WALK-IN ASSISTED DIGITAL WHITE PAPER

THE OPEN IDENTITY EXCHANGE | COUNTERPOINT CONSULTING
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Open Identity Exchange UK (OIXUK) discovery project examined the delivery of walk-in assisted digital support for the Passports Online Renewal service by a third party. The user journey did not include GOV.UK Verify registration, but the findings from this research will feed into future work in the area of government support for identity assurance. The findings were also intended to feed into the Digital Training and Support Framework[1] procurement, at the invitation to tender stage at the time of writing.

Assisted Digital support[2] is the help given to people who cannot complete online government transactions on their own. Previous assisted digital research on the Carer's Allowance service[3] had indicated that walk-in support, where an appointment was not booked, might be more convenient for some customers, reduce overheads on the service, customer and provider, whilst allowing providers to continue their other work right up until a customer arrived. The key obstacle of walk-in revealed in previous work was the unpredictability of demand.

This discovery project investigated the hypothesis: **'Walk-in assisted digital is effective[4] for some users, at least for some services, and feasible[5] for some suppliers to provide.'** It sought to identify design features of a successful walk-in service for a universal service.

The project was done with the Timpson Group[6], which has nearly 1500 branches nationwide. Timpson Colleagues[7] provided the third party support in two locations during October and November 2015. Walk-in support was tested on 29 participants with low digital skills, confidence or limited access to the Internet. Participants were told to arrive any time between 9.30am and 4.30pm on either the Friday or Saturday.

The findings were found to be in support of the hypothesis in this study. In these two locations, for the universal[8] prototype service used, and with the levels of demand simulated, walk-in assisted digital was effective for users and feasible for the provider. The research indicated that features promoting successful walk-in assisted digital support may include the option of a private area touchscreens as an alternative to a mouse and friendly, patient helpers. Recommendations include that government services consider walk-in Assisted Digital services where appropriate and that further research is carried out with a live service, and other government transactions.

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[1] https://assisteddigital.blog.gov.uk/2015/11/19/digital-training-and-support-framework-is-open-for-submissions/
[2] https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/assisted-digital
[3] https://assisteddigital.blog.gov.uk/2014/09/04/testing-assisted-digital-support-for-carers-allowance/
[4] Effective in this hypothesis is defined as successful completion of the Assisted Digital service and customer satisfaction
[5] Feasible in this hypothesis refers to Timpson Group responding to unpredictable demand alongside other business for this study, as well as the third party's opinion about on-going feasibility after the study had been completed.
[6] https://www.timpson.co.uk/about/76/group-companies
[7] Timpson use the word colleague instead of staff. Colleague is used instead of staff throughout this paper
[8] Renewing a passport is a service open to the majority of UK adults

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# 1. Background, Objectives and Hypothesis

This discovery project explored the hypothesis: **walk-in assisted digital is effective for some users, at least for some services, and feasible for some suppliers to provide**. The project aimed to explore if a walk-in assisted digital service could work for a universal service, as well as what design features might work well for successful walk-in assisted digital support. Or, conversely to ascertain why it did not work.

Assisted Digital support[9] is help given to people who can't use online government services on their own. Landscape research indicates that around one in five people may not be able to complete a government service unaided due to a lack of skills, confidence or access. The government approach to Assisted Digital was action nine of the 2012 Government Digital Strategy; an important part of ensuring digital by default services can be used by everyone. Guidance for how services should incorporate Assisted Digital support[10] into their end-to-end service design is published in the government service manual and specifies that such support must meet user needs.

Figure 1: Government Digital Service Diagram explaining Assisted Digital Support in a digital by default context[11]
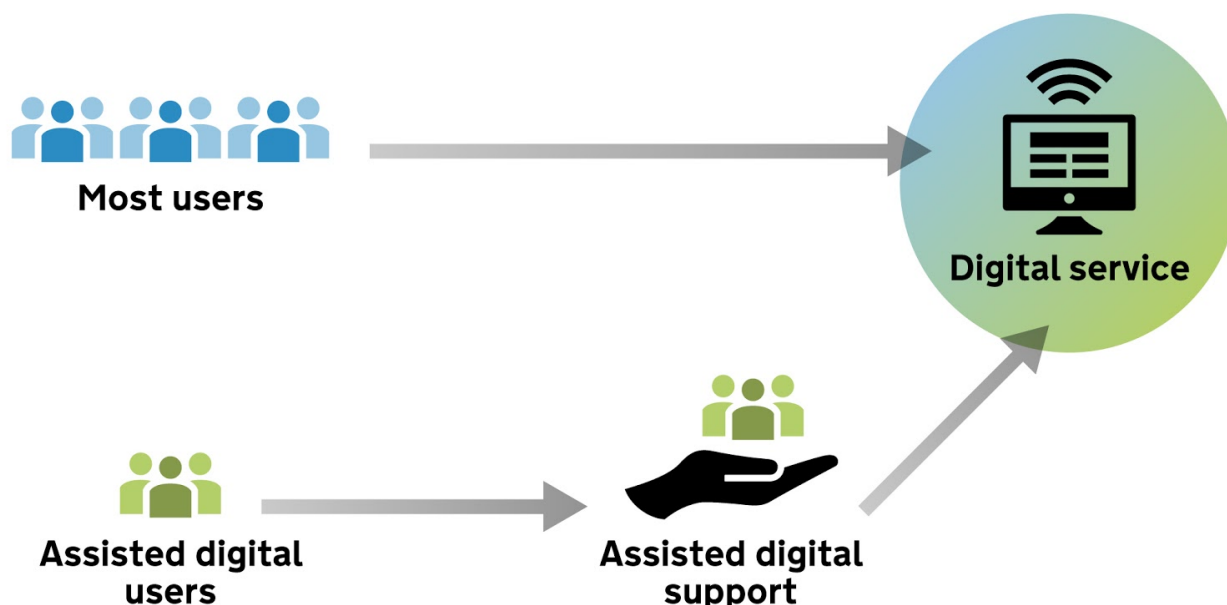
Previous assisted digital research with Department of Work and Pensions Carer's allowance and Ministry of Justice's Employment Tribunal Fees had indicated that the infrastructure behind booking an appointment for

