



Cabinet Office

Julia Harrison

Head of Product - Government as a Platform

Government Digital Service

@JuliaFromIT

My name is Julia Harrison; I work at the Government Digital Service, or GDS as we call ourselves, which is part of the Cabinet Office.

For those of you not familiar, I'll explain some of those things in a moment.

But first, I want you to cast your minds back...

**Friday
20th March 2020
9:30am**

You might not remember the specific date, but you'll remember that week. It was just before the UK went into our first lockdown.

At GDS, we'd all just started working from home full-time, and had no idea how long that might last.

“Please can you join a call”

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This was the text message my manager, and several other senior leaders in GDS received.

“I’m so glad you’ve volunteered”

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He received this very warm welcome to the call. He didn’t know he had volunteered at that point, but by the end of the call he was signed up to leading a programme to build a digital service for launch on the Monday. Three days away.

A cohort of the people most vulnerable to COVID-19 would be told to stay at home - not to leave their homes, not even for shopping. Many of them would have neighbours and relatives who could drop off food and other supplies safely. For those who didn’t, we needed to find a way for them to register to get help, and for us to securely pass on their details to the organisations who could help them.

Over the next hours, he and others figured out what skills were needed to quickly set up a new service, recruited a few key people from around GDS...

“People almost magically appeared”

GDS

...they in turn recruited more people, and as word got around, a team came together to work over the weekend.

At the same time, people from at least five different government departments were also coming together to solve their piece of the puzzle.

There's an episode on the GDS podcast all about how that happened:

<https://gds.blog.gov.uk/2021/02/24/podcast-the-clinically-extremely-vulnerable-people-service/>

So I'm going to skip to the feelgood bit...



Christopher Hope ✅
@christopherhope

...

NEW Here is the first one of 1.5million Government food boxes to be distributed by Rob Jenrick's Housing, Communities and Local Government department to households that are being shielded from coronavirus.



9:26 PM · Mar 25, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

GDS

By the evening of Wednesday, March 25th, just five and a bit days after that first text message, food boxes were being prepared to be delivered the next day.

Seeing the photos of the first food boxes was an emotional moment.

In the first wave of the pandemic...

4.7 million food boxes

to 558,000 people

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...**4.7 million food boxes** were delivered to over half a million people.

We enabled over a million others to get priority access to supermarket delivery slots, and local authorities were able to target critical social care services to those who needed them.

And I'm not going to pretend that you can build something in four days without some serious compromises. One thing we absolutely would not budge on was the privacy and security of people's personal data - that was a priority right from the start. As was making it easy for people to register. But on other things, we had to just do whatever was quickest and come back and improve it later - and by the summer, the vulnerable people service we were running was very different to what we had on the day it first went live.



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@JuliaFromIT ➤

So as I said, I'm a Head of Product for the Government as a Platform programme at GDS.

And if you notice my Twitter handle, my background is corporate IT. I started out in desktop support, then Windows support and engineering, got into IT Service management, service improvement projects, and via a happy accident ended up in product.

I've been in product for about eight years

The Cabinet Office was formed in 1916 and is, to quote [our website](#), "the corporate headquarters for government, supporting the Prime Minister and ensuring the effective running of government".

I've been at GDS two years, and I'll tell you a bit about our history in a moment

I've been with the Government as a Platform programme (GaaP) since May 2020

That's another way of saying I can't take credit for most of the things I'm talking about today.

GaaP: Government as a Platform

GaaP provides a range of shared services, solving common problems across government

 GOV.UK Design System

 GOV.UK Notify

 GOV.UK Pay

 GOV.UK Platform as a Service

GDS

Problems like:

- how to provide usable and accessible ways for users to interact with services (Design System)
- how to send communications to users (Notify)
- how to receive payments from users (Pay)
- how to host services (PaaS)

All of which enable government to **quickly** and **safely deliver good services**, providing great value for money

GDS

All of which enable government to quickly and safely deliver good services, providing great value for money

Our platforms are used in thousands of digital services across the public sector in the UK.

And because what we do is mostly open source, what we've created has been reused as the basis for similar services around the world.

And since March 2020,
GaaP has been critical
to the government's
response to Covid-19

Government Digital Service

Organisations: [Government Digital Service](#), [Cabinet Office](#)

How Government as a Platform is meeting challenges posed by coronavirus

Miriam Raines and Mark Buckley, 13 May 2020 - [GOV.UK](#), [GOV.UK Notify](#), [GOV.UK Pay](#), [Government as a Platform](#)



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<https://gds.blog.gov.uk/2020/05/13/how-government-as-a-platform-is-helping-in-the-covid-19-response/>

Because of GaaP, service owners across government could move at incredible speed, creating new services in just a few days.

more than 50 services

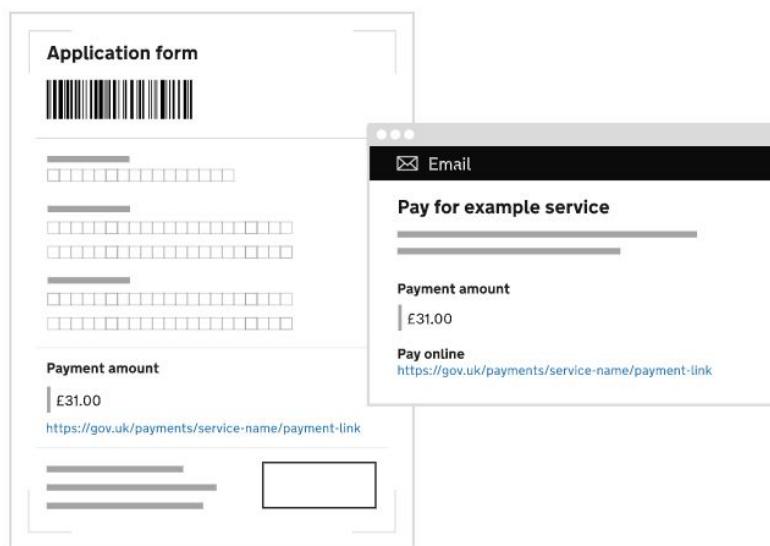
in 12 departments

£10.4M saving



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Design System: Enables usable, accessible, consistent services to be built fast. As well as providing the design patterns for the vulnerable people service front end, we enabled the creation of more than 50 new services in twelve departments, saving government an estimated £10.4 Million just in the first few months of the pandemic.

