admin**

Average cost of administering the service £53.16 per applicant\*

A digital application and booking process will remove the need for licensing staff to manually enter data or arrange appointments. Email and SMS reminders will reduce the need for reminder letters.

## **Reduce errors**

A digital application and booking process will remove the need for licensing staff to manually enter applicant data. A digital application form will also reduce errors made by applicants on the application form through on-page validation.

## **Improved customer experience**

Reduced duplication of effort, access to services out of working hours and improved information about the licensing process will improve customer satisfaction.

\* Example average statistics provided from Gateshead council

\*\* Findings from our survey to local authorities

# Potential impact of the digital service

## Streamline journey

A online booking process and application form will reduce handoffs and unnecessary calls to streamline the journey.

## Reduce checks and touchpoints

Digital identity services and validation on forms can ensure details are accurate. This removes the need for licensing details to be cross-checked by staff.

Online booking processes removes the need for staff to initiate the appointments and tests. It also reduces the demand on staff to update or cancel existing appointments.

Based on our survey, on average an applicant may visit a Council office up to **3 times** throughout the new driver application process. During the new driver application process Gateshead receives on average **3.6 calls** per each taxi licence application. It is likely that a digital solution would reduce or remove unavoidable contact.



# Potential impact of the digital service

## Indirect benefits (not easily measurable)

### Enhanced public safety

The ambition of this project is to free up staff to both maintain the current high standards of public safety and provide new opportunities to go above and beyond.

Digital improvement will reduce the amount of time Licensing staff spend on administrative activities thereby freeing up their time to spend on proactive enforcement activity, which will serve to enhance public safety.

Taxi enforcement activities which would benefit:

- Taxi Rank inspections – ensuring compliance with vehicle conditions (plate displayed etc) ensuring any vehicle using the rank is in fact a licenced vehicle with a licenced driver. The positive benefit of Licensing officer presence outside of the office. For example, Licensing officers can issue (Penalty Charge Notices) PCN's for smoking in vehicles.

- Operator inspections
- Vehicle inspections (with and without Police)
- Operations with Northumbria Police - the ability to stop a moving vehicle and complete further vehicle checks (insurance, tyre treads etc). Outcomes include suspending, revoking or prosecuting drivers depending on what is found.
- Meter testing
- Operations to ensure no illegal taxis are working in the area
- Increased frequency of CSE training and potentially check DBS certificates more than once a year.

# Potential impact of the digital service

## **Other Licensing activities:**

It would also free up time for Licensing Officers to inspect pubs/clubs and gambling establishments in a more structured way, in addition;

- Scrap metal site inspections
- Scrap metal collector checks and inspections.
- Street trading inspections (Burger Vans etc)
- Sex Shop inspections

## **Potential new activities**

(these as initial ideas, and may not be applicable to all councils)

- Raised awareness with the public of the difference between private hire and Hackney Carriage.
- Evaluate the policy for CCTV within vehicles to protect both the public and driver safety.

# Potential impact of the digital service

## Indirect benefits (continued)

### Improved staff morale

By removing/reducing repetitive or unnecessary tasks we may improve staff morale. Staff will instead focus on tasks where they see the benefit of their actions and feel that they are contributing to the purpose of the service.

### Encourage digital life skills

A digital service will free up staff to support people who require digital assistance. They can help transition people to a future digital services such as renewals.

### IT systems fit for purpose

Supporting a digital application process and booking system will require improvements to council infrastructure and equipment. This investment could improve efficiencies and staff morale. It could also positively impact other council services by opening up new opportunities through investing in new technology.

### Improved communication

Improved content about the application process and a chatbot to answer questions outside of hours will improve communication with applicants.

### Better use and collection of data

Data is stored securely online rather than paper based files which could be lost or damaged. A digital application removes the need to provide the same data multiple times.

# Challenges

[Download the standardisation research poster](#) (pdf)

Throughout the course of the discovery, the following challenges and barriers to change have been identified.

## **Standardisation**

All those involved see the value in a standardised service. But they agree that it will be challenging.

Local policies and national legislation were highlighted by both council employees and applicants as a barrier that would need to be confronted if the licensing process was to improve. We were also made aware of the current consultation – [Taxi and private hire vehicle licensing: protecting users](#).

Results from the survey of 113 local authorities' Taxi Licensing services highlighted the lack of standardisation currently. Councils currently use 13 different IT systems plus various third party services for DBS checks.

These are areas that need further investigation for standardisation:

- having the same roles and responsibilities for Licensing team staff
- the DBS process
- guidelines around convictions
- the requirement for CSE certification
- fees for licences and admin
- platforms and tools used in the process
- vehicle licence specifications
- explanations of policies
- the need for the knowledge test to be reviewed - is the current format still fit for purpose
- Technology, tools and platforms used within the service

# Challenges continued

## **Digital inclusion and confidence**

The variety in digital literacy of the applicants is a challenge. There is clearly an appetite for a digital service, but some applicants we interviewed questioned how it could work for the less tech-savvy.