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[9] https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/assisted-digital
[10] https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/assisted-digital/action-plan.html
[11] https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/assisted-digital

face-by-face support might be resource intensive and this is true for organisations that have to use them. Implementing online appointment booking systems is costly and once appointments are booked, they don't always happen. Appointments need to be made available in advance, leading to the logistical challenges and potential inefficiencies inherent in planning to guarantee availability, though some have advocated only making appointments available on the day to reduce these issues.[12] The research with Carer's Allowance and Employment Tribunal Fees indicated it might be better to delegate booking to the provider, or to consider walk-in, particularly for short transactions.

Key potential advantages of walk-in are:
- More convenient for at least some customers
- Reduces overheads on the service, customer and provider
- Allows providers to continue their other work right up until a customer arrives

However, as with walk-in services in general, this research revealed that unpredictability of demand is a constraint. In some instances there were long gaps between people arriving to use the service. There was also the potential that people would arrive at the same time, leading to queues and impatience about waiting. Queuing times could be longer for services that take a long time to complete, particularly if people arrived at the same time, so drop-in support might be less suitable for more complex transactions, where pre-booking an appointment would be more appropriate. However, customers might be less concerned about queues if the drop-in location were easy to access by being near to their homes or workplaces, in locations where people shop. We were also aware that for really short and simple to complete services (such as Prison Visit Bookings), face to face support might be unnecessary, as telephone support could achieve the same ends with greater convenience to the end user. Any gaps between Assisted Digital customers arriving might be less of an issue to the provider if other work could be performed in-between.

To explore the hypothesis that 'walk-in assisted digital is effective for some users, some services and feasible for some suppliers,' a service was identified that seemed an appropriate length - neither so short it wouldn't be worth physically going anywhere, nor so long that an appointment would seem necessary. To reach the widest demographic, a universal service was considered appropriate.

The prototype Passports Online Renewal Service was chosen as a universal service of appropriate length for this pilot. All British Citizens over the age of twenty-six are eligible to complete it, and the service can be completed within five to fifteen minutes by the majority of users.

The Passport Service also has an existing link with third party help in the form of photography shops, as well as with identity, as the passport is a key document used by many GOV.UK Verify identity providers.

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[12] http://web.bma.org.uk/pressrel.nsf/wall/8EFED143EBD30BA680256EEB00361F53?OpenDocument

Assisted Digital Support for Identity Assurance was not explored as little is known about good walk-in assisted digital support. Findings from this study will feed into any future research into support for identity assurance.

The Timpson Group were keen to explore the provision of face-to-face Assisted Digital Support on the basis that it might prove to be a potential source of future revenue.

This discovery project recruited participants who might need to complete a Government service online but don't have access to the Internet and/or the necessary skills to complete the transaction without help. The participant was made aware they could get support at Timpson and they could just walk-in. The participant went to the research venue they had been recruited near, at a time across two offered days that the participant chose. They were given help to successfully complete the transaction online.

Participants needed to be eligible for the service and have a valid UK passport. The location needed to be convenient and accessible and the provider needed to have the skills and capability (i.e. equipment, internet access) to provide the universal service as well as deliver Assisted Digital support.

The project explored the participants' experience of the walk-in service, which included reported user satisfaction and recorded waiting time as well as transaction length; participant response to other business taking place in the support provider's premises, and provider response to dealing with walk-in demand in addition to usual business taking place. It did not explore support of GOV.UK Verify registration; neither did it test elements of taking a passport photograph (though a photo will be required), nor did it test the photo payment process (a non-Assisted Digital element of the service).

2. Methods Used

The Timpson Group includes the Timpson shoe repair shops, Max Spielmann photo centres, Snappy Snaps photo centres and ArkHive, a purpose built concept identity shop. For this research project, a Max Spielmann branch in Newbury and the ArkHive shop in Henley-on-Thames were used. The two different locations provided different angles on the hypothesis and were not intended to be duplicates.

The first location was an existing Max Spielmann Store inside the Tesco Extra at Newbury Retail Park in Newbury. The two Timpson colleagues running the store continued business as usual at the same time as delivering support. Space was at a premium in the 36m² shop (See figure 4). This location tested a 'retrofit' option (where an existing Max Spielmann store's portrait studio was adapted to provide a sit-down, private space) to enable exploration of how existing stores might 'add on' an Assisted Digital service.

The second research location was a new, purpose-built, concept identity store on a busy street of shops in Henley on Thames, called ArkHive. The store had not yet opened for business as usual. Any business taking place in the store alongside the assisted digital support was less clearly defined than the Newbury store. This venue had more space, with a variety of environments in which to test how best to deliver the support.

The project recruited forty participants (twenty for each location), with the expectation that about thirty would show up on the selected days. Participants from a range of Assisted Digital skill levels were recruited. The recruitment agent struggled to meet the brief, supplying fewer of the least skilled participants and more of those with a higher skill level. They also recruited three people outside of the brief who did not have any assisted digital needs.