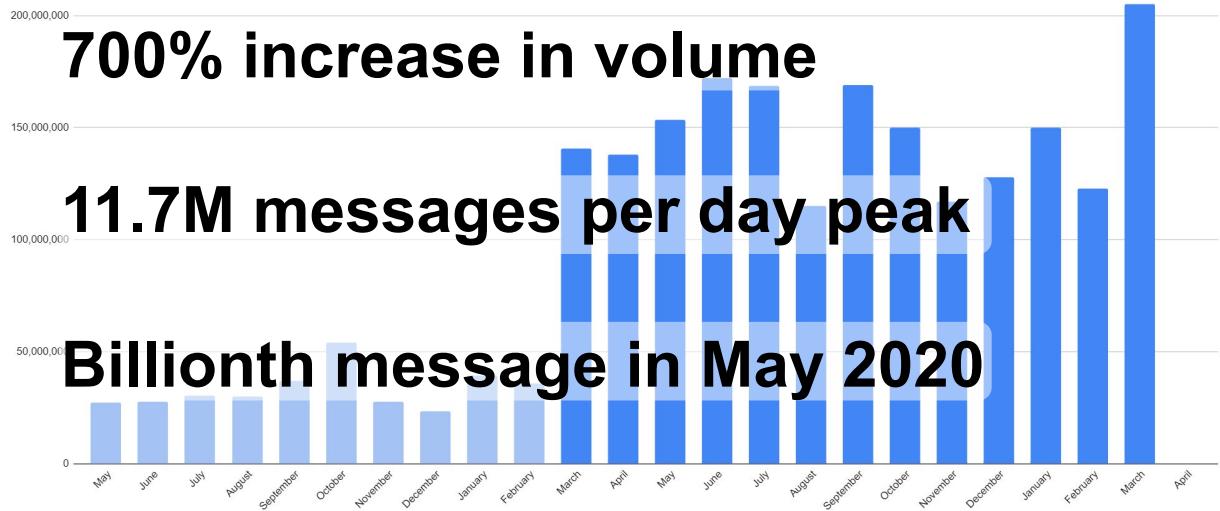


The diagram illustrates the integration of GOV.UK Pay with other digital services. On the left, a large white box represents an 'Application form'. It contains a barcode at the top, followed by several horizontal input fields. Below these is a section labeled 'Payment amount' with a field containing '£31.00' and a link below it: <https://gov.uk/payments/service-name/payment-link>. To the right of the application form is a smaller box representing an 'Email' service. This box has a header with three dots and the word 'Email'. Below the header, it says 'Pay for example service' and shows a payment progress bar. Underneath, it displays 'Payment amount' as '£31.00' and a 'Pay online' button with the URL <https://gov.uk/payments/service-name/payment-link>.

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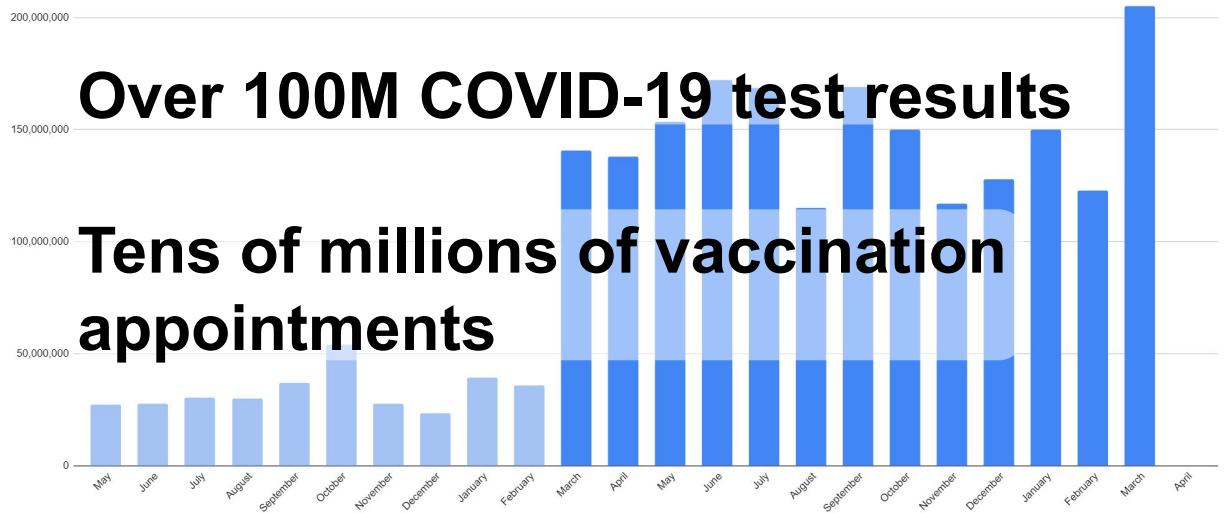
GOV.UK Pay makes it easy for service teams to take card payments from their users, and is used by over 200 public sector organisations, ranging in size from the NHS and the passport office to museums in Northern Ireland and the Orkney Islands Council.

And when back office staff around the country couldn't physically come to an office to process cheques, GOV.UK Pay gave them a way to take electronic payments which they could set up in a single day even with no digital team.



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GOV.UK Notify makes it easy for services to send emails, SMS messages and physical letters to their users, and is used by everything from huge government departments with mature digital capabilities to GP surgeries and primary schools, who can send messages by uploading a spreadsheet. During the pandemic it has enabled text messages from the NHS to extremely vulnerable people advising them to stay at home; business continuity messaging for public sector staff; travel alerts from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development office... with a 700% increase on our usual volume, and a peak of 11.7M messages a day. The platform sent its billionth message in May 2020.



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And since then we've sent well over 100M text messages telling people their covid test results and tens of millions of emails, texts and letters related to scheduling vaccination appointments.

Created on: 12 April 2021 at 23:33 (Delivered after 0 seconds)

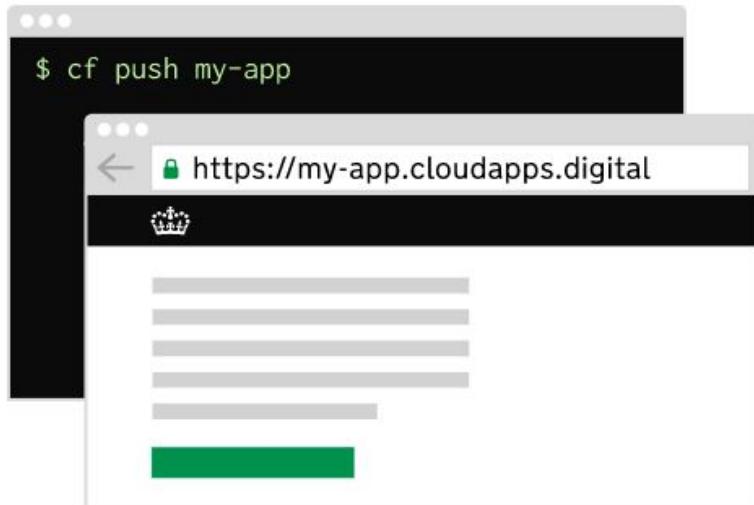
From: NHS Booking <nhs.booking@notifications.service.gov.uk>

To:

Subject: Your coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination appointments

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And this is my proud parent moment. When I was able to get my appointment for my first vaccination in April, of course I had to check the email headers and see for myself that it had come through our platform.



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And **GOV.UK Platform as a Service**, which provides an on-demand platform enabling new services to get started quickly, hosts services for more than 50 public bodies including Navy News - the newspaper that celebrates the deeds of the Royal Navy around the world, the Civil Aviation Authority's service to register a drone or light aircraft, and the Department for Education's Teaching Vacancies Job Finder. And GOV.UK PaaS hosts our own notifications platform, and was able to support the massive increase in traffic on Notify thanks to its ability to scale rapidly.