User research also highlighted some applicants' lack of confidence using a digital service. Some shared their reluctance to use other online services, such as online banking.

The user needs generated from discovery need to be used when developing a new service. These reflect the need for a simple and efficient service, which will provide help to the applicants who need it. It will also allow them to complete the application offline.

## **Compliance from users**

One challenge is apparent in the current process and potential digital service: both rely on the applicant willingly giving correct and consistent information.

## **Internal culture change**

The appetite for individuals to change their ways of working and responsibilities was seen a big challenge. Senior stakeholder support is needed to facilitate the policy and role changes required to support digital.

## **Third parties**

Interacting with and reliance on third parties (such as DBS checks) is a challenge to improving the process. Actions and timelines are out of the Councils' hands, and applicants' expectations need to be carefully managed.

## **Council infrastructure and network to support**

Legacy systems need to be changed to the right technology to achieve improved solutions. Wifi/network connectivity issues in rural areas currently impact access to digital data or payments.

# Challenges continued

## **Resources and skills internally**

Availability and time for staff to contribute to the projects was also seen as challenging. Dedicated project teams are required to allow changes to be made efficiently. Those consulted on the project from wider teams would need senior stakeholder buy-in to invest their time and put in place plans to cover their day-to-day responsibilities in the short term.

## **Budget and investment**

The investment required to make desired changes nationally was raised as a challenge. Technology and systems would need to be standardised.



# Perceived barriers

We asked participants in the service scope workshop to give their personal opinions of the appetite for change.

Participants scored their personal appetite and the perceived appetite of the wider council teams.

Generally, participants rated the perception of the Councils' willingness to change as slightly below their own. They recognised the challenges involved for the Councils to implement the change.

Participants had the highest appetite for change for "providing digital support if we were to change the service" and "creating a digital service for taxi licensing right now".

"Standardising fees for licences and admin" had the most disparate views across participants who felt that while this was important, it would be challenging for the Councils.

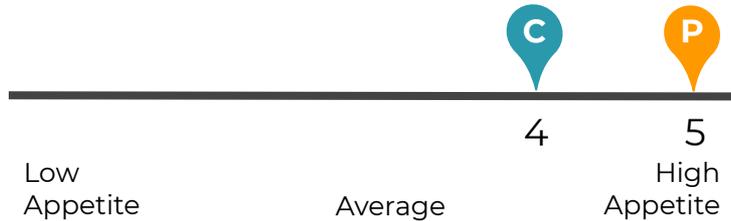
[All 'Appetite' scales are available in the appendix.](#)



# Perceived barriers



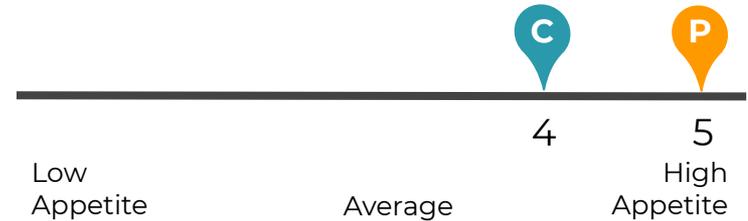
## Meeting user needs



Participants on average felt that meeting user needs was a priority for everyone involved. Participants felt that it was important to move away from making decisions based on assumptions in order to improve customer experience.

Challenges identified by participants included the pressure to deliver quickly. Participants also highlighted that there may be a knowledge gap in some Council teams to be addressed and that some teams may be more open to change than others.

## Creating a digital service for taxi licencing right now



All participants rated their appetite to create a digital service for taxi licencing right now as 5. They felt that improving the service offering would benefit everyone involved, improve customer service and potentially cut costs. Participants also felt Councils were bought in to the process.

Challenges identified by participants included the Council having the time and resources to create a digital service. Participants also felt that the benefits may need to be articulated more clearly.





# **How to move forward**

(our recommendation)

# Is there a need for a digital service?

Yes, there is. We've learnt that a digitally supported service would benefit all those involved in taxi licensing. Users' pain points would be alleviated, and each user group has shared an appetite for a digital solution. The service would still require an element of face to face interaction to preserve public safety and digital assistance for those who are less digital literate.

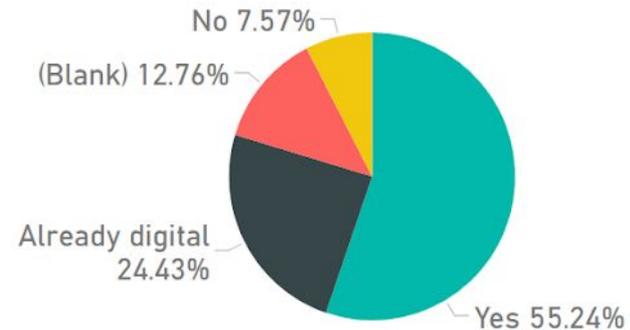
Not all user needs are currently met by the existing provision. For instance, operators highlighted how they need to do tasks in bulk, but are unable to due to the limitations of the current process. They envisage a new, improved, digital service being able to meet their needs.