Figure 3. Participants recruited

- 4 participants who do not own or use a desktop, laptop or tablet computer or a smartphone.
- 8 participants who do not own or use a desktop, laptop or tablet computer, but do make limited use of a smartphone for calls, messages, photos, a few apps.
- 17 participants who own and use a desktop, laptop or tablet computer but do not use it to make any purchases, or for any government or financial services.

Participants were asked to arrive any time between 9.30am-4.30pm on either of the research days and to bring their passports. Participants also received a reminder call the day before from the agency. The research days were Friday 9th and Saturday 10th October for Newbury and Friday 13th and Saturday 14th November for Henley. We chose Fridays and Saturdays because we were advised by Timpson that these would be the busiest for running alongside business as usual, in order to test customer feelings around waiting. We also wanted to

include a weekend day because we thought this might prove convenient to some participants. When they arrived at the stores they were invited to sign consent forms.

Participants who consented to audio and visual recordings, were filmed as they received support to use the online service. This allowed capture of their activity on-screen as well as their expression, body language and behaviour. The transaction length, with support, was obtained from the recordings, measured from the time the participant sat down to the point they left their chair after receiving support. This enabled comparison of participants' perceived support times and to give an idea of the range of support durations, which could later be related to the digital skill level of the participant. At both locations follow-up interviews were recorded and forty pounds cash incentive was given to each participant at the end of the interview.

Timpson colleagues providing support were given minimal preparation other than access to the test service. This was deliberate to mimic the nature of walk in support, where Timpson colleagues should not need special training to use a service that is designed to be intuitive enough for self-service. They were encouraged to let the participant do as much of the transaction as possible. To get the provider perspective on whether the support was feasible, we interviewed the people giving the support after each research day, including the person covering business as usual in Newbury, and spoke with the Timpson project manager after the trial to get their feedback.

Newbury Store

The Newbury store was small, with much equipment fixed in place so space was tight (see figure 4). Participants were observed from the moment they entered the store.

As participants entered, they were greeted by one of the two Timpson Colleagues and asked to sign a participation consent form. The existing Portrait studio corner (see figures 4, 5 and 6) was used to provide Assisted Digital support. A black curtain was added for privacy and a grey sheet was used for the background, to enable compliant photos to be taken (see figure 6). For the purposes of research, a Timpson colleague took the photo of the participant. It should be noted that any live Assisted Digital support service funded by Government would expect the user to provide their own compliant photograph, or pay a third party to take it for them.

Figure 4. Plan of Max Spielmann Store Newbury - a table was put in the photo studio for support

Figure 5. Photo of whole Max Spielmann Store

Figure 6. Photo of Portrait studio converted to help area

The Assisted Digital support provided was given from the opening "Start now" screen, up to and including the closing screen, seen below in figure 6. Follow-up interviews with participants were carried out in a room upstairs in the Tesco Extra store.

Figure 7. Screenshots of the first and final pages of the Passports service used in this project
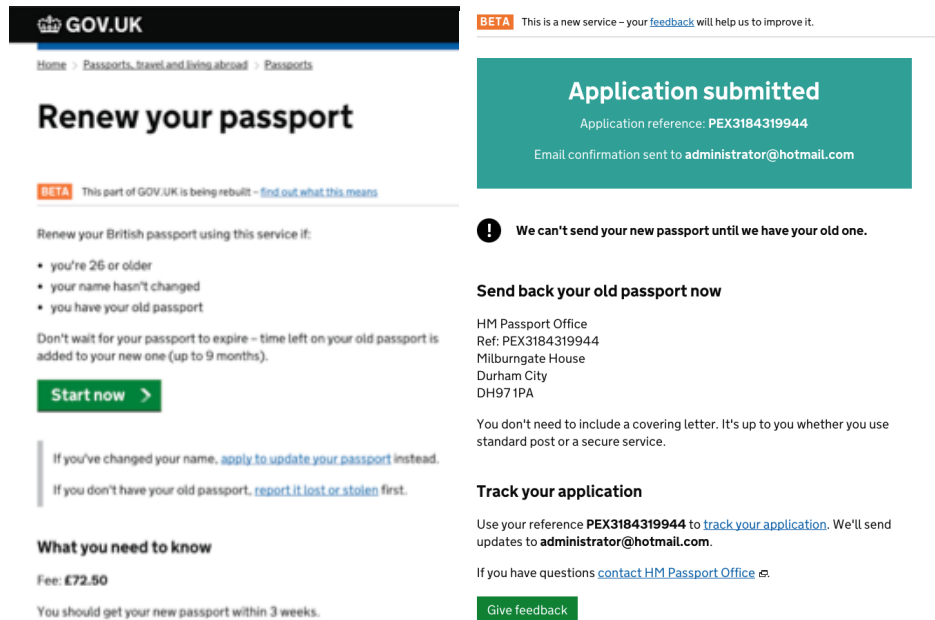
Henley - Walk-In Environment

For Henley the store was laid out according to the floor plan below (fig. 8). The user journey in Henley began from start of the online transaction support (see fig. 7) to after the interview. Support was offered to participants at the sofas, in the Biometric Zone, and at the table and chairs near the meeting room. All follow-up interviews were conducted in the meeting room except for one, which was conducted at the large table.