How was this possible?

Back to November 2010...

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Jason Manford had just quit the One Show, Nigel Havers had just walked out of I'm a Celebrity, and if neither of those names mean anything to you, it was the day Prince William and Kate Middleton announced their engagement...



2,000 organisation sites

Around that time, there were nearly 2000 public sector organisations, each with their own individual website, with different styles and layouts. It was difficult to navigate, confusing and frustrating.

Users shouldn't need to know how government is structured to find what they need.

[Home](#) | [Contacts](#) | [Do it online](#) | [Newsroom](#) | [Video](#)**Scam emails to students**

Have you received a suspicious email that claims to be from Student Finance England?

► [Student finance: online security](#)

Straight to...

- **Motoring**
Car tax, Learners, Driving licence...
- **Education and learning**
Student finance, University, 14-19s...
- **Money, tax and benefits**
Benefits, Taxes, Benefits adviser...
- **Home and community**
Housing, Council Tax, Flooding...
- **Travel and transport**
Journey planner, Passports...
- **Caring for someone**
Carer's Allowance, Support services...

- **Parents**
Preschool, Schools, Childcare...
- **Employment**
Jobs, Redundancy, Holidays, Pay...
- **Young people**
Money, Work and careers, Leisure...
- **Disabled people**
Financial support, Housing, Rights...
- **Pensions & retirement planning**
State Pension, Plan for retirement...
- **Crime and justice**
Types of crime. Victims. Prevention...

HM Government

Most popular

- [Job search](#)
- [Cold Weather Payment](#)
- [Student finance](#)
- [SORN](#)
- [Income Support](#)
- [Car tax](#)
- [Driving theory test](#)
- [Attendance allowance](#)
- [Jobseeker's Allowance](#)
- [Passports](#)
- [More online services](#)

Money healthcheck

Take 5-10 minutes on

So on 23rd November 2010, Martha Lane Fox, a digital entrepreneur and the government's Digital Champion, published the result of the strategic review the Cabinet Office had asked her to carry out of Directgov, which at that time was the government's main online platform.



But instead of just reviewing Directgov, she wrote a report much wider in scope about how government could better interact with the public and deliver more efficient public services online.

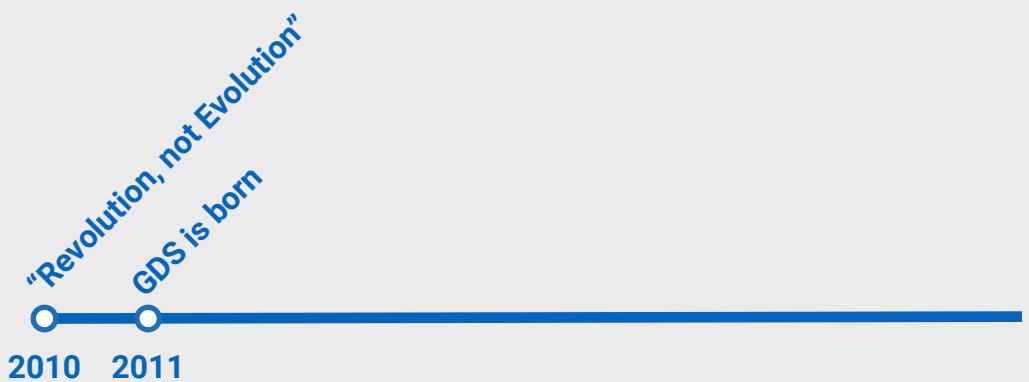
"Revolution, not Evolution"



2010

GDS

In her report, titled 'Revolution not Evolution', Martha laid out a vision that ...



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...gave us the mandate to set up the Government Digital Service in 2011.

GOV.UK brought 2,000 sites to a single domain

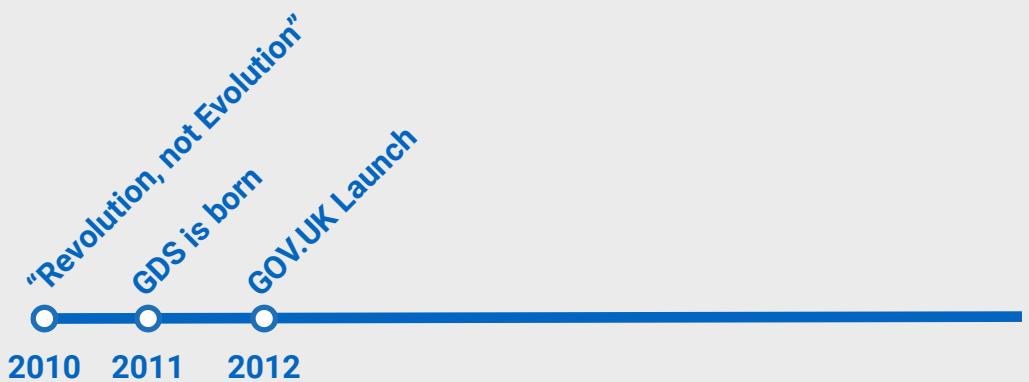


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The first GDS project was the GOV.UK alpha. 14 people, 10 weeks, about 100 user needs.

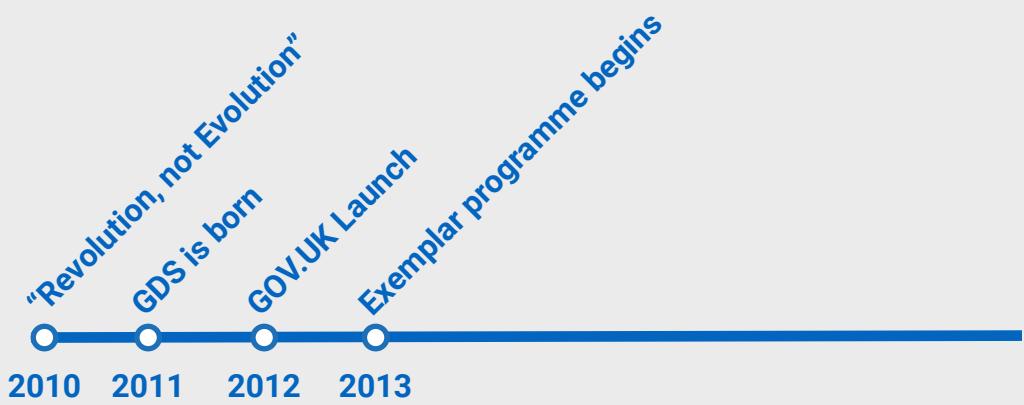
It was more about making a point than making a product.

The point was: we can build government websites in a different way, and they can work. We can be agile. We can start with user needs, and meet them. We don't have to procure things through huge, years-long contracts.



