Transforming Access to Services at Westminster City Council

Each year, Westminster City Council (WCC) issues approximately 37,000 resident parking permits, 85% of which are permit renewals. In order to be eligible for a parking permit, residents must have their main or sole home within the boundaries of the controlled parking zones within the City of Westminster, and must be the sole keeper of a vehicle that is driven by them and kept in Westminster.

Due to intense competition for on-street parking spaces, as well as previous experience of fraud, WCC applied a policy whereby residents had to turn up in person at the council one-stop shops to renew their permit, with up to seven different pieces of identification to prove their identity and entitlement.

Requirement

WCC wished to streamline the permit renewal process, which was considered to be manually intensive, inefficient and costly. The primary driver was to improve the customer experience to reflect its customer values, in particular "It's easy to access your services" and "One contact gets things done". In addition, WCC sought to achieve improvements in cost efficiencies and a reduction in the cost of fraud. Given that Internet penetration in the Borough is estimated at between 60 and 80%, a key requirement was to implement an online solution, to provide residents with a wider choice of channels and remove the need to present documentary proofs in person or by post.

Key requirements for the new system were therefore:

• Secure access via the existing WCC website

• Real time personal authentication to confirm identity and address to satisfy eligibility requirements

• Implementation of parking permit processing and management solution

Solution

Authenticate, Experian's online personal identity authentication solution, was implemented in order to verify each resident's identity and to ensure that they meet the eligibility criteria. The solution was integrated into the permit renewals application process, so that real time authentication can be carried out seamlessly during the application process. Authenticate positively corroborates an applicant's identity and residency to provide WCC with the required level of confidence that the applicant's identity is genuine and, from a residency perspective, that the applicant is eligible for a permit. In addition, potentially fraudulent applications are flagged, for example, where an applicant has never or no longer resides at an eligible address, or where the address is for a business rather than a private residence.

Authenticate works by checking an individual's details against a broad range of data sources held by Experian. These databases contain biographic footprints established for 45 million UK citizens and hold in excess of 1 billion records.

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The data retrieved for each citizen is measured in three dimensions – breadth, depth and quality – to determine the degree of confidence associated with the identity being genuine.
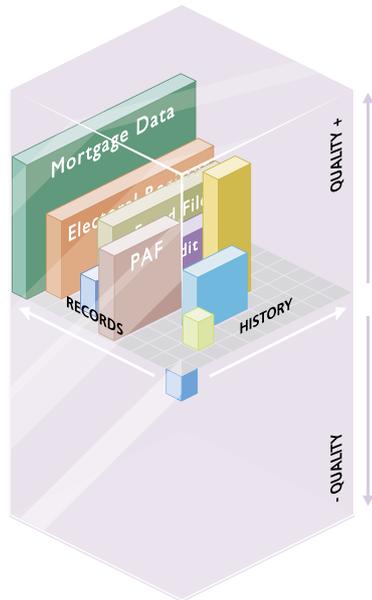
Breadth determines the number of data sources against which corroborating matches are found, whilst depth looks at how far the records go back in time as an indicator of fraud and / or validity. Quality considers the type of record, the level of due diligence performed in its creation and, therefore, its level of trust as a source of identity confirmation.

Once the citizen's details are received by Experian during the application process, they are validated and then processed by Authenticate to deliver a set of results which are tailored to WCC's requirements and adhere to HMG guidelines. The solution is utilised by WCC under their statutory powers.

Outcome

WCC have been able to replace their manual system with a solution that incorporates non intrusive and robust authentication. The new system is delivering an improved customer experience that is closely aligned to its core values, at the same time as making significant cost savings and guarding against fraud.

"Since the launch, with rigorous Experian security, we now have a 30 per cent take-up and this is increasing week on week. That's the secret to take-up: you have to enable things that people actually want to do and provide a more efficient, safe and secure way of doing things. This is a real example of an improved service."

Dan Thomas, Parking Services at Westminster City Council

To find out more

For further information on Authenticate, or to learn more about how Experian's data and intelligent decisioning solutions can assist your organisation, please contact your Experian Account Manager or the dedicated public sector Customer Service Team on 0115 901 6026 selecting option 2.

Case Study

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