

Case study: The City of Edinburgh Council

Experian's Residency Checker helps Edinburgh increase council tax revenue by £2.45 million



Client

The City of Edinburgh Council is at the forefront of local government thinking and reforms with an annual expenditure of over £1 billion. One of the key areas of funding for the Council is council tax, which contributes over £210 million annually. Until recently, The City of Edinburgh's data showed that 90,000 properties in the city were benefiting from a council tax single person discount (SPD). This equates to £27 million or £35 million when water and waste water charges are included.



Challenge

The City of Edinburgh Council has traditionally undertaken a manual review of its 90,000 single person households. This is costly, time consuming and lacks independent verification of the information being supplied. This process changed during 2007 / 2008 when Experian and the Council worked together to validate the amount of single resident households in the Edinburgh area. The City of Edinburgh Council wanted to reaffirm genuine council tax SPD claimants as efficiently and effectively as possible, with minimum impact on both the claimant and the Council. In addition, they wanted to highlight any potentially fraudulent claims, to enable them to remove the discount and bill the correct amount of council tax.

Solution

The Council utilised Experian's Residency Checker solution to improve its eligibility checks on SPD claims. The Council supplied Experian with a list of single

residency addresses. These addresses were processed using Experian's Residency Checker's Occupancy Count Service. The service uses Experian's range of up-to-date data sources in combination to create a picture of the residency make-up at each address.

The results reaffirmed that 54,000 households were still entitled to receive the council tax single person discount. This meant the Council did not have to send a letter to these residents or process the returned documents.

Where the information returned showed the possibility of more than one person living at an address, the Council sent each address a canvass form asking the known resident to confirm the number of people living at that address. Where the Council suspected there was a fraudulent claim, based on the data provided, a request for further information was made to Experian.

“By working with our business improvement partner, Experian, we have been able to significantly improve the way that we validate our single person discount for eligible citizens. As well as improving council tax yield, the process ensures that SPD is only awarded to eligible households by introducing an element of independent checking of information provided. There is also evidence that the process acts as a deterrent for fraudulent claims.”

Mike Peterson
Head of Revenues and Benefits

This second request for information from Experian is permitted under provisions granted by Section 29 of the Data Protection Act.

The second request involves Experian processing a further list of addresses (with multiple occupants) against Residency Checker's Occupancy Details Service. This process uses the same data sources as the Occupancy Count Service, however, this time, the actual names of those believed to be resident are returned. In addition, a Residency Checker score was provided, to indicate both how recent and the strength of the supporting residency source data. This helped the Council prioritise resource by focussing efforts on those with the highest likelihood of being fraudulent.

Results

By working with Experian, the City of Edinburgh Council has been able to collect an additional council tax income of

- £1.2 million during 2006 / 2007
- £1.25 million during 2007 / 2008

The Council has also seen a vast reduction in the amount of customer contact and the number of canvass forms issued from 90,000 to 36,000 annually. This has resulted in a significant reduction in time and money spent on contacting customers, for example reduced call centre and postage costs, as well as improved customer service.

With ongoing investment, the Council will continue to maintain and improve the accuracy of single person discount claims allowing it to maximise council tax revenues in the future.

For further information please contact us:

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