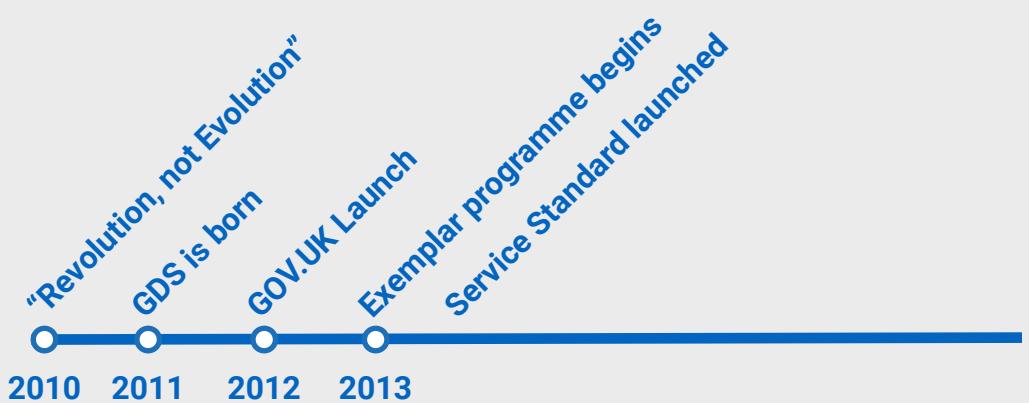
GDS

And by 2012, GOV.UK was able to replace DirectGov



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January 2013: We began the exemplar programme - working with government departments to build 25 great digital services using truly agile methods - meeting policy objectives, not “building the thing”, prototyping, experimenting, iterating. Long-lived product teams with sustained funding.



GDS

March 2013: We launched the service standard, which laid out how departments can build and sustain good quality digital services

→ [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) | Rules, guidance and support

BETA [Contact the Service Manual team](#) if you have feedback, questions or suggestions.

[Service manual](#)

Service Standard

The Service Standard helps teams to create and run great public services.

Check whether you need to use [the previous version of the Service Standard](#).

1. Understand users and their needs

[Read more about point 1](#)

Get notifications

When any guidance within this topic is updated [email](#)

2. Solve a whole problem for users

[Read more about point 2](#)

3. Provide a joined up experience across all channels

[Read more about point 3](#)

This is the current version of the standard which came into effect in July 2019 - you can find this and the original at <https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/service-standard>



Service Standard

Meeting users' needs

- 1 Understand users and their needs
- 2 Solve a whole problem for users
- 3 Provide a joined up experience across all channels
- 4 Make the service simple to use
- 5 Make sure everyone can use the service

Providing a good service

- 6 Have a multidisciplinary team
- 7 Use agile ways of working
- 8 Iterate and improve frequently
- 9 Create a secure service which protects users' privacy
- 10 Define what success looks like and publish performance data

Using the right technology

- 11 Choose the right tools and technology
- 12 Make new source code open
- 13 Use and contribute to open standards, common components and patterns
- 14 Operate a reliable service

www.gov.uk/service-manual/service-standard

Each of these is supported by guidance in our service manual, but I'll just take you through the 14 points

Meeting users' needs

- 1** Understand users and their needs
- 2** Solve a whole problem for users
- 3** Provide a joined up experience across all channels
- 4** Make the service simple to use
- 5** Make sure everyone can use the service

GDS

These are about user research, user-centred service design, simplicity and accessibility

Providing a good service

- 6** Have a multidisciplinary team
- 7** Use agile ways of working
- 8** Iterate and improve frequently
- 9** Create a secure service which protects users' privacy
- 10** Define what success looks like and publish performance data

GDS

To provide a good service, we believe you need a multidisciplinary, agile, data-informed product team, able to iterate and improve a product. And of course we care about privacy.

Using the right technology

- 11** Choose the right tools and technology
- 12** Make new source code open
- 13** Use and contribute to open standards, common components and patterns
- 14** Operate a reliable service

GDS

And we have guidance to help teams make good technology choices. In particular we have a commitment to open source.



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June 2013: service assessments

A service team could have their service assessed by a panel of their peers from elsewhere in government, using the service standard.

What we learnt from building services and assessing those built by others was that there was a set of common needs. Things being built again and again.

End-user facing needs

- 90% Publish information**
- 85% Send notification**
- 80% Submit information**
- 65% Two way conversation**
- 45% Submit file/evidence
- 35% Create account
- 30% Confirm identity**
- 30% Pay government**
- 30% Give permission
- 25% Issue certificate

...

And we identified a list of these common user tasks, and put in an ambitious bid for multi-year funding, because we knew that if we could build something once to meet each of these needs, we could avoid duplication of build and maintenance costs and save money all over government.



GDS

And in 2015 the GaaP programme began, to do just that



And not only did we save money - because we were able to put whole teams on solving these problems, we could become expert in things like taking payments from users while, say, the people working on the service to book a driving test can focus on what it takes to help people book a driving test.

Not-so-secret ingredients



So what were the secret ingredients? Why were we able to do those things?

(It wasn't post-it notes or bunting, although you might have thought that if you ever visited our office.)

A central function for the benefit of others

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Being funded to build something in one department for the benefit of others

There are other models, but creating incentives for sharing is hard. For us this was key to getting started - in the early days of a product, it's much easier to persuade people to start using it if you don't also have to persuade them to start paying for it.

Solving problems many people recognise

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One of the nice things about solving common problems is... they're common. People recognise them. They can see you're doing something that will help them.

And the sooner you can solve enough of the problem to save them work, the sooner you're helping.

Not only that, but by having real users use your product for real work, early, you start getting data to help you improve.



Not being everything to everyone

Photo credit: AskDaveTaylor on Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

And it's fine not to be everything to everyone.

This goes a bit against the grain for us at GDS - when we build things for the public to use, one of the points of the service standard is "Make sure everyone can use the service".

But building something for other service teams is a bit different. If they have a specific need, unless it's shared by a lot of other teams, it might not make sense for us to add that. They might need to build it themselves, or procure it somewhere else, and that's fine.

That means we can keep our products relatively simple, we can avoid feature bloat and the support burden that comes with it; we can continue to run and iterate our products with quite small teams.

Truly agile organisation

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A truly agile organisation

- experimenting, not being put under pressure to pretend we knew all the answers at the start
- not fixing on a solution too early and “building the thing” means we can focus on outcomes, solving real problems, delivering real benefits

User-centred design approach

GDS

UCD approach

- Big focus on understanding real user needs through user research, prototyping and - again, experimentation
- There's a selfish reason to prioritise good design as well. If our users can self-serve most of the time, it means we can run our services with relatively small teams. So it's really important we create things that are easy to use. So we take data about how users interact with our services to inform our decisions on what to improve.

