

# Introducing DVLA's Emerging Tech Lab



## **The team**

I lead DVLA's Emerging Tech Lab, and I'm joined by a technical lead and three developers.

Two of our developers are on DVLA's Masters Level Apprenticeship Programme. As well as exploring how we can make use of modern cloud platforms and technologies, they have also spent time studying for a masters degree in Software Engineering at Swansea University. Now back in the workplace, they are putting their new skills to use.

## **What we do**

We use new and emerging technologies to solve problems set by the business. We do this by developing proof of concepts (PoC), which means we test a concept or theory to see if it has the potential to be turned into reality. At the end of each project we produce a working PoC, and share with our colleagues what we've done and what we've learned along the way.

## **Our first project**

We realised a lot of people start their journey with us by applying for a driving licence. As part of the application process, we ask you for a passport photo which then gets printed on your driving licence. Our clerks must check each photo conforms to the passport photo criteria.

The process of checking each photo is time consuming and we wondered if we

could train a machine to take on this task. The answer was yes and, after some research, we built our own machine learning model to do this.



## Teaching begins

We taught the model what acceptable and unacceptable photos look like.

To do this we took photos that conformed to the passport photo criteria and ones that didn't, and tagged these as either acceptable or unacceptable. Capturing the acceptable images was straightforward, but we had to get creative with the unacceptable images. Dolls, figurines and even snapchat filters featured in these!

## The moment of truth

After uploading the tagged images we left the machine to learn. After just a few minutes, it told us it was ready and invited us to test it. We fed in a selection of new images and waited... our machine passed with flying colours, a great result!

## What's next?

We've got a full backlog of ideas to explore using technologies such as artificial intelligence, augmented reality, chatbots and more challenging machine learning use cases. So we're going to be pretty busy over the next few months.

## To find out more

You can [read about what it's like to work at DVLA](#) and [take a look at our latest vacancies on Civil Service jobs](#).

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## [How DVLA helps improve employability skills in the local community](#)

Employability skills are the traits and talents that make you an attractive candidate for a job.

You can improve your employability skills through training and practical applications to give yourself an edge in the job market. As a large local employer, we wanted to see how we might help people in the local community with this. And so, our Employability Skills Programme (ESP) was born.

We began by surveying local groups to gain information about what we might do to help those who most need support, such as [CRISIS](#) and [Remploy](#). This information helped us understand how our staff could give expert help and advice on preparing people for work, developing their practical skills, and giving them confidence to become the workforce of tomorrow.

## Developing skills



A dedicated pool of Employability Skills Ambassadors from our staff were soon out in the community helping people with a range of activities. These included giving training sessions, conducting on-site tours, holding mock interviews and telephone tests. They have also represented DVLA at local employability or community events. One such event was the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) first Positive Action Event, providing information and opportunities for our BAME (Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic) customers across Swansea Bay.

Not only does this benefit the community, it is also a fantastic development opportunity for our ambassadors. They are committed and enthusiastic people who have a passion for helping others. It's a chance for them to develop their skills in communication, presenting and so much more.

Our programme is now well established and has been a great success with requests for our support doubling in number since launch. We are proud to have achieved this with no budget, managing it with just our passion, commitment and time.

## **What's next for ESP?**

In addition to our regular networking meetings we will celebrate two years of supporting our local community with our external community groups and their clients. Our ambassadors also have a 'careers information' session lined up with a group of Year 9 pupils to talk about the skills and attributes DVLA as an employer looks for.

The success of this programme has made us stand out as an employer of choice in the local area. By working to improve skills in our local community we

have given not only our staff a chance to develop but also shown that DVLA is a great place to work.

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## 25 years of Customer Service Excellence: how we do it

We recently retained our Customer Service Excellence (CSE) accreditation for the 10th successive year. Before this we held the Charter Mark, [part of the Citizen's Charter Programme](#), since 1993. This is 25 years of awards for our focus on customer service.

Run by [Cabinet Office](#), [CSE recognises organisations that are "efficient, effective, excellent, equitable and empowering"](#).

It's tough to achieve accreditation; we're rigorously tested against multiple criteria in 5 service areas: delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude. These are areas that our customers have said are a priority for them. CSE also places emphasis on developing customer insight, understanding customer experience and measuring service satisfaction.

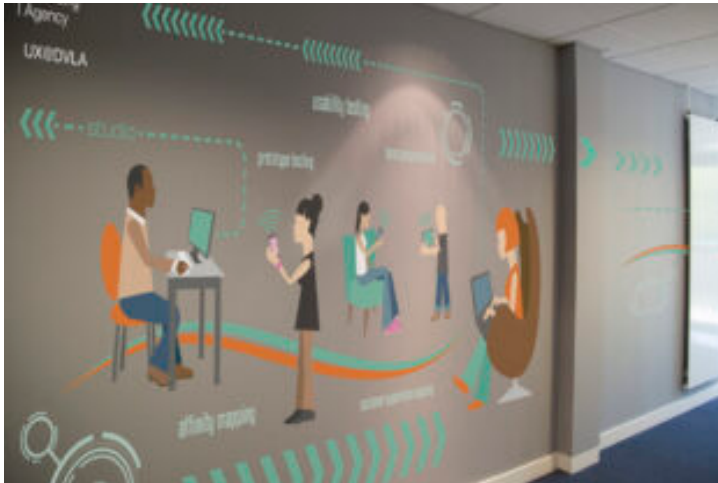
### How we meet the standard

[We understand the differences in our varied customer base](#). This allows us to design our services by focusing on them. We cover a wide range of customers, commercial and public, by carrying out research across the country.