Certain processes within taxi licensing would benefit from a digital solution more than others. For example, first-time driver applications. Others are less suited: an operator licence application gets so few users that it isn't a high priority for a digital service.

An improved digital service would lead the way for a standardised, national solution. This would benefit other authorities, as the Local Authority survey highlighted the inefficiencies and costs of the current taxi licensing process.

Insights from our **Local Authority survey** show **55.24%** of the 98 Authorities who completed our survey would adopt a full digital service.

However, we believe **this number could be higher**. Comments from this question suggested that those who selected 'no' did so as they believe some aspects of the service could never be 100% digital.



# Recommendation: A focused discovery on **new taxi driver applications**

We entered into this Discovery with the intention of assessing the viability of a digital service which could progress into an Alpha. Due to the discovery comprising of concurrent research streams across three councils and a national survey, we concluded quite late on (within the last two weeks) that going into Alpha was not viable. As the discovery phase timescales (9 weeks) and budget were fixed, it was not possible to pivot the project to accommodate a change in focus and team requirements.

The first discovery focused on understanding the wider services and opportunities, and the potential for standardisation across councils. Using these insights, we recommend a follow-on discovery to provide specific direction for an alpha project.

During the service scoping workshop, stakeholders found more opportunities (and more benefits) to improve the new taxi driver application process compared to vehicle licensing.

Resolving many aspects of the new driver application process will improve related services such as renewals. It will pave the way for improvements to vehicle and operator licences.



## Discovery

### Understanding context and problems to solve

- Explore user needs, policy intent, organisational goals, desired outcomes and wider context
- Identify the big challenges, opportunities and constraints
- Identify assumptions, create hypotheses and list possible approaches
- Be prepared to stop - at this point it could be the best outcome

# Recommended approach

*A summary of the new proposed project approach to expand Discovery with the aim to move into Alpha*

## Discovery 1

Understand the need for a digital service.

- Understand the complexity of services
- Investigate user needs
- Identify potential challenges and appetite for change



Complete

## Discovery 2

Understand the feasibility of a digital service for new taxi driver applicants.

- Refine user needs for specific service
- Explore potential 'to be' journey
- Investigate national feasibility

## Alpha

Testing options by prototyping.

# Objectives of the new discovery

## **Increase understanding of new taxi driver application**

Understand barriers, frustrations, attitudes and behaviours for those currently in the process.

Understand the needs and opportunities of third parties such as CSE course providers and DBS. Investigate opportunities to improve.

Refine user needs and build a greater understanding of content needs throughout the process.

Identify and prioritise opportunities within the process to inform the 'to be' vision and alpha scope.

Benchmark and agree measures of success to ensure the impact of change can be measured.

## **National opportunities**

Verify if challenges identified between Gateshead, Sunderland and Northumberland are also shared by other councils outside of the region.

Understand what existing projects are in progress and what lessons can be learnt from them based on survey responses.

Involve wider councils and senior stakeholders to build momentum and buy-in to standardisation.

## **Feasibility**

Understand the capabilities and limitations of existing systems based on collaborative councils and survey responses.

**“It never clicked that we had so many software tools that didn't work together”**

Northumberland Licensing Team

Understand the technology and process implications of the 'to be' journey.

Recommend the architecture and process required to support a standardised national service.

# Recommended team for discovery

We recommend a **12 week discovery phase**.

A 12 week discovery would allow for:

- wider council involvement outside of the region working in collaboration with their teams
- an increased number of shorter collaboration sessions, rather than lengthy days with lots of activities
- adequate time for in-person user research and shadowing as we know that remote sessions with these user types may be unlikely
- the research to follow individuals through large sections of the process for in-the-moment insights
- researchers to follow the process for themselves

Suggested team:

- **Service Designer 50%** - sets the vision, purpose and principles in collaboration with stakeholders to create 'as is' and 'to be' service blueprints
- **Content Designer 30%** - defines the content strategy and sets guidelines for content creation
- **User Researcher x1.5 100%** - plans and undertakes research to help everyone develop a deep understanding of service users.
- **BA 60%** - works with the solutions architect and stakeholders to scope the project, capture and manage user stories.
- **Solutions architect 50%** - works with wider council teams to explore current systems and their purpose to inform recommendations.
- **Project Manager 40%** - maintains project plan and activities
- **Support from each local authority** - works closely with teams to inform on current policy, processes and challenges

# 'Now' timeline

## PRE-DISCOVERY

What we can do right now

Upskill internal teams around content design & strategy

Joint content review and re-write

Showcase discovery within councils

Sessions to learn from each other using journey maps.

Example: one team member to follow applicant through the process as per Gateshead

Showcase nationally

## DISCOVERY 2 - FEASIBILITY

New driver application service

Investigate existing systems and options available

Research to understand applicant contact needs through service

Investigate options to implement a standard solution nationally

Employ quick wins to improve applications process

## ALPHA

Testing options by prototyping

Testing options to prototype such as improving the application form exploring capture basic information and ID

# Beyond discovery: alpha

If the focused discovery concludes that the digital service is feasible, we will move into an alpha phase. This phase will serve as a proof of concept for standardisation on a small scale.