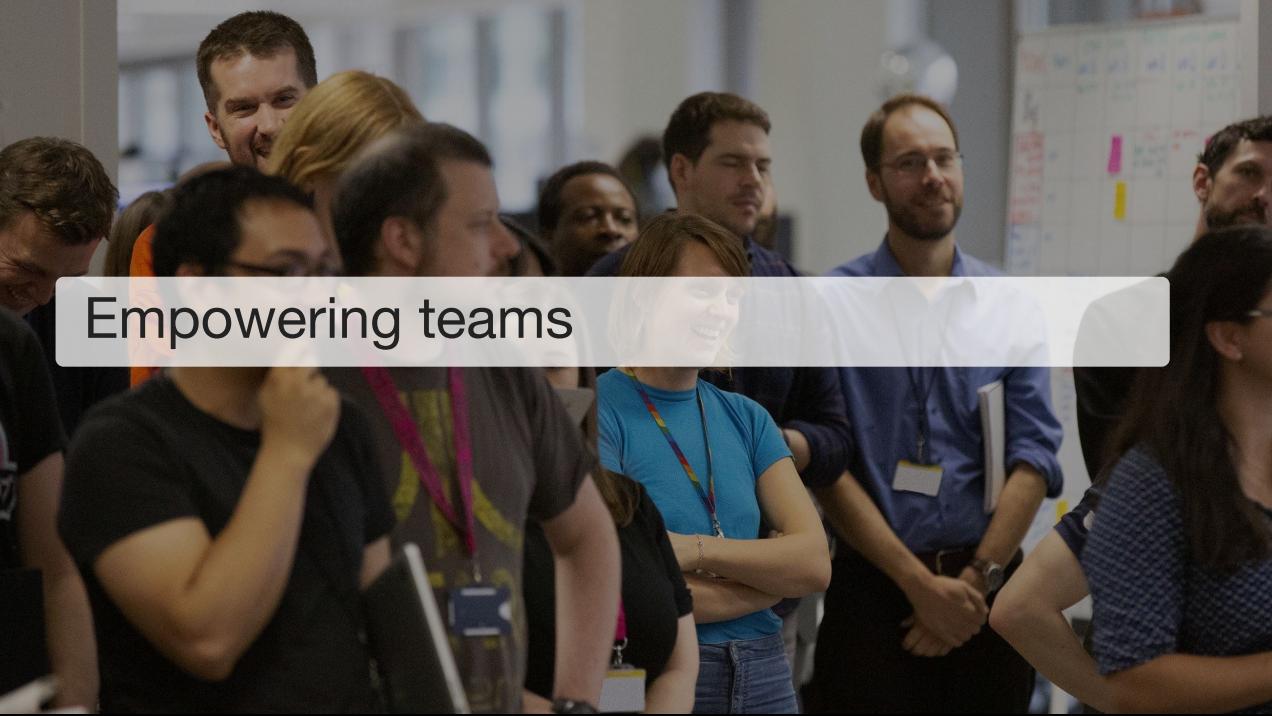
Products, not projects

GDS

Because we fund long-lived product teams, we're able to keep iterating and developing our products to keep up with evolving user needs or add even greater value. There is no "handover to ops" and we don't have to get approval and funding to add a feature if we can do it with the team we have.

And we're able to build deep expertise in what we do and get to really know our users - unlike a project team which is typically disbanded when the project finishes, and everyone goes off to do something new.

And in an emergency, if we have things that can safely be paused, we can free people up to deal with the emergency



Empowering teams

So coming back to March 2020 - because these platforms already existed, our teams could focus on helping their users - the teams scrambling to solve urgent problems in a pandemic.

- Because we already encouraged our teams to act with a degree of autonomy, they could re-prioritise work - they could decide to stop doing some things. It was very obvious that anything not related to saving lives or supporting critical services could probably wait. We didn't have to tell our teams and they didn't have to ask permission, they just let us know which things wouldn't get done.
- When the government told the most vulnerable people to stay at home, the service to enable them to register their details to receive help was built, maintained and iterated, to begin with, by volunteers from other teams.
- And, of course, that left gaps in those teams. Again, the autonomy we gave to product teams meant they could re-prioritise their work accordingly (i.e stop doing things) while the folks at my level - one level removed - focused on things like supporting people through the switch to remote working, and planning for what we'd do if we had a lot of staff sickness.

- One of the product managers reporting to me at the time looked after the infrastructure that supported a service critical to people claiming help with their living costs, and we knew there would be a massive increase in people unable to work during lockdown, and needing to register for financial support for the first time.
- This product manager had people working away from the team volunteering on the vulnerable people service, so he and the remaining team had been figuring out with their user - the owners of the identity verification platform - what they could do to make sure there were no issues with scaling for a huge increase in demand. They'd decided to park all their roadmapped work and focus just on scaling and stability. And my response was...

“Great. Thanks. Yes. Do that then.”

GDS

And tell me if I can do anything to help.

They didn't ask permission, and I didn't expect them to. They were best placed to figure out their priorities with their customer, and they did. And I carried on working on programme-level problems.

That's great, but...

But what can you do if you're not in a truly agile, user-centred, product-driven organisation? What if you *are* expected to be an order-taker?

Don't build things. Solve problems.

GDS

I've found there's a lot you can do if you can influence just one stakeholder - just one manager with a requirement that you're expected to fulfill.

Because often someone comes to *us* with "we need a... thing". That's actually pretty normal. And it's fine. Our job is to dig deeper.

I need a status tracking platform

GDS

Back in 2015, this was something we thought we might need to build. Some kind of platform, to bring together status on all the requests a member of the public might have open with different parts of government.

But no user wakes up and thinks “I need the government to give me a status tracking platform”. What’s the real need?

~~I need a status tracking platform~~

Users need to know what's happening with their transactions

GDS

Already, by framing the requirement as the problem being solved, not the thing being built, we can think about other ways to solve that problem.

Users wanted to know the status of their transactions. And they wanted to know because we hadn't told them.

And pulling together status of all the possible requests a member of the public might have open is a really hard problem to solve.

Making it easy to tell them, in real-time, when something happens with their request is much, much simpler. And we'd already started working on that problem, we probably didn't need a separate status tracking platform.

Don't measure the thing.

Measure the benefit.

GDS

So we're thinking about solving problems rather than building things. And if our measures of progress have, up until now, been based on "how much of the thing have we built, are we on time, are we within budget", we could probably improve on that. Not only because it's a better measure, but also because if you can get your stakeholder to agree to your commitment to deliver the benefit, you can get them away from caring so much about "the thing".

Objective	Key Results
Build a status tracking platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We built a status tracking platform

FICTITIOUS

Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) - this is how our teams measure success in the GaaP programme. When we understand what's needed, the team gets together to propose OKRs.

I'm going to take our example of a status tracking platform and apply it to a fictional organisation. In our case it didn't happen *exactly* like this, but it easily could have done.

Let's imagine we have a fictional executive who is really attached to the idea of a status tracking platform. Maybe they had one at the last place they worked.

Objective	Key Results
Build a status tracking platform Users know the status of their request	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We built a status tracking platform

FICTITIOUS

As before, we start by asking *Why*?

And the same as before, it's because users want to know the status of their request.

Maybe our executive has been looking at our social media feeds and can see how many people are frustrated at not knowing what's happening. Which is fair enough.

“Are you saying you want happier users?”

FICTITIOUS

And it's great to have these conversations because we can find out what they really care about - what motivates them. In this case it sounds like what they really want is happier users.

Objective	Key Results
Build a status tracking platform Users know the status of their request Happier users	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We built a status tracking platform• Customer satisfaction increases by 20%

FICTITIOUS

And if they agree that's what they want, we can set it as an objective, and suggest a key result that we think we might achieve.