Figure 8. Henley ArkHive store plan

Figure 9. ArkHive Identity shop on Bell Street in Henley

Figure 10. The sofas area where participants waited and were supported at the sofas or the table behind

Figure 11. The Biometric area where most support was given

Figure 12. The interview room

3. Findings

NEWBURY

Participants at Newbury

Out of the twenty participants who were recruited for Newbury, sixteen came to the store between Friday 9th and Saturday 10th October. Ten participants came on Friday and six turned up on Saturday. All participants arrived at the store within a few minutes of the stated research opening hours of 9.30am - 4.30pm. The participants' overall demographics are listed in Figure 13. These show that there were more female Newbury participants than male; they were representative of the age range eligible for the service (over twenty six years old), came from slightly lower socioeconomic groups than average for West Berkshire, and were slightly less ethnically diverse than typical for their area.

Figure 13: Participant demographics and statistics compared to local and UK statistics[13]

Feature	All Participants	Newbury Participants	West Berkshire	Henley Participants	South Oxfordshire	UK
Female : Male ratio	2.6	2	1	3.3	1	1
ABC1:C2DE Socio Economic Group ratio*	2.2	1.5	1.8	3.3	2.0	1.2
% Ethnic Minority	6.3	6.7	8.8	5.9	9.1	19.5
Mean Age (years)	57	53	39 (~55***)	61	41 (~55***)	39
Mean, Median and Mode DI Scale level	5, 5, 5	4.9, 5, 7	Not available	5.1, 5, 5	Not available	Not available
Mean distance from home (miles)**	1.98	1.98	N/A	1.98	N/A	N/A
< 2 miles from home**	18	9	N/A	9	N/A	N/A
< 1 miles from home**	10	2	N/A	8	N/A	N/A

* Based on earnings of highest wage earner in household - asked and recorded by recruiter

** Based on Google shortest driving distance to participant reported postcode. Excludes 3 unknowns and 3 outliers (2 participants live in Oxford and regularly visit relatives in Henley, one lives nearly 20 miles away but visits regularly to work)

*** Adjusted to take into account participant age had to be over 26

### *Participants' digital capacity and access needs*

The Newbury participants were plotted on the Digital Inclusion scale (DI Scale)[14], which shows their online skill levels from one to nine, with one the lowest and nine the highest. Ten participants had Assisted Digital needs

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[13] Statistics from ONS Census 2011
http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-local-authorities-in-england-and-wales/

and were rated below seven on the Digital Inclusion Scale (subsequently referred to as 'Assisted Digital Participants') based on their responses to interview questions around their ownership, access to and use of internet enabled devices, and on their performance whilst being supported through the transaction. This included one user who did not want to wait for the testing session and did not take part but was interviewed during a short follow up call.

Fig. 14 Participants from Newbury plotted on the Digital Inclusion Scale[15]

Digital inclusion scale
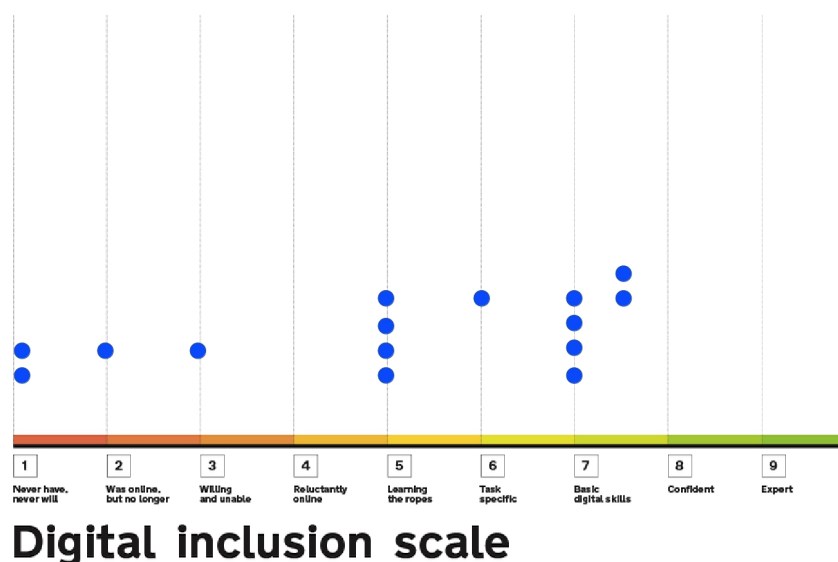
Technology use for Newbury Assisted Digital participants.

- 3 participants had iPads
- 2 participants had a smartphone (although 1 user only used it for SMS and calls)
- 2 participants had computers
- 2 participants had no device by which to access the internet

Access needs Newbury Assisted Digital participants:

- 2 participants had walking or sitting difficulties due to bad backs or reduced mobility.
- 1 user had severe dyslexia and short term memory loss

Average length of transaction with help

Participants six and ten both experienced technical issues with the service. Their times are not included in the transaction length analysis. The time starts at the point they sit down in the corner of the shop with the Timpson colleague, James, and stops when James tells them the process is complete. There were seven Assisted Digital participants who had valid recordings with no technical issues. The average time spent for these participants was

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[14] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-digital-inclusion-strategy/government-digital-inclusion-strategy#annex-2-digital-inclusion-scale-for-individuals

[15] See note 14

twenty three minutes and four seconds which is over nine minutes longer than for the four non-Assisted Digital participants with valid recording of thirteen minutes and forty one seconds.

Observations of the help at Newbury

Three of the Assisted Digital participants struggled to use the mouse, greatly slowing their progress through the transaction. One of these had pressed the screen assuming it was a touchscreen. This led to the idea that touchscreens might speed support for transactions for some people. This idea was tested in Henley.