The alpha phase will use a test and learn methodology to explore the highest risk areas. We will iterate potential solutions by looking at both front-stage for the end-users and back-stage processes and systems.

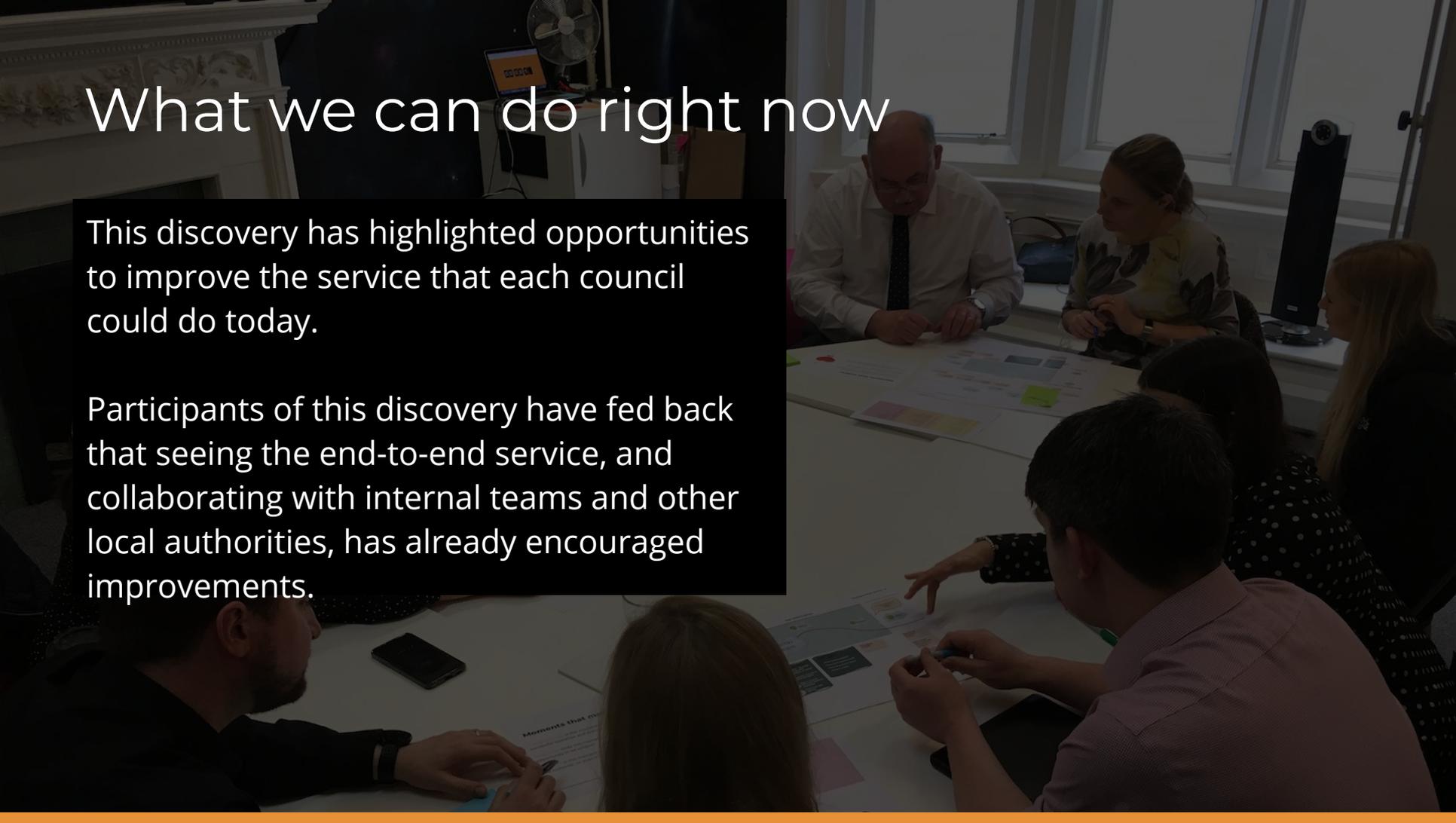


## Alpha

### Testing options by prototyping

- Learn which possible approaches and solutions will work best through prototyping
- Prioritise learning about the biggest assumptions, risks or challenges
- Test with real users to prove or disprove hypotheses
- Be prepared to stop at this point

# What we can do right now

A group of people are gathered around a large table in a meeting room, engaged in a discussion. They are looking at various documents and papers spread across the table. The room has large windows in the background, and there is a laptop and a fan on a desk in the upper left corner. The overall atmosphere is professional and collaborative.

This discovery has highlighted opportunities to improve the service that each council could do today.

Participants of this discovery have fed back that seeing the end-to-end service, and collaborating with internal teams and other local authorities, has already encouraged improvements.

# Content recommendations

There are common digital content issues across all 3 councils. Improving these would make the existing journey much clearer.

Going forward, these pages will be critical to moving people through the digital service, so they need give the right information.

