**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.*

|  |
| --- |
| May 2020   1. Overall, the lack of a partner service for Authenticate as a Service means that a bare minimum of discovery work has been possible up front – we simply don’t know what service setting the product will sit within. 2. This means that when considering our users and their contexts of use, we are working with extremely broad generalisations. 3. In the absence of a service to test our designs with we have invented a dummy service as a prompt for scenario discussion. There are limitations with this, not least that any findings we derive from testing must be caveated with the observation that our test subjects are not as motivated to engage with the process as actual users of an existing service would ordinarily be, 4. As our heroku prototype requires a user to sign into it in order for us to conduct (remote) testing, our own tests of the Authentication service are unhelpfully primed. This is causing overt user confusion as well as potentially less obvious bias in respondents’ reactions to the prototype design which involves a sign in process. |

1. **What research you’ve done**

|  |
| --- |
| **Desk research into academic treatments** of 2 Factor/multi-factor authentication.  **Knowledge sharing with other DWP** researchers as well as researchers in other areas of government.  **Remote prototype testing** – phone only with 46 users working through the prototype while research team mirror that activity remotely.  Due to Covid and contractual constraints, the first 24 of these were with **friends and family.** These people were, typically, well educated, white, middle class, middle aged people who viewed DWP as a relatively abstract organisation ie they had little if any direct experience of using DWP services. This provided an obvious ‘debt’ in that the team could not be entirely sure of the representativeness (or otherwise) of thee feedback these users provided.  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 (3) had no evident difficulties.  They were also almost entirely **first language speakers**, with **good internet access**, high levels of **digital capability** and no declared **accessibility** issues.  This was qualified in the last round of testing with did which involved eight PIP claimants. Their issues comprised:  5 mental health issues  3 visual impairment issues (1 screen reader user, 1 colour screen)  2 mobility issues  1 hearing impairment issue  1 cognitive impairment issue  Participants P25-P46 were 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. |

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

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

|  |
| --- |
| 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.  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 nothing to research scenarios involving **proxy users** ie parents/partners/carers/etc |

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.*

|  |
| --- |
| We anticipate that we will be able to overcome our inability to reach users of DWP services as the project progresses. At the time of writing (May) news has just come in that our recruitment blocker has now been lifted. This means, as intended, that more refined experiments will be carried out with a more appropriate set of test subjects.  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!  The lack of a service to integrate with will continue to leave us blind to potential pain points around the integration of AaaS with any service.  Covid restrictions have made accessibility testing impractical to date – as at May 2020. This needs to be addressed at the earliest possible opportunity.  Subsequent engagement with PIP participants (August 2020) has partially ameliorated this, but it remains an area requiring more attention. |