

West Dunbartonshire steps up to the challenge with Direct Debit

A 30 per cent increase in Direct Debit payers marked a strikingly successful promotional campaign for West Dunbartonshire Council – securing the authority top spot in its division of the Bacs Direct Debit Challenge League.

Challenging perceived boundaries

Marion Smith, Section Head, (Revenues & Benefits) of West Dunbartonshire Council, said: “The Direct Debit Challenge League has played a significant role in what we have achieved this year. The ability to benchmark our performance on a regular basis against similar authorities, gave us a measurable objective to work towards. The sense of achievement within the team is fantastic and we are delighted to have won our division.”

The call for people to ‘rise to the challenge’ was a critical element of the campaign strategy for West Dunbartonshire. Armed with the knowledge of what could be achieved the revenues team were able to actively challenge what they considered boundaries and push past them to achieve greater Direct Debit take-up.

Payment flexibility with Direct Debit

Central to the year long campaign was the decision to change the payment date for traditional forms of payment, moving it from the 28th to the 1st of the month. At the same time, the local authority developed two bespoke posters to highlight the multiple payments dates, 1st, 15th and 28th, available for those who chose to pay by Direct Debit. The poster campaign was supported with the inclusion of a Direct Debit instruction and related information in all non-Direct Debit payers’ annual bill. In addition, a second wave mailing was sent out to reinforce the variety of payment dates available for those that selected Direct Debit.

AUDDIS maximises convenience

In addition to the wider direct marketing communications strategy, West Dunbartonshire Council also embraced Paperless Direct Debit, making the process of signing up to Direct Debit less onerous for residents and reinforcing the convenience and flexibility that Direct Debit offers. This process was supported with staff training to ensure the process was as smooth as possible for the customer.

Marion concluded: “The result of this campaign has exceeded our expectations. We have managed to increase our number of Direct Debit payers from 12,412 to 16,761. Challenge is an ideal term for this campaign as it challenged the revenues team to improve, demonstrating what could be achieved and renewing their focus. We will certainly use this tool in future to help us measure our performance and help understand where we may be able to improve our Direct Debit take-up. We look forward to a similar challenge this season.”