"Is this not a touchscreen?"
[jabbing laptop screen when told he'd need to use the mouse] "Oh dear…"

There were some instances where the help being offered may be deemed advice and guidance rather than strictly just focused on providing support with digital skills and access. If a third party gives incorrect advice, liability may rest with the provider rather than the user. The service is looking in more detail at the video footage to establish whether guidelines should be drawn up on this issue. Nevertheless, it was clear that this advice was of great value to the participants as part of the support.

The videos clearly showed participants were relaxed and laughing and they visibly enjoyed the process of being supported. The Timpson Colleague was clearly experienced at providing support for technology and quickly established rapport with the participants. Observing Timpson Colleagues helping customers in the store with other services demonstrated an overlap in skills that seemed helpful for good Assisted Digital support: calm, friendly, patient, and judgement free.

Feedback from interviews at Newbury

Expectations of the process

When asked after they had tried the service what they expected, results varied. Five Assisted Digital participants said they had expected what had happened, one expected paper and another user said that they were expecting more queues. Many weren't sure what to expect.

"Well he's going to be down there as well, so if I get stuck, he's going to …
well, I hope he will, otherwise I can't do it …"

Convenience and feelings about waiting

Several Assisted Digital participants indicated they had scheduled their visit with another activity: breaks, after work, after school drop-off, visiting other shops. At least two Assisted Digital participants brought their Tesco shopping trolleys with them into the store. Another Assisted Digital participant indicated they couldn't drive so

were dependent on others for what time they were dropped off. Three Assisted Digital participants did not work; one was out of work, the other two were retired so they could choose when they wanted to come.

Figure 15. Photo of a shopping trolley in the store brought in by a participant

"It wasn't long [to wait]. I didn't go around the store because I would be tempted [to buy]. 15/20 minutes isn't long"

Clearly convenience is likely to be connected to how close the location is to where participants live (see figure 13). The majority of the participants lived within two miles of the Newbury store. However, only two lived within one mile. This is likely to be due to it being an out-of-town shopping centre, with little housing very close by. Recruitment of participants was carried out in front of the store, so whether this location would be convenient to the majority of Newbury's population is uncertain, though Timpson have pointed out that there are two Timpson shops and a Snappy Snaps franchise, as part of their extensive national branch network, in the centre of Newbury where support could potentially also be offered.

"It was all right except for my back. If I had queued up on Friday, I would have come back on a Saturday or a bit later on … I only live across the road."

About half of the Assisted Digital participants did not have to wait to be seen. One Assisted Digital participant mentioned not coming on a Saturday because they wanted to avoid the busiest day and this may help to explain why twice as many came on Friday as on Saturday. The one person who left after waiting had come at the busiest shop time on the Saturday afternoon. However, it is worth bearing in mind that the participants seem to have been recruited outside the store on the Tuesday so there could be some mid-week bias.

The Assisted Digital participants tended not to mention any concern about waiting unless prompted during the interview. However, when asked, the one who had not had to wait indicated that waiting was a concern due to a walking difficulty. Similarly, one participant who had been made to wait indicated that waiting had been a slight

concern because of his back problem. There wasn't suitable seating available for them. Some felt more negative than others about having to wait.

Feelings about the overall process at Newbury

On the whole the Assisted Digital participants thought the process was quick and easy. When asked how long it took they were either accurate and happy with this time or underestimated, but were still happy. Several of the participants commented that they appreciated the patience of the Timpson colleague and one indicated that this had helped them do the transaction more easily. At least two participants indicated that they'd found the process enjoyable.

> "I was very slow on the computer. I had fun. 10 minutes?"

There were also a few positive comments from Assisted Digital participants about the impact of the curtain. It's impact on privacy, ability to concentrate and the resulting lack of worry about queues came up.

Would they come back?

Answers from participants in incentive based research such as this should be considered with caution.

One measure of whether the support met any of the participants needs was if participants would use it again.

It's worth noting that a negative answer to this question may also indicate that support successfully met user needs and that the participant gained enough confidence or skills to self-serve next time. Not surprisingly, participants' answers were ambiguous. From their uncertain responses, the number of participants who might come back could be anywhere from zero to five of the ten Assisted Digital participants. One person said they'd come back if it was free, one would consider it if there was a reasonable charge but would try to do it themselves if it was unreasonable.

Seven Assisted Digital participants at Newbury indicated they'd try it at home next time. Two of these said they had gained confidence and skill from doing it once. Those who had gained confidence were considered a real success as the ultimate aim is for people to increase their digital skills and self-serve. Most Newbury participants were less sure when asked how they would deal with photo issues. Three thought they could definitely get help at home to do this if they struggled.

> "Well I did it, which is good for me. It was helpful having
> someone read it [due to my dyslexia]"

Provider perspective at Newbury

The Timpson colleague thought it was straightforward to deliver the Assisted Digital support, and that normal business continued while he concentrated on providing support. However, he was behind a curtain and so could

not be certain of this. There were a number of occasions over the two days when photo customers were observed waiting for help. This was particularly the case when the Timpson Colleague was providing support to people low on the Digital Inclusion scale. Some of these transactions took around thirty minutes. The Timpson Colleague indicated after one of these long sessions that Assisted Digital support provision might not be possible in a store with only a single person running it, though it is worth noting that the Timpson average number of colleagues per shop is 2.2 and it's even higher in Max Spielmann shops. It is uncertain whether this study simulated demand as artificially high, too low or around the future number.

