**Research Debt**

In the current circumstances, where you may be prevented from extracting the Right Insight from the Right Methodology at the Right Time on your projects due to the unavailability of face to face research, remote tools or participants it’s highly likely that you will have gaps in your research that require revisiting, or assumptions that remain untested as well as decisions that may have been made on your project that weren’t fully evidenced.

This template is designed to document those gaps.

A gap is a research question or problem that has not been answered appropriately or at all - In essence it’s a knowledge gap for the overall project, rather than just a research gap. This leaves the project with Research Debt which needs to be picked up and explored at a future date.

This will be particularly important in relation to Covid-19 specific projects which will be revisited in the future and assessed under stricter governance.

1. **Design decisions, Process Changes and system changes which have been implemented but were not researched or tested.**

*This may include changes that were made based on untested hypotheses.*

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| We’ve tested iteratively throughout six sprint cycles. Design decisions have been proposed at each turn and tested (albeit to a limited degree) on the back of these. The most recent sprint (Sprint 6) has seen the design reach a point where the design iterations need testing. These relate to:     * The handling of the messaging around the definitiveness (or not of payment amounts (‘estimated payments’ in previous iterations) * The messaging around the limited service hours of JSAPS, including down-time messaging. * Advisory messaging deriving from the above   There has been very little full end-to-end testing of the service across Authenticate, Confirm Your identity and Digital Self Service. This is especially pertinent in terms of the quite lengthy user registrations journey. Some unhappy paths remain untested.  The holding page advising users of a delay in presenting data has only been tested to 15 seconds, and only with one round of six participants. Although encouraging reactions were recorded, this needs further (quantitative) validation at some point. Likewise, there has been no testing of a JSAPS delay in terms of IDV. |

1. **What research you’ve done**

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| **Desk research into academic treatments** of 2 Factor/multi-factor authentication (see AaaS)  **Knowledge sharing with other DWP** researchers as well as researchers in other areas of government, including aligned researchers in IDV.  **Remote prototype testing** – phone only with users working through the prototype while research team mirror that activity remotely.  They were also all using **laptop computers**. Given that, for example, prior research shows something like 80% of UC claimants will by default access the net via a smartphone, this is another point to consider.  The complexities of using a phone for a call AND to test the prototype meant that this was not something we actively pursued. Sound quality and manual dexterity / shifting between applications were the reasons for this. However, the small number of phone users we encountered had no evident difficulties. Specific testing with phone users is lacking. The ned for this is accentuated by the knowledge that a preference for phone browsing is known to correlate with lower digital skills.  They were also almost entirely **first language speakers**, with **good internet access**, and high levels of **digital capability**.  Participants are professionally recruited to take part in remote UR sessions, as described above. They all had recent/current experience of DWP services. Non-graduates were recruited. By default – given the nature of the recruitment – these participants were **all at a relatively high level of digital capability.**  This, again represents a gap in our testing. One self-declared as ‘slightly dyslexic’. They used a mixture of laptops and tablets to access the prototype. (although logically we ARE designing for those who are digitally literate).  Those recruited have tended to be **long-standing claimants**. We have done very little, if any research with new claimants. People in that position are likely to be less familiar with the way DWP claims and payments are handled. As a result they may be more anxious about what is (or is not) happening in respect of their claim. |

1. **What research you would have done**

*This could be additional research or taking a different approach.*

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| Ideally, we would have engaged directly with **DWP service users** from day one. Pop up research might have allowed us to get a richer picture of users’ attitudes to their online engagement with DWP generally as well with 2FA specifically.  The same is true of directly recruited and screened participants. Recruitment limitations prevented this initially. In short, we’d have done more **Discovery research.**  **Pop up research** would also have allowed us to get quick and inexpensive feedback on our initial design thinking and content ideas. It would also have allowed us to explore directly users’ mental models of DWP services.  **Direct testing with users in person** would have removed the issue of having to sign into a prototype in order to test a sign in process.  **Card sorting** to establish optimal page sequences would have been a useful technique if face to face contact had been possible.  **Workshopping** the above might also have been productive, but it was not even considered given the Covid restrictions.  This could also have involved Subject Matter Experts from the various claim teams.  Had we been permitted we would have used **screen sharing technology** as part of our prototype testing we would have more confidence in our observations.  We have done almost nothing to research scenarios involving **proxy users** ie parents/partners/carers/etc  We have tested primarily with established claimants. These people are relatively well informed in terms of how claims work. Testing with **new claimants** is likely to show different information needs. Working through professional recruiter makes reaching new claimants difficult. |

1. **Implications when revisiting research**

*This may cover things such as Target Users reached/not reached, key terminology or concepts untested, goals and pain points that went unexplored or usability issues which you weren’t able to robustly test. It may also encompass aspects of Accessibility or Assisted Digital.*

*It’s also crucial to highlight where proxy audience groups have been utilised, and any implications.*

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| We anticipate that we will be able to overcome our limited ability to reach users of DWP services as the project progresses.  There will remain issues of reach, however, as Covid limitations will still be in place. There is only so much we can spend on recruitment!  Covid restrictions have made accessibility testing impractical to date – as at Sept 2020. This needs to be addressed at the earliest possible opportunity.  It is worth considering that post-covid user reactions to digital engagement may be different to what they were pre-covid. This needs to be borne in mind when comparing findings with past research. |