Currently web pages combine lots of different information. Often it's telling the user about what the council does, rather than what the user needs to do. It would help people trust the page content more if it was focused on one clear user task.

Linking back to the user needs and our understanding of the audience will help shape the structure and format of the web page.

There's an issue with accessibility – very complex language that's not understandable for everyone. Simplifying this language will help a wider range of users access the information.

All pages had a very high reading age, which is at odds with the average reading age of the UK (around 9 years old). Again, simplifying the language and sentences will help more people understand the process.

## **In the short term**

All Councils have voiced an interest in participating in a collaborative content writing workshop. The aim is to learn best practices and establish how their approach to content strategy can be standardised.



[Download the desk research content report](#) (pdf)

# Process improvements

There are multiple areas for improvement across all three councils current processes. Some of which could be applied in the near future and provide initial benefits to the council.

## Efficiency savings

The number of handoffs and double checking throughout the process isn't efficient and can lead to human error. Reducing these and encouraging staff to take responsibility will increase efficiency.

Other efficiency improvements:

- Reduce the reliance on paper and the need to process paper forms manually by entering data into digital systems.
- Provide a digital knowledge test (similar to Gateshead,) reducing the time taken to arrange tests and mark paper tests.

- Internally operate and provide a Child Sexual Exploitation course, available to all councils who require CSE certification, to reduce wait times.
- Standardise the systems used to conduct tasks. This would allow for improved internal communication and the potential of national database of information.
- Offer alternative methods of pay at each council office.
- Provide more authority to vehicle test stations, to increase the efficiency of the vehicle licensing process.

## In the short term

Consider when the DBS check is required in the process. Find out if it can be conducted earlier to reduce overall completion time and save costs for the applicant. Providing information to set expectations will help, as well as using DBS Nereo to access outcomes, and promoting the Update Service.

Local authorities can also learn from each other to improve their processes, as each authority is at a different stage in their transformation of taxi licensing.

# Culture and buy-in

A big challenge to the digital service is the internal appetite for change. Motivated and engaged people within organisations are critical to creating successful services.

Understanding their needs means you gain trust and support from those who make or break service design.

Communicate up-front the purpose behind changes and the benefits of any proposed changes. This will help others outside the projects understand the need for change.

Involve wider teams in discovery and alpha. This will make research insights visible, and build empathy for change within teams.

Provide training and shadowing opportunities to build confidence in digital. Shadowing or conducting a Q&A session with services which are already digital will reassure staff of change and provide useful insights into ways of working.

## **In the short term**

Showcase the work to date to wider teams within each local authority and encourage their engagement.

Consider how to share the work nationally, such as at an expo or follow-on event.

# Communication

Applicants aren't aware of what they need to do, how to do it, or what to provide at the beginning of their journey. Providing clarity early on will help a more informed and painless user journey.

Many of the applicants seemed to be unaware of why they were required to provide information or attend meetings. They felt they were often duplicating effort.

Communicate who does what, and explain why each task is necessary to the service. Being transparent and defining a clear purpose will help improve the applicant's understanding and develop a trustworthy relationship.

**“We know that communications need to be improved, but we're not sure how”**

Gateshead Licensing Team

Applicants shared how they often need to communicate the same problem or query multiple times, resulting in this user need: I need any licensing team employee I interact with to be knowledgeable of my application, so that I can get satisfactory answers to my questions.

Aim to reduce the number of face-to-face touchpoints in the end-to-end journey. Travelling and attending appointments can be costly, time consuming and impact on an applicant's day to day work.

## **In the short term**

Licensing teams should provide a dedicated team member to process an application throughout the applicant's journey.

Gateshead have already adopted this approach and have received positive feedback from applicants. This would also help reduce the perception that the Councils are difficult to contact, as applicants would have a single-point of contact.

# Further research opportunities

Our discovery research activities highlighted further research opportunities.

## **End-to-end residents and taxi driver journey**

Conduct research with residents and taxi drivers to map their end-to-end journey with a focus on public safety. This could feed into proactive activities to improve public safety and reassurance. Taxi drivers also fed back that their own safety is also important, and could encourage more applicants.

## **Participatory sessions with taxi drivers and operators**

The discovery research highlighted discrepancies on expectations and responsibilities between taxi drivers, operators and licensing staff. Participatory sessions with these groups would allow topics to be explored collaboratively and a common language created to clearly communicate roles and responsibilities. The insights could also inform service improvements and hypotheses to explore during alpha.

## **Research third party content needs**

During discovery a number of third-parties were identified. Research could be conducted independently to begin to improve the collaboration and information provided and received from these parties. This would improve the service efficiency and standard.

These third-parties are:

- GPs – ensure the correct information is received first time from GPs conducting the taxi driver medical assessment.
- Job centre – ensure the correct information is provided to potential applicants set expectations about the process..
- Operators – support operators in supporting those with low digital literacy. Ensure the correct information is provided to potential applicants.



**Skills  
transfer**

# Upskilling opportunities

As part of this project, opportunities for up-skilling and transfer of information were provided for those who involved.