We haven't quite got them to let go of the tracking platform idea yet, but that's ok, one step at a time...

“But without increasing costs, right?”

FICTITIOUS

But we could make a lot of users happier by sending them flowers. That's probably not the answer our executive is looking for. They probably don't want us to massively increase costs in the process.

“Would you like it if we reduced costs?”

FICTITIOUS

What if we could have happier users and **reduce** costs?

In our fictional organisation, much like everywhere else, when users are unhappy, or when they want to know the status of their request and can't find it for themselves, one of the things they do is contact us - either through a call centre or our social media channels. And the more users we have contacting us, the more we have to spend on staffing our contact centres and social channels. So reducing those contacts reduces costs.

“Happier users. Reduced contacts. Got it.”

FICTITIOUS

If we can get to this common understanding with our executive, we’re really getting somewhere.

Objective	Key Results
<p>Build a status tracking platform</p> <p>Users know the status of their request</p> <p>Happier users</p> <p>Reduced costs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We built a status tracking platform• Customer satisfaction increases by 20%• Contacts for status requests decrease at least 50%

FICTITIOUS

Objective	Key Results
Build a status tracking platform Users know the status of their request Happier users Reduced costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We built a status tracking platform • Customer satisfaction increases by 20% • Contacts for status requests decrease at least 50%

FICTITIOUS

Now when you come back to them with your proposal for how you can get happier users and reduced contacts not only on time and within budget, but *quicker and cheaper than you can build a status tracking platform*, you might get a lot less resistance.

I can't promise, but I have had conversations like this and seen it work in more than one organisation. It is possible.

It's not the user's job to tell you what they need.

It's your job to find out.

GDS

If we'd asked our users "would you like a place to see the status of all your requests" they might have loved the idea. We could have spent hours testing different ways to present that information and convinced ourselves we were solving an important problem. And in a way, we would have been. But we could have solved a different problem much more efficiently.

I'm not an expert in user research, so I asked an expert for some tips that anyone can use. Here's what I got.

No pitching

X If we made a thing that solves all your problems, what would you think about that?

GDS

We're not doing market research, so be careful not to pitch your product idea

No leading questions about preferences

✗ Did you like ...?

✗ Do you enjoy ...?

✓ What did you like about that...?

GDS

Not only are these questions closed, they are also non-actionable.

How could we turn this into a better question?

If a user is telling us about a great experience in another product, by asking '**what did you like about that..**' we learn much more about their preferences.

Avoid speculation

- ✗ Imagine if ..., what would you do ...?
- ✗ If we made ... next year...would you use it?
- ✗ Has ... ever happened to you? What did you do?

GDS

Keep the discussion questions grounded and focused on real experiences

Get the team involved

GDS

To make sure everyone really understands the needs of our users, we recommend everyone should observe at least 2 hours of research every 6 weeks

That could be by watching user research sessions live, or watching recorded playbacks

But you can learn about your users in other ways than dedicated research sessions.

It could be by listening in on customer service calls, looking at tickets in the support queue, looking at social feeds

If your users are other people within your organisation, you could sit with them. (OK, maybe not for the last year or so. Ask them what the online equivalent is. Join their slack channel? Ask to observe on a task related to the problem you're solving?)

Use verbatim quotes... carefully

GDS

Quoting users or research participants word for word is much more persuasive than only using a summary. People tend to really anchor on emotive language users use when they're delighted or frustrated. This can be a double-edged sword, so use with caution!

Start with the problem, not the solution

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“Last time you needed to check on the status of something - what prompted that?”

GDS

I don't know whether this is a question anyone asked when we were thinking about a request status platform. But if we had, what might the answer have been?

“I realised it was a few weeks since I'd sent in my passport application and I hadn't heard anything”

Well, there's more than one way to solve that.

Asking about a problem and its context helps us figure out if this is a real problem, not really a problem at all, or a symptom of a different problem.

You can read more about what really happened with our request to build a status tracking platform here:

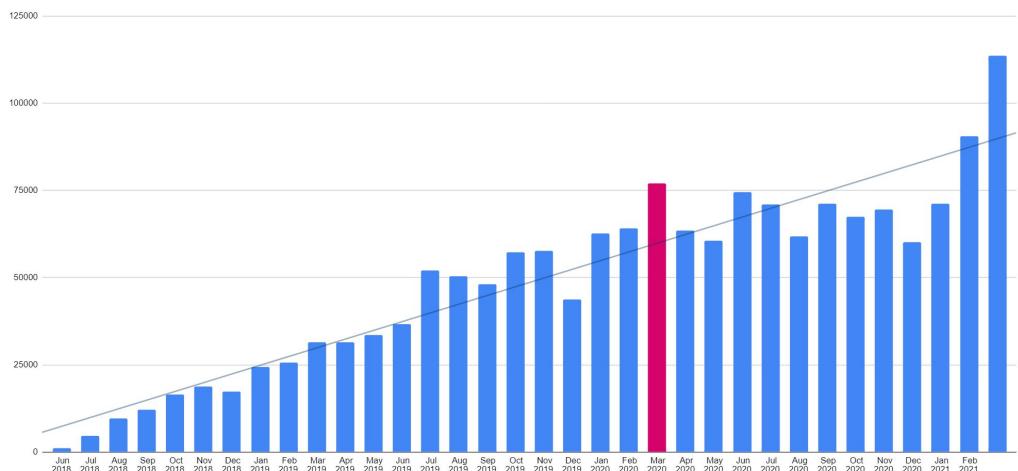
<https://medium.com/digitalhks/u-k-gds-gov-uk-notify-e645cce3cda8>

Where are we now?

GaaP products continue to go from strength to strength.

