Towards the Future for Legal Aid and Legal Aid Professionals

Justice Digital

A flexible organisation, driven by data and led by users

Context:

Legal Aid Agency

- Employs c.1,200 people
- Administers £2bn of public money (representing >22% of overall MoJ spend in 2022/23)
- Processes >400k applications for legal aid (2021/22). 94% of civil applications were processed within 20 working days except for the most complex cases and 100% of criminal legal aid applications were processed within 2 days.
- Processes 1.2m bills (2021/22). 99% of bills were processed within 20 days against a target of 90%.
- Answers 130,000 calls to our call centres (2021/22)
- Contracts with c.2,200 civil providers; c.1,600 crime providers and makes payments to c.3,600 advocates
- Majority of staff work in case management teams, handling applications from clients (members of public) and bills (from providers - often solicitors) or in contract management teams
- NAO agreement of <1% margin of error
- Deliver 98% initial transactions online, but rely on systems which a majority (85%) are at end of life or beyond

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Deliver a world-class justice system that works for everyone in society

Changing the user experience of justice - simpler, faster & better for everyone

Protect the public from serious offenders & improve safety in prisons

Reduce reoffending

Deliver swift access to justice

Led by users

We will create a user centred mindset & true multidisciplinary teams

Driven by data

We will ensure the right data is available at the right time for the right people

Flexible in our approach

We will be nimble, using automation where it is right to do so

Deliver simple, clear, fast services for probation colleagues

Deliver modern, joined up services for prison colleagues and prisoners

Create simplified and more reliable access to legal aid services

Build a modern Lasting Power of Attorney

Provide straightforward & sensitive access to compensation

Modernise Courts & Tribunals services (Reform)

Secure, de-risk and make visible the health of our top 45 business critical systems

Design, deliver and maintain sustainable core technology services and an exceptional workplace technology experience

Build strong digital & technology capability

Drive proportionate functional standards

Build an open, collaborative culture

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