Project team members were invited to shadow user research interviews with applicants and the council members also, they were asked to participate in the various workshops ran by Orange Bus.

## Research log of activities

Throughout the Discovery phase, the project team have been contributing to a research log of activities, to document the upskilling opportunities and what they've taken away from being involved.

[View log of research activities here](#) (pdf)



# Thank you!

Thank you to all the Councils for participating in this Discovery phase and openly contributing with how they currently work.





# Appendix

# Collated research deliverables

**For the ease of viewing, we have collated all the research deliverables that were into one single pdf.**

This file includes:

- Journey maps
- Research posters
- User needs
- User needs with moments that matter
- Benefits matrix
- Skills transfer - log of research activities
- Desk content research
- Survey data

[View and download the pdf file here](#) (pdf)

Other deliverables (videos and spreadsheets) can be viewed on the next slide.

# Individual research outputs

[Taxi licensing - show and tell 1](#) (video)

[Taxi licensing - show and tell 2](#) (video)

[Research highlights video](#) (video)

[Research timelapse](#) (video)

[Desk research and content review](#) (pdf)

[Emerging themes - poster](#) (pdf)

[What needs to be standardised - poster](#) (pdf)

[Taxi driver insights - poster](#) (pdf)

[Discovery research - poster](#) (pdf)

[Benefits - matrix of potential benefits](#) (pdf)

# Journey maps

## **Gateshead**

[Driver licence blueprint](#) (pdf)

[Vehicle licence blueprint](#) (pdf)

## **Sunderland**

[Driver licence blueprint](#) (pdf)

[Vehicle licence blueprint](#) (pdf)

## **Northumberland**

[Driver licence blueprint](#) (pdf)

[Vehicle licence blueprint](#) (pdf)

# Process maps

## **Gateshead**

[New driver licence application process map](#) (pdf)

[Driver licence renewal process map](#) (pdf)

[New vehicle licence application process map](#) (pdf)

[Vehicle licence renewal process map](#) (pdf)

# Lessons learnt: conducting research

## **Project scope**

For this Discovery, the main focus regarding a user's journey has centred around the 'happy' path or the successful journey of securing a licence without any complications.

Understanding challenges or edge cases, such as going to committee due to previous criminal convictions, would require further research.

Additional tasks such as applying for a 'Licence badge replacement' or 'Reporting an accident' were de-scoped in order to dedicate time and resource to understanding the mandatory steps in the process.

Renewing a driver and vehicle licence have been researched. However, it is recommended that insights are validated and for a greater understanding of the end-to-end user journey.

## **Recruitment**

We've experienced challenges recruiting applicants throughout Discovery. Guerilla research at taxi ranks often resulted in drivers not wishing to talk to us, as they believed we working for the council. Drivers were also reluctant to participate in workshops, especially with council employees. This led to our research approach being adapted to running a co-design workshop involving only the council licensing team.

The majority of participants we spoke to were renewing their licence rather than first-time applicants, meaning a shortage of insights regarding aspects of the process that first-time applicants are involved in, such as the knowledge test.

As the aim of the project was to discover if there was a need for a digital service, research with all demographics was not necessarily needed. Going forward it would be recommended to interview drivers who do night-shifts and work weekends to capture a insights from a wider demographic of taxi drivers.

# Lessons learnt: conducting research

## **Environment**

Some of the 1-2-1 interviews conducted where within council buildings, leading to possible bias in favour of the council.

Drivers at a taxi rank in Gateshead were aware of/had seen a crime take place at the rank the day prior to our research. Arguably, affecting their mindset and responses - an aspect to be mindful of when conducting future research.

# Survey data

[Local authority survey results](#) (pdf)

[Citizen survey results](#) (pdf)

To help us visualise the data, making it accessible and easier to understand we've created two Power BI reports:

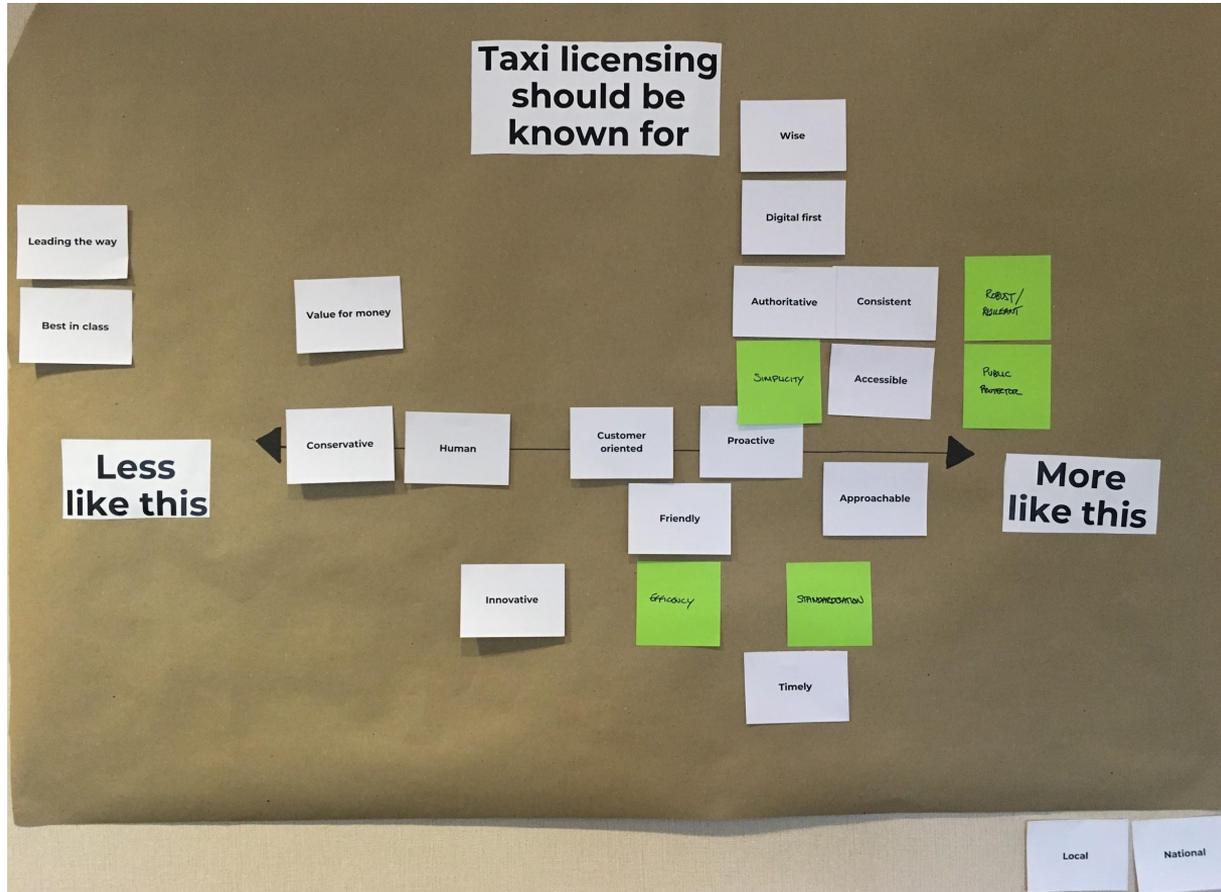
**Local Authority:**

<https://tinyurl.com/yxmhfsvu>

**Citizen survey:**

<https://tinyurl.com/y25upwns>

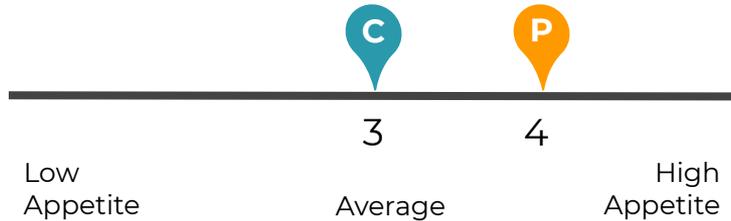
# Agreed service vision (in full)



# Perceived barriers



## Standardising CSE requirements and delivery



Participants felt that this was important for the Councils' safeguarding strategy and for public safety. They felt that Councils would have a medium appetite for change in this area.

Challenges identified by participants included disparate requirements across Councils. An audit would need to be carried out to identify best practice and requirements. Buy-in from some Councils may be an obstacle if they are unable to see the benefit.

## Standardising tools used within the processes



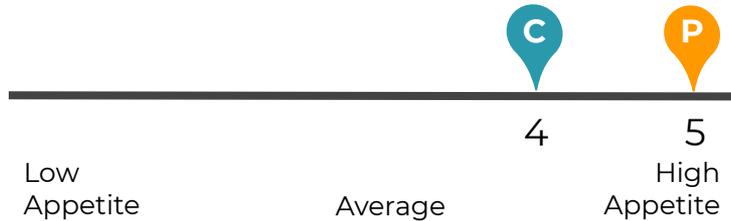
Participants expressed a desire for improvements to make processes more efficient and streamlined. They generally had a high appetite for change in this area.

Participants felt that the Councils' appetite for change in this area may be lower, as standardisation may mean a feeling of 'loss of control'. Other challenges identified included cost implications, as Councils may have already invested in their own local tools and may not see the value in re-investing.

# Perceived barriers



## Meeting user needs



Participants on average felt that meeting user needs was a priority for everyone involved. Participants felt that it was important to move away from making decisions based on assumptions in order to improve customer experience.

Challenges identified by participants included the pressure to deliver quickly. Participants also highlighted that there may be a knowledge gap in some Council teams to be addressed and that some teams may be more open to change than others.

## Committing to standardising SLAs



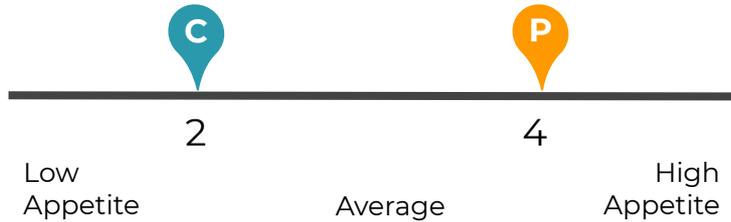
Participants expressed mixed opinions on their commitment to standardise SLAs. This was seen as outdated by some, but important for performance by others. Other participants expressed no opinion as SLAs were unrelated to their roles.