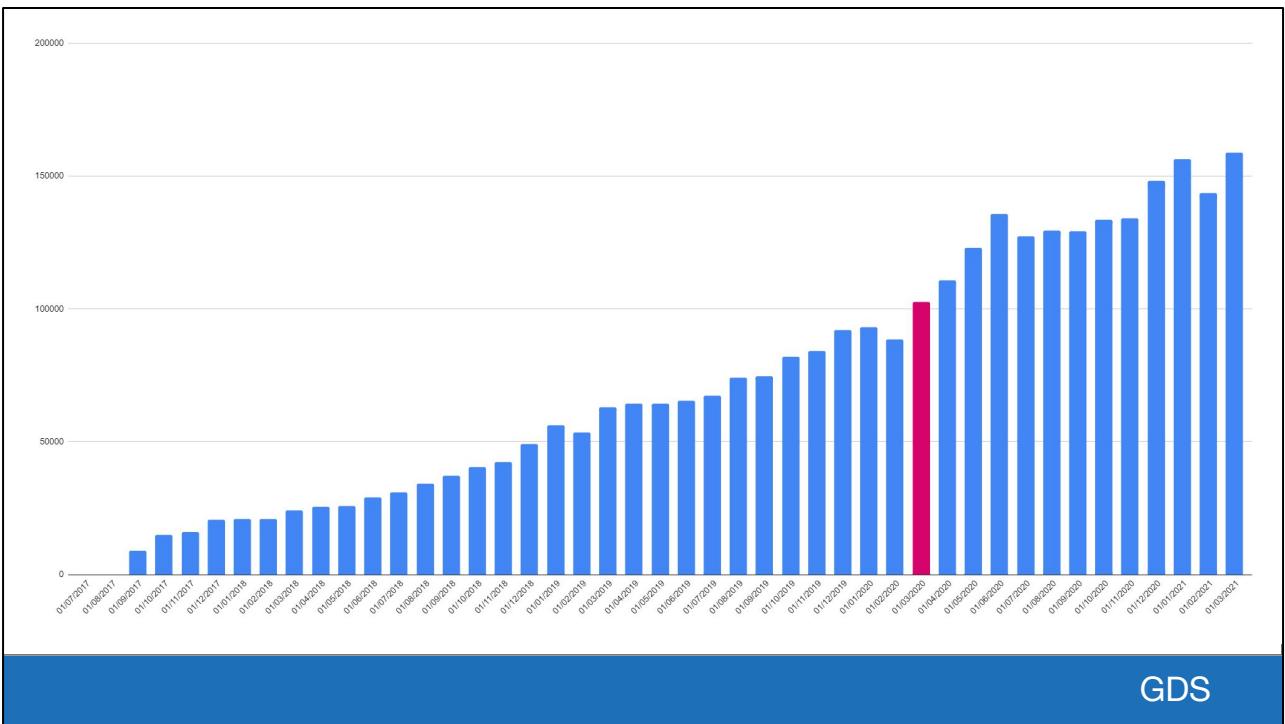
And we've started discovery on one of the most asked-for things we haven't built yet - a way to collect data from users to replace the PDF forms that low-volume services are currently using.

Monthly downloads of govuk-frontend npm package



GDS

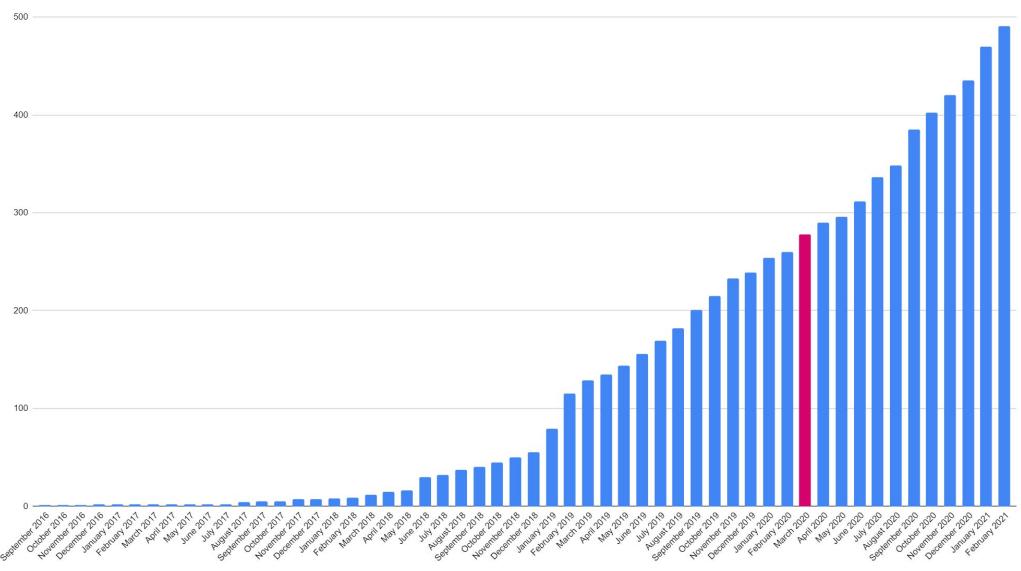
GOV.UK Design System usage is dependent on frontend developer activity across government. What we think this shows is that after the rush of new services around March 2020, unsurprisingly, a lot of departments, like us, slowed down on some things. But in general usage continues to trend upwards.



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GOV.UK Platform as a Service (PaaS), also growing steadily in usage

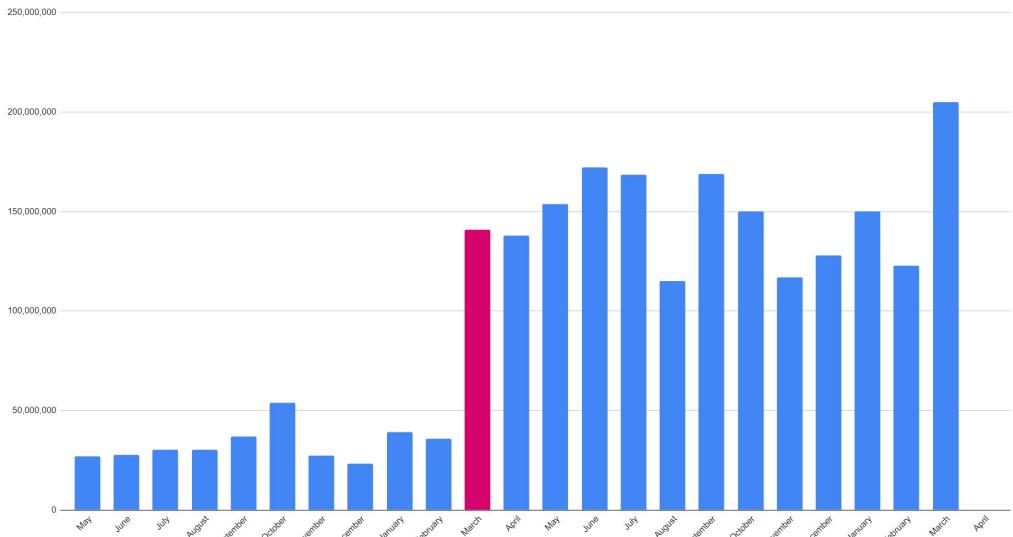
GOV.UK Pay Adoption



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GOV.UK Pay continues to grow, and has been on a gentle exponential curve since about 2019