> "It was really busy. We made a week's target today!" Timpson Colleague

The curtain might obscure the view of Timpson Colleagues to judge whether they could provide brief shop-floor help - if the Assisted Digital customer was happy to continue for a short period alone. Nevertheless, the Timpson Colleague covering the photo customers reported that business targets were exceeded on the Friday and Saturday. This was despite much of their time being disrupted by interaction with the project - welcoming participants, getting them to sign consent forms, sorting technical difficulties and answering questions from the research team. The area manager confirmed that two Timpson Colleagues are allocated to this store (the same number as present on the research days), and this double cover would normally be in place for at least one day at the busier end of the week (Fridays and Saturdays). However, one of these colleagues may also be away from the store for four to six days per week providing cover elsewhere. Timpson have indicated that Timpson Colleagues are trained to respond swiftly and flexibly to fluctuations in demand, and that operationally they regularly move between stores to address fluctuations in demand. Following this study, Timpson felt their existing operational approach would also work for variations in walk-in Assisted Digital demand.

> "We already deal with great variation in demand in our stores. The weather can greatly affect demand, for example. It's just not a problem. " Timpson Project Manager

HENLEY

Participants at Henley

Out of the nineteen participants who were recruited for Henley, seventeen turned up to the store between Friday 13th and Saturday 14th November. Twelve participants came on Friday and five on the Saturday. Three participants arrived before the stated research opening times, arriving between 9am and 9.30am and all others arrived between 9.30am and 4.30pm. There was an even higher ratio of female to male participants in Henley than in Newbury, participants were slightly less ethnically diverse than is typical for the area, slightly older than is representative of the age range eligible for this service of over twenty six years of and from higher socio-economic groups than is typical for South Oxfordshire (see figure 13).

Participant digital capacity and access needs

There were sixteen Assisted Digital participants at Henley and only one non-Assisted Digital participant, assessed based on their interview responses and performance during support (see fig. 16 - Henley participants plotted on the DI scale).

Figure 16. Participants from Henley plotted on the Digital Inclusion Scale
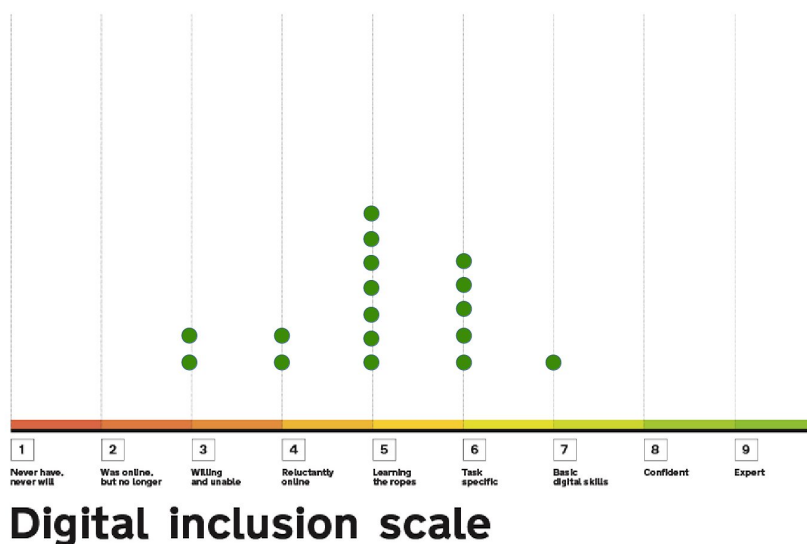
Technology ownership of participants:

- 7 participants had iPads or tablets
- 4 participants had smartphones
- 7 participants had laptops or desktops
- Nobody had no device by which to access the internet

Participant access needs:

- At least 2 participants had a walking difficulty
- 1 user had a weakened arm and a speech impairment due to a stroke

Average length of transaction with help at Henley

The average length of transaction time was fifteen minutes and thirty nine seconds in Henley (the recording for one participant failed, so was excluded from calculating the average supported transaction time).

Four Assisted Digital participants were observed using the touchscreens at Henley. Two Assisted Digital participants indicated that they wished they had, but had not known they could. One of these had been offered the touchscreen, but had perhaps not understood the question. This participant took thirty minutes to complete the transaction, and struggled with the mouse. One participant needed to touch the screen several times to

activate the on-screen buttons. The Timpson Colleague thought this was due to the screen accepting swipe movements (adjusting settings may help).

> "Before I was a florist I was a typist. [I'm] okay with a keyboard…
> I found the mouse really difficult. I would have preferred to use the screen."

There were two hypotheses around whether participants would prefer to use the touchscreen on-screen keyboard or not. One hypothesis was that people would prefer to use these to stay on the same device. The other was that people would prefer a physical keyboard as it is generally easier to type on these. Four participants used the touchscreen keyboard available. Two of the participants who used the physical keyboard indicated they had touch-typing experience, so naturally used the keyboard. The two participants who used the on-screen keyboards were used to using these keyboards, one on an iPad the other on their smartphone.

At Henley, the Timpson colleagues were less familiar with the service and had less experience helping people with technology. At first this led to a few incorrect prompts.

Two participants could not read their own passport, as they didn't have their reading glasses, so the Timpson Colleague read them on their behalf for the participant to type. For one of these the Timpson colleague initially read out the wrong expiry date. This may be appropriate support, but raises the question of liability.

Feedback from interviews at Henley

Expectations of the process

Four Assisted Digital participants indicated the process was as they had expected, one user had expected paper forms and another to sign photos. One said it was more comfortable than expected.