The complexities of the application process and service offerings across Councils was highlighted as an area for consideration. Participants also highlighted that SLAs were politically unpopular within Councils which may pose a challenge.

# Perceived barriers



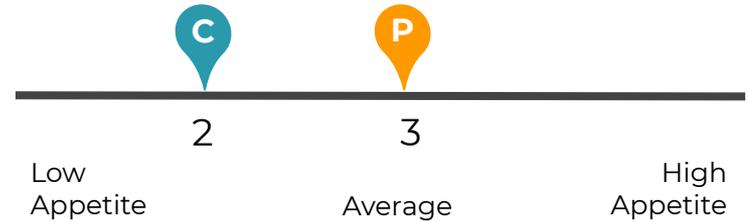
## Standardising fees for licences and admin



Participants on average had a high appetite for standardising licence and admin fees. They felt that this would help to avoid applicants 'shopping around'.

However, they perceived the Councils' appetite for change to be lower due to challenges such as the 'cost to serve' which may differ across regions. Some participants felt that standardisation may require a policy change and buy-in from Council Members. Others were unsure whether standardisation of fees would be possible at all.

## Standardising licencing team roles and responsibilities

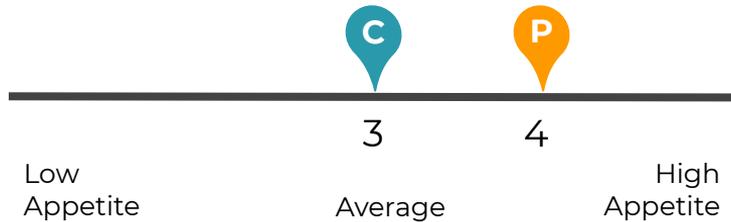


Participants generally felt that some positive change had happened in standardising licencing team roles and responsibilities already. On average this wasn't felt to be a priority to Councils or participants themselves.

Standardisation in this area was felt to be unrealistic by some participants. This was because each Council has different requirements and Council staff often deal with other areas than taxi driver applications.

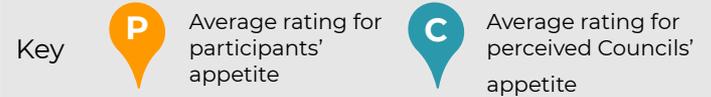
# Perceived barriers

Experimenting with new technologies for the service



Participants recognised the need to improve existing processes to make them more efficient, reduce costs and improve customer experience. They felt that experimentation with new technologies would support this.

Councils were perceived as wanting to be seen as innovative, but a lack of skills combined with budget and time constraints posed challenges to this being realised. One participant also said that Councils are “too focused on the now rather than the future”.



Standardising vehicle specifications



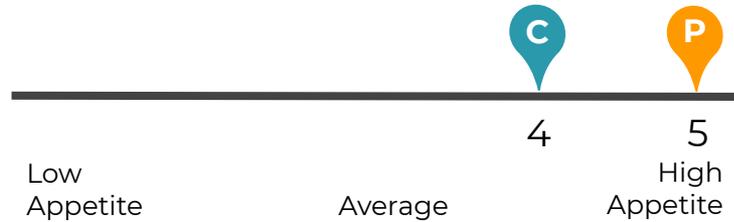
Participants on average felt that standardising vehicle specifications was a high priority for ensuring consistency across Councils. This would avoid applicants 'shopping around'.

However, participants felt that this may not be as much of a priority for Councils, as they may be reluctant to change existing policies.

# Perceived barriers



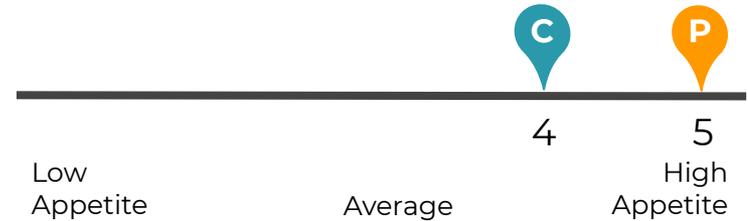
Providing digital support if we were to change the service



Participants felt that providing digital support if the service were to change was important in order to modernise the service while also minimising digital exclusion. Participants also felt that Councils have a high appetite for change in this area.

Challenges identified by participants included Council resources and Council staff having the required skills. Ensuring that digital is one part of an omni-channel strategy was also highlighted as a consideration.

Creating a digital service for taxi licencing right now



All participants rated their appetite to create a digital service for taxi licencing right now as 5. They felt that improving the service offering would benefit everyone involved, improve customer service and potentially cut costs. Participants also felt Councils were bought in to the process.

Challenges identified by participants included the Council having the time and resources to create a digital service. Participants also felt that the benefits may need to be articulated more clearly.