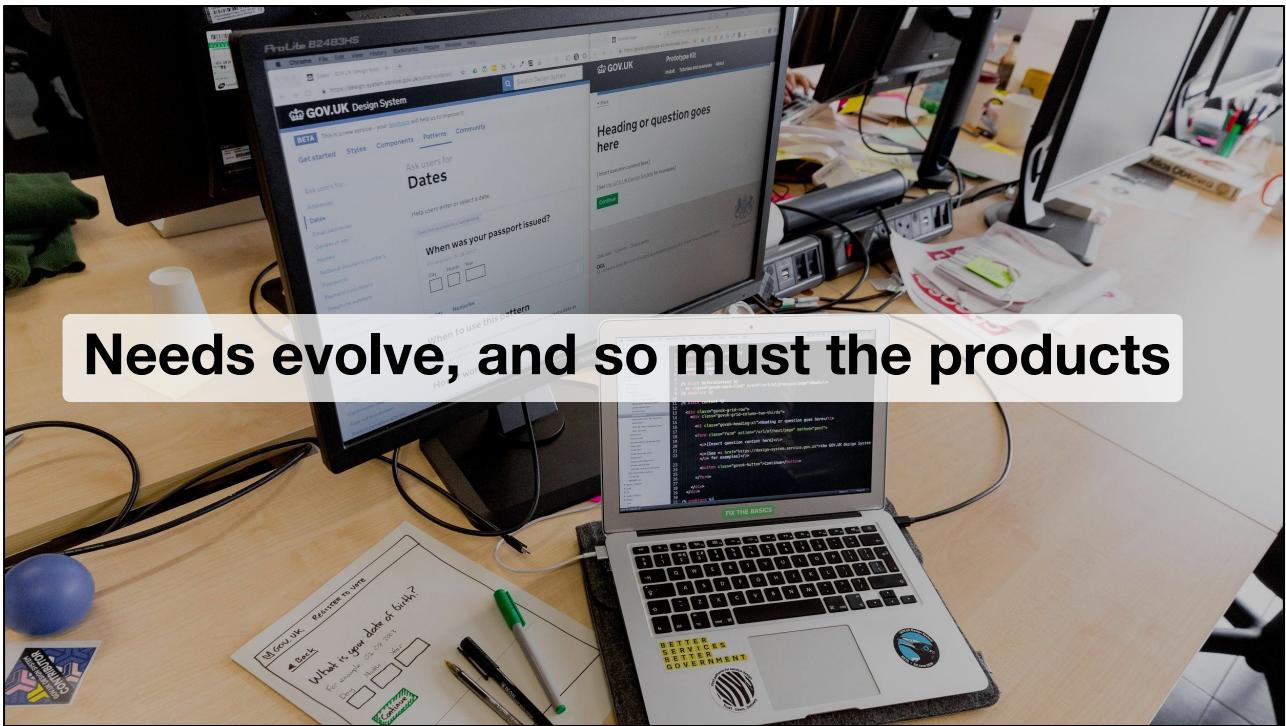
Notify message volumes per month



GDS

GOV.UK Notify usage went through the roof in March 2020 and - with vaccination scheduling and covid tests making up a big chunk of its volume - hasn't slowed down yet.

What's next?



Needs evolve, and so must the products

There are things we want to do with our existing platforms, and you can see those on our public roadmaps, and this year we're putting in another bid for multi-year funding to tackle the *next* things we can do to make it easier for government to build great digital services.

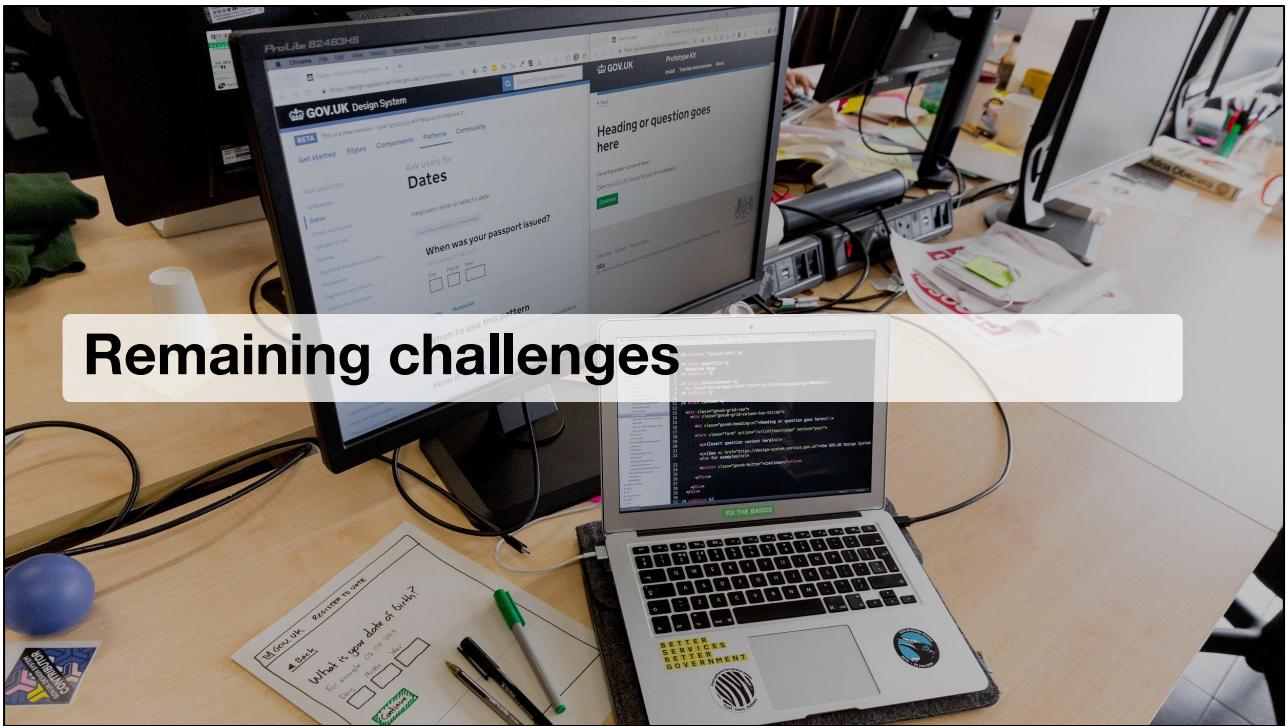
Product roadmaps are here:

<https://github.com/orgs/alphagov/projects/> (GOV.UK Design System)

<https://www.notifications.service.gov.uk/features/roadmap> (GOV.UK Notify)

<https://github.com/alphagov/paas-roadmap/projects/> (GOV.UK Platform as a Service)

<https://www.payments.service.gov.uk/roadmap/> (GOV.UK Pay)



Remaining challenges

Often we talk to teams who would love to use GaaP platforms in their services, but there are constraints that prevent them, so we want to partner with some teams elsewhere in government to figure out how to unblock some of those.

And we're still figuring out how to make it possible to share things that aren't centrally built. What happens if another department builds a thing that serves a wider need? Is it possible to create the right incentives and remove some of the biggest risks for them providing a service for others?



gds.blog.gov.uk



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I'd love to tell you more, but some things are still up in the air a little. But we'll blog about them in the open as soon as we can. Keep an eye on our blog to find out more as it happens... <https://gds.blog.gov.uk/>

We're hiring

And now I have a story of my own to tell. Until I joined GDS two years ago, I'd worked almost entirely in the commercial sector and never really considered becoming a civil servant. But in October 2018 I was at a conference where Liam Maxwell gave a talk. Liam used to be the CTO for the Cabinet Office and has held other senior positions in government technology. And at the end he talked about technology careers in the civil service. And not long after, I applied for a job at GDS.



Making it easier for people to interact with government takes work, and we need people to help us do it. It can be pretty full-on at times, but it can be fun, and it might be the most rewarding work you'll ever get to do.

You can find our careers site here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/government-digital-service/about/recruitment>

And subscribe to our careers portal here to get updates as new roles become available:

<https://gdscareers.tal.net/vx/lang-en-GB/mobile-0/appcentre-ext/brand-4/xf-930972319091/candidate/jobboard/vacancy/4/adv/>