

Residents benefit from streamlined COVID-19 testing with eForms



As the 9th largest metropolitan borough in England, it was essential Wigan Council was able to provide efficient COVID-19 testing to over 300,000 residents. With the help of dynamic, easily adjustable eForms, the Council kept up with increasing demand for testing as the pandemic developed - delivering over 1,000 COVID-19 tests per week.

The Challenge

During the early outbreak of the coronavirus in 2020, Wigan Council was required to provide COVID-19 PCR testing for its residents. Under instruction of the Department of Health and Public Health England, the scheme was to commence as soon as possible, at numerous Council-run centres across the borough. Within 24 hours, each swab needed to be tested and processed by a lab, before each resident was then informed of their results via email.

However, the quick development of the crisis meant Wigan Council had only five days to create a public test booking system. With allocated centres set to begin testing in less than a week, and with further sites set to open, Wigan faced a significant challenge in allowing its residents to access and receive COVID-19 testing.

The original booking system

The original process consisted of a basic booking form on the Council's website. Test requests were populated into a spreadsheet, and residents were manually emailed their booking confirmations. Each morning, an offline version of this document was sent to test centre staff, who then used the spreadsheet for check-ins at testing sites.

Key Benefits

- Improved employee morale
- Enhanced service for residents
- Significant reduction in admin time and overheads
- Faster COVID-19 test bookings and recordings
- Local data aiding surge and hotspot testing

“We were the only pilot, out of the 10 in England, that actually managed to crack the IT solution. I think it's shown us the art of the possible, in a way that we really hadn't appreciated in the past



Lynne Calvert, Enhanced Service Manager Public Health / COVID-19 Response Lead

What wasn't working?

- **Time constraints:** The original process was labour intensive, requiring human intervention at every stage. At the height of the programme, over 500 emails were awaiting booking allocations in the email inbox at one time.
- **Low adaptability:** Offline spreadsheets meant data and bookings were extremely difficult to amend, and slot cancellations were rarely filled.
- **Room for error:** With such vast amounts of data requiring quick action, there was ample room for human error to impact the booking process.

The Solution

The original booking system was always going to be an interim, "quick fix" product. As the pandemic evolved and the need for testing increased, it was clear an end-to-end digital solution was required to support both residents and council workers. However, there was no time for the council to develop this independently.

Wigan Council already utilised NDL's SX Robotic Process Automation (RPA) toolkit – leading them to explore the FX eForm platform. Wigan identified that, with help from the NDL team, the council could craft a digital solution that would consistently meet all of its changing requirements.

In line with project requirements, easy-to-use, secure, and fully integrated booking eForms were created. Residents accessed the eForms with their own devices, selecting an appointment slot and test centre to suit them, before receiving an instant email confirmation notification once booked.



Take a look at the [project video](#).

For more information about NDL's Digital Transformation Suite:

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The team members were working under great stress and needed to respond to a rapidly evolving situation – the NDL team were so flexible and understood why the spec was continually changing



Steve Baldwin, Digital Transformation and Innovation Manager



The Benefits

eForms delivered several valuable benefits to the Wigan Council team, allowing them to better allocate resources throughout challenging times.

The streamlined approach and easy access to data for local reporting allowed mobile testing to be deployed at surge sites, helping to control and track the spread of the virus. But most importantly, the digital solution provided a better experience to members of the public.

At its peak, Wigan delivered over **1,000 tests** across its centres each week – with **287 tests** taken on their single busiest day. New testing centres were easily added to the eForm booking system, and old centres were easily removed. Out of the 10 testing pilots in England, Wigan Council was the only local authority able to find a viable digital solution.

What's Next?

As Wigan Council continue to navigate unprecedented times, its RPA and eForm platforms provide the answer to managing a wide spectrum of digital tasks.

To learn more about Wigan's project, and how they remained adaptable throughout the pandemic, [click here](#).