We work closely with trade associations, motoring organisations, the police, other agencies and relevant medical charities, as well as other government departments. This allows us to share best practice and knowledge. [Our user experience \(UX\) laboratory also allows us to test and evaluate our users' end](#)

[to end experience](#), across various channels and devices. On a monthly basis we conduct satisfaction survey research. We analyse our customer satisfaction scores and the comments made.

[Using customer journey mapping helps us to understand and improve how our customers interact with us.](#) For example, understanding what customers feel when telling us about a medical condition. We step into their shoes from the moment they know they need to tell us, through to the final outcome. Seeing DVLA from their perspective gives us valuable insight into how our customers feel at different stages of the process.



Senior managers at DVLA have created an environment to encourage people at all levels to see our customers as individuals and understand their needs. [This is highlighted in our business plan, where our Non-Executive Chair Lesley Cowley emphasises 'how good customer service is central to our success and what people expect when they deal with us'.](#)

Achieving the standard is a reflection of how DVLA as a whole provides great service to our customers.

## **We're continually improving our services**

While it's great for us to get an independent view on the service we provide our customers, the assessment is also a valuable tool to help us improve. Every year, we've used the assessor's advice on areas where we can improve our services.

This is in line with our aim to make sure the design of our services are led by customer feedback. This will hopefully lead us to continue to retain the CSE standard for years to come.

**Would you like to help us keep improving our services?**

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## [BA @ DVLA: our Business Analysis Development Programme goes live](#)



Today marks the launch of DVLA's Information Systems Business Analysis Development Programme. It is a great opportunity to grow in-house talent that allows us to progress with our digital transformation.

We are at the forefront of public digital services. Last year alone we reached a record-breaking one billion interactions with our customers with over 90% online. [Our IT Strategy](#) outlines how we will transform our services to the public over the coming years. We will respond to new technologies (such as cloud computing) and also once in a lifetime [changes in transport technology](#) such as the move to self-driving vehicles. Business Analysis will be crucial in ensuring we make these goals a reality.

We use Business Analysts (BAs) in all our digital projects, working closely with software engineers to put in place award-winning services for our customers. BAs also have an important role in talking to our stakeholders. They make sure we understand the outcomes stakeholders want to achieve and advise how we can provide it in the most efficient way. Business analysis is a great introduction to a career in the IT sector, with plenty of opportunities to become professionally recognised and to have continuous professional development.

Our BAs have a community that shares best practice and offers a strong support network. They have become a reference point for other government departments who are looking to match the development structure we have put in place.

So, if you have an interest in IT, enjoy solving problems, can stay calm under pressure and are committed to your development we would definitely like to talk to you.

## **What would the programme give you?**

Firstly, it would give you the chance to study for a recognised qualification – the BCS International Diploma in Business Analysis. To get this you would spend:

- 70% of your time in the role, gaining experience and putting in to practice the formal learning
- 20% of your time mentoring
- 10% of your time in formal classroom training, self-study or online learning

You would also be given a personal mentor to help you through your time. But perhaps more importantly, it would give you the chance to gain experience working on some of the most important digital services within government, putting into practice your learning in a real world environment.

## **The offer and how to apply**

We have 10 positions available on our Programme. They run for 24 months with a salary of £25k, giving you the opportunity to earn while you learn. It offers a real alternative to some of the more traditional routes, such as university.

[To find out more about the roles, entry requirements and application process follow the link on our current vacancies page.](#)

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## **[What DVLA has been doing to clamp down](#)**

# on vehicle tax evasion

Since the start of 2019, DVLA wheelclamping teams have been busy up and down the country targeting untaxed vehicles. Bethan Beasley, DVLA's Senior Leader of Enforcement Partnerships, tells us more.



It's been a very busy start to the year for all of us on the DVLA enforcement team. We've been all across the country in various locations looking for vehicles that haven't been taxed – and we are not done yet.

## **Why we're doing it**

It's all part of [a wider campaign targeting the 11 locations of the UK where vehicle tax evasion is highest](#). In 2018, we took enforcement action – ranging from fines to clamping – on over 464,000 vehicles in these areas.

As well as the hard work we're doing out on the roads every day, we're running local advertising in each of the regions including radio, printed publications, poster sites, websites and on social media. All of these activities together are designed to make the driving public think again if they're considering not taxing their vehicle.

There really is no excuse not to tax. It's never been easier for motorists – on GOV.UK you can [tax your vehicle 24 hours a day](#) and if you are not sure when your tax is due, you can [check your vehicle tax is up to date](#). You can even check on [Amazon's Alexa](#) or [Google Home](#) if you want. All you need is your vehicle registration.

## Driving the message home

One of our highlights of the campaign has been taking our [giant clamp](#) to some of the locations and putting it in city or town centres to see what reaction it gets from the general public. A stark physical image like this has really attracted people's attention and made them think, as you can see from this video of our giant clamp:

[embedded content]

Other comments we received from the public after seeing the giant clamp included:

"A lot of people are reluctant to do their car tax because they think it's difficult – this campaign will show them how easy it is."

"Pay your tax – it's as simple as that. There's no excuse is there, really."

## What's next

We've clamped nearly 9,000 vehicles so far during this campaign, but we're not stopping there. Our enforcement teams work across the country on the look-out for untaxed vehicles, and our message is the same wherever we go: [tax it](#) or lose it.

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