> "I thought the survey would be on paper as passports is all on paper.
> The touchscreens were so cool!"

Convenience and Feelings about waiting

Convenience was a factor in deciding when to come. Nine participants mentioned scheduling their trip with other activities. As with Newbury, it appeared people were trying to avoid busy times. A young couple indicated the only time they were available was when their parents were looking after their children.

> "I was in the area. I had a doctor's appointment at 9 o'clock and it was on my way"

The majority of participants lived within two miles of the ArkHive store. One of the participants dropped in on the Friday, when they had planned to visit on the Saturday. They said they lived nearby and had dropped by on

the off chance after work, but had forgotten their passport. When asked about waiting in the follow up interview on the Saturday, they did not raise this as an issue indicating that perhaps it was not very inconvenient as they lived nearby.

On the Friday morning several participants arrived within a couple of hours. Two Timpson Colleagues were in store and a range of devices were available, so only three of the Assisted Digital participants had to wait for a short period. On the Saturday afternoon one of the Timpson Colleagues had to leave early. The last two participants were a couple; the first was quite quick so their partner did not comment on the ten minute wait despite saying she was generally impatient. However, there was a wait-time for the follow up interview and some participants had a fifteen to twenty minute wait for this. Although this interview was solely an element of the research, the comments about waiting were considered in general terms as they might also be applicable to waiting for the actual service.

One Assisted Digital participant who'd had to wait indicated that the waiting environment was very important. He described previous bad experiences of having to stand in line in the Post Office, hearing about everyone's problems and being ordered to do things in a particular way. There were positive comments about the free coffee and the increased comfort available in ArkHive.

Feelings about the overall process

Four Assisted Digital participants and the non-Assisted Digital participant said they thought the online form was quicker and easier than they expected. However, three Assisted Digital participants under-estimated the time it actually took by over five minutes, and two over-estimated by over five minutes with three estimates within three minutes of the actual time.

When participants were asked about the transaction time in the context of waiting, the participants treated this separately from the waiting time. The total journey time mattered less to them than the wait before it started and the waiting environment, which ties in with other research on queuing theory.[16]

> "Don't mind driving 7 miles for this [Would you wait 20mins?] By the time you've poured yourself a coffee and drunk it… and for 5 minutes you can uhhhh [relax]"

Several participants commented that they greatly appreciated the help and support. Two participants mentioned that they were being told what to do, which was helpful in some ways, but they felt hurried. This indicates that guidance or training should be available for people giving support, particularly given the potential for liability.

Feedback was generally positive from those who used the touchscreens. Even the participant who had needed to touch the screen several times still thought this was the best way to perform the transaction.

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[16] Two papers about queuing:
1. http://www.scs-europe.net/services/ess2002/PDF/bus-5.pdf
2. http://www.slate.com/articles/business/operations/2012/06/queueing_theory_what_people_hate_most_about_waiting_in_line_.html

However, there was one participant who regularly uses an iPad who chose a mouse as they knew this would be easier to use. One participant commented on the height difference between the physical keyboard and the screen being awkward in the sofa area. Some participants commented on the variation in temperature.

Would they come back?

As with Newbury, findings for this question should be treated with caution, and merits further investigation in a live context. The answers were ambiguous. The majority (eight Assisted Digital participants) said they would try at home first, though they weren't so sure when questioned about the photo. From the ambiguous responses, anywhere from zero to eight out of the sixteen Assisted Digital participants said they might come back. One participant seemed keen to come back even if there was a charge, though he seemed to have unrealistic expectations about the ability of the store to chase his passport if it was delayed. Two mentioned comparing the cost to the Post Office 'Check and Send' service, and other photo services if there were a charge. Three participants in Henley indicated that they'd come back if it were free. Three said they'd definitely get help at home enough to deal with the photo. Two favoured the Post Office, one in order to support keeping it open, the other due to positive customer experience.

Provider perspective at Henley

The Timpson Colleagues reported that they found the process straightforward and faster than expected. This may be partly due to the slightly higher digital skills in the participants. Because business as usual had yet to start in the Henley store, it was not possible to draw any conclusions on how it might fit in with other work. However, Timpson have indicated that it was always in their plans to offer some kind of Assisted Digital service at the ArkHive shop.

Timpson colleagues indicated that some areas of the store seemed more appropriate for support than others. The desk in the biometric area was higher relative to the chairs so potentially slightly less comfortable. An improvement may be increased adjustability of the height of the touchscreen

Comparison between sites

Store activity, location relative to centres of population and facilities at the sites were clearly different so direct comparisons are difficult. Queuing was more prevalent at Newbury than in Henley. Henley provided an opportunity to focus in on particular aspects like the touchscreen interface and participants had a choice of what kind of environment to receive support.

Apart from being female-biased the participants were fairly representative of the local populations in each area despite the recruitment selection for lack of digital skills (see figure 13). However, these areas have higher

earnings and lower ethnic diversity than the South East or UK as a whole, so some caution should be used in applying the findings elsewhere.[17]

There were common aspects of support that people liked across both sites: friendly, patient customer support, a lack of reliance on friends and family, privacy and the convenience of tying the walk-in support with other activities. What they didn't like was any waiting, especially waiting with others, or with nothing to do, feeling hurried (by external factors such as parking tickets as well as any factors in the shop like queues) and any technical issues.

Trust was a factor for some Assisted Digital participants at both sites. Several participants were nervous about paying online. Two participants at Henley and one at Newbury had lost money through card fraud. This had reduced their confidence online. Participants seemed to feel safer paying online with government transactions, particularly if receiving official help to validate they were doing it correctly. Two Assisted Digital participants from Henley and two from Newbury said they were positive about and interested in the support before they came. However, several distrusted the recruitment agent. Others doubted whether they'd actually get the cash incentive. This may have been partly down to the recruitment approach (it was the same recruiter for both locations). All participants appreciated the support once at the shops.

<blockquote>"I thought it's such a good idea [before coming]…. It takes all the fear out of it [after receiving help]. We should spread the word!"</blockquote>

One Henley Assisted Digital participant said that the idea of receiving help at a third party premises had been slightly scary, particularly somewhere she'd never heard of. This was less of a factor in the Tesco Extra environment in Newbury for the established Max Spielmann brand. In Henley three participants had concerned family members accompany them to ArkHive, whereas in Newbury only one was accompanied. Again this could have been because of the way they were recruited, as there were no negative comments about the third party provider. Timpson have indicated that a government-approved mark might help reassure customers.

<blockquote>"It was easier than I expected - maybe because of the nice chap helping me."</blockquote>

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[17] http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/mro/news-release/census-2-1----south-east/census-gives-insights-into-characteristics-of-the-south-east-s-population.html

4. Implications

Although the numbers of Assisted Digital participants in this study were relatively small (with some recruitment bias), there were a number of people for whom walk-in assisted digital proved effective with this provider. The prototype service chosen is estimated at seven on the digital inclusion scale (i.e. users need basic online skills[18] to complete it), which is fairly typical for government services.[19] For transactions of a similar length (five to fifteen minutes), these findings may, therefore, also be relevant.

It is difficult to say whether walk-in support would be suitable for other government services such as those including GOV.UK Verify. What is clear is that each service will need to be assessed on a case by case basis, and further areas to focus on in research should include how adding GOV.UK Verify registration alters the demand for face-to-face support for services, the length of time it adds affects walk-in, what preparation customers may need in terms of documentation to bring and any other factors such as privacy and security.

We discussed the feasibility of walk-in support with Timpson. They indicated that they had not seen anything that would indicate the support would not be feasible. The core business had not been compromised, revenue earning equipment had not needed to be removed to make space for the support. For each service the difficulty and length of time to complete a transaction would be a deciding factor, as well as the need for a suitable business case.

One of the challenges to walk-in services of all kinds is unpredictable demand, a potential issue that Timpson are aware of. As indicated above, Timpson thought this discovery project had not challenged their in-store support and felt that the service worked well in this instance alongside their existing service offering. They said that their regular business is entirely walk-in and varies greatly so they are used to dealing with fluctuations in demand. If demand was higher than in the current study Timpson have said they would allocate more Timpson Colleagues to support as required.

From an identity perspective this research provides useful context for designing support for digital identity solutions for those people who have low online skills, confidence, reduced access and potentially small digital footprints, as the issues are likely to interrelate. Given that there are people who still struggle with the very basics of computer interaction, digital approaches should proceed with this in mind. However, the progress of many of the participants, particularly when supported by touchscreens and one-to-one support was encouraging.

Features of support improving the success of walk-in Assisted Digital would appear to be:
- Touchscreens for those used to iPads and smartphones or who have never used a mouse
- Resourcing to keep waiting times to twenty minutes or less (potentially to cover business as usual if run alongside this)

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[18] https://web.archive.org/web/20140313015933/http://www.go-on.co.uk/opportunity/basic-online-skills
[19] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-digital-inclusion-strategy/exemplar-services-and-identity-assurance-how-complex-they-are

- Seating and something to distract people waiting (e.g. coffee, newspapers)
- Being local to where people live or frequently visit for other tasks and has parking nearby
- An element of privacy
- Friendly, patient people providing support, ideally with experience of supporting people with technology

5. Conclusion

The findings of this trial are in support of the hypothesis: 'walk-in assisted digital is effective for some users, at least for some services, and feasible for some suppliers to provide.' The participants recruited who faced access, skills or motivation barriers to using government services on their own, were able to complete the transaction with the support of a Timpson Colleague. Positive feedback from participants indicated that the implementation was effective in supporting their needs in a manner that they were happy with, indicating that walk-in assisted digital support was effective for them in the context of this prototype service. From observations made by the researchers on site, it seemed feasible for the provider to respond to the demand in this instance.

Timpson have said that for the level of demand simulated they feel that delivering the service was feasible. They have further commented that they could deal with higher demand within their current flexible approach to allocating Timpson Colleagues across stores.

6. Recommendations

1. Further research should be carried out on walk-in Assisted Digital with a live service. This would test the actual behaviour of people offered this option and allow further exploration of trust factors for customers in a live third party setting. Perhaps their needs would be better met in a different way, in reality.
2. Further research to test the impact in store on the unpredictability of demand
3. Government services should consider recommending support providers to have touchscreens available to save transaction time and make it easier for customers
4. Government services should consider walk-in Assisted Digital as a potential option when testing Assisted Digital face by face support options if these are required to meet user needs
5. Further research should be carried out into the impact of touchscreens. How should these be offered and explained to customers who may not understand the concept, and how to adjust settings to cope with first time users.
6. Further research should be carried out into other government transactions.
7. Further research into ways to build trust in third parties such as government approved assisted digital provider marks

Appendices Available on Request

- Details of structured observations
- Spread sheet tables of summarised findings
- Recruitment brief for agency tender
- Agency screener questions
- Research brief
- Interview script
- Preparation letter from recruiter to participants
- Details of the touchscreens used at Henley and their set-up