



UK Health
Security
Agency

Calderdale Council self-isolation pilot

Local food delivery

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Background to pilot

People in Calderdale who have needed to isolate due to having COVID-19 or being a contact of someone who has COVID-19, have struggled to do so, mainly due to outlying areas having a lack of access to good, affordable fresh food. Supermarket delivery slots have been hard to come by, and even if they are available, they are not contributing to the local economy like the local independent businesses do. To facilitate a proper isolation and to help vulnerable people in these areas, we propose connecting Calderdale's independent, locally run businesses with customers using a bespoke version of the existing digital platform '[Totally Locally High Streets Online](#)'.

Challenges and barriers

Getting online

As expected, (as Totally Locally have found elsewhere), it takes a lot of convincing to get some traders to sign up and start using the site. Even then, the time and technical skills required prevent some from registering and adding products.

Other traders seemed willing to register but simply lacked the time to do this. We offered to photograph their products and upload them as well as registering on their behalf, but still needed them to complete the registration process, register Stripe and so on, which has led to delays.

We feel that these traders won't ever learn how to keep their products updated because we did the initial work for them.

Traders with hundreds or even thousands of products find it a bit daunting to go online due to the work it would take, so we have been recommending that they start small, with their 10 or 20 best-selling items (for example, the DIY stall).

The lighting stall thought it too much effort to go online due to their number of products, but also because most customers don't know exactly what bulb or electrical item they need to replace. Most need a to-and-fro question to get the bottom of the exact bulb needed, and even after this they are often returned and replaced for different types – this would be difficult to replicate remotely via a delivery service. Also, Stripe keeps their transaction fees when amounts are refunded to customers, so the trader loses out small amounts with every refund.

Some traders such as butchers and fishmongers when selling in person might offer different weights or prices of items when asked for specific cuts or portions. Due to this, they have come up with an average sized portion for one person and priced accordingly online – these do vary

slightly with each order. This is easier for customers to understand rather than ordering weights that they might not be familiar with (for example, per 100g and how this relates to an average portion size).

Some traders already had a website that sells products, so we were able to import their products from this, but this does leave them with 2 sites to upkeep and control stock levels with (if they do this).

We felt that some essentials weren't available from the registered traders, so we are working to provide some essentials from our own shop: toilet roll, toothpaste, shower gel and so on.

Payments

Some traders are online on the site but not connected to Stripe (due to the above reasons), so we have created an account and registered on their behalf, we take the online payments, then pay them in person out of a cash float.

One trader didn't want to register due to the transaction fees that Stripe charge (1.4% + 20p per order). In-person card readers often have less of a transaction fee than this (although rental/monthly fees too), and some felt that they didn't want to be charged a higher fee. Stripe is the only online payment system we could integrate with our website that supported one payment from one customer and multiple payments to each trader involved in each transaction.

Stripe (required for Payments) puts some traders off using the site as they might not have heard of it previously or feel it's too much effort to register. The sign-up process is a bit lengthy as you need to add information about their business as well as bank details and so on.

As orders are combined into one cargo bike delivery, traders don't have control over shipping and minimum order amounts – due to this, low-value orders from some traders cause issues as the Stripe fees eat into and sometimes cancel out any potential profit (for example, for a £1 bag of sweets the charge would be 21p) so we monitor order values and refund fees for any trader's orders below £5.

Communication

Some traders aren't on their stall every day or all day-long so lack the simplicity of having the order email confirmations go to just one person – due to this for one trader we must phone orders through to the shop, then along with in-person orders they are prepared specifically for the following day.

Some traders own several market stalls in different towns so have a mixture of sporadic staff and themselves working in Halifax Borough Market, requiring more co-ordination of items that need to be prepared or ordered in advance.

Deliveries

Cargodale defined the area supported for deliveries – to exclude far-flung remote parts of HX and those on more major roads for safety. This is so that if several orders need to be delivered on a particular day, they can guarantee this by not having very long journeys each time, particularly up steep hills. This has led to some confusion when explaining to customers the areas supported for delivery because it can't be easily and quickly explained. We added an exact map of the supported area to the website so customers can see for themselves, and code in the back end of the website excludes delivery from areas outside of this.

Soon after launching, our main rider had to self-isolate due to proximity with someone who tested positive. Due to this, Antony from Cargodale stepped in to cover any deliveries. There is now a backup rider familiar with Halifax and the delivery system to cover any eventualities like this.

For businesses not online on the site, or even ones registered, we added a bespoke 'delivery request' form so that payments from regular customers taken over the phone (that is, not through the website) could still be delivered using the service. This also applies to any in-person purchases from customers that might prefer the items to be delivered rather than having to carry them home. This was following feedback from one elderly customer who commented that she would love to do more of her fruit and veg shopping at the market but struggles to carry heavy shops home.

Marketing

Due to the rules on self-isolating being relaxed shortly after the service was live, we reworded the website and marketing material to better reflect this and show that the service was not only for those self-isolating at home due to COVID-19.

We created a marketing pack of material to promote the service:

- large posters (general for around the market and on the delivery Hub)
- A4 posters (for traders to show on their stalls)
- postcards (dropped to supported areas using Cargodale)
- branding the cargo bike itself

As the cargo bike gets lots of attention every time it's seen in and around the market, this has been branded with the DeliverHX name and website. We are planning to have it situated in the market for an 'open day' to hand out leaflets and encourage a discussion on green last mile

delivery and the DeliverHX service in general to help generate interest. We feel that for a large selection of the target audience, online or social media aren't the best way to reach them so seeing posters and the bike in person will help.

We have been posting about the service in local Facebook groups and asking traders to share info about the service too. A selection of images to promote the service was sent to registered businesses for them to post on social media. Many of these however don't have social media channels or post to them regularly (or have much of a following).

Feedback after cargo bike is branded up and customers are asking questions about the service: some don't trust that it's free.

Feedback from the local Test and Trace team – more affluent people who are more likely to use the service tend to fill in their T&T information online themselves via the digital journey – therefore they don't come through to the local contact tracing team, reducing our ability to do any direct promotion of the service.

There has been great interest in the pilot from local media, with Halifax Courier and Radio Leeds covering it.

Data

During the period of the pilot, we have had 13,866 people tested positive for Calderdale in the Borough. In the last week we have had 1,325 people test positive as the Omicron variant has become the dominant virus in the Borough.

During that period, we had only had 50 orders, 8 of whom have declared they were self-isolating.

We had only one response to the follow-up survey, which was previously agreed with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

Overall

We have found that adoption of the online shopping and free delivery facility is taking a long time to build-up awareness and get a steady flow of customers using it regularly.

We believe in the concept and the positive impact it will have for those self-isolating or simply unable or unwilling to shop in person. It provides a real alternative to the big supermarket online delivery options and supports the local economy. Our use of Cargodale also positively impacts our carbon footprint. We have identified funding through the DfT Last Mile Delivery programme

and through Public Health that will allow us to extend the pilot to March 2023, allowing us to better analyse the data and the longer-term future of the scheme.

We are also now supporting the local food bank with deliveries to those isolating and one of their clients commented: she liked bike delivery as it felt like she was getting a delivery from a shop or restaurant rather than a food parcel. The bikes seem to be conversation starter and helped reduce social isolation.

In terms of using the bikes, getting to and from the market by motor vehicle is already difficult, and was extra hard during the first lockdown thanks to temporary traffic measures. With further pedestrian and cycling priority measures proposed for the town centre, it's been good to prove the concept of smaller, lighter delivery vehicles.

Hopefully the qualitative data is helpful in terms of lessons learned in setting up such a scheme.

About the UK Health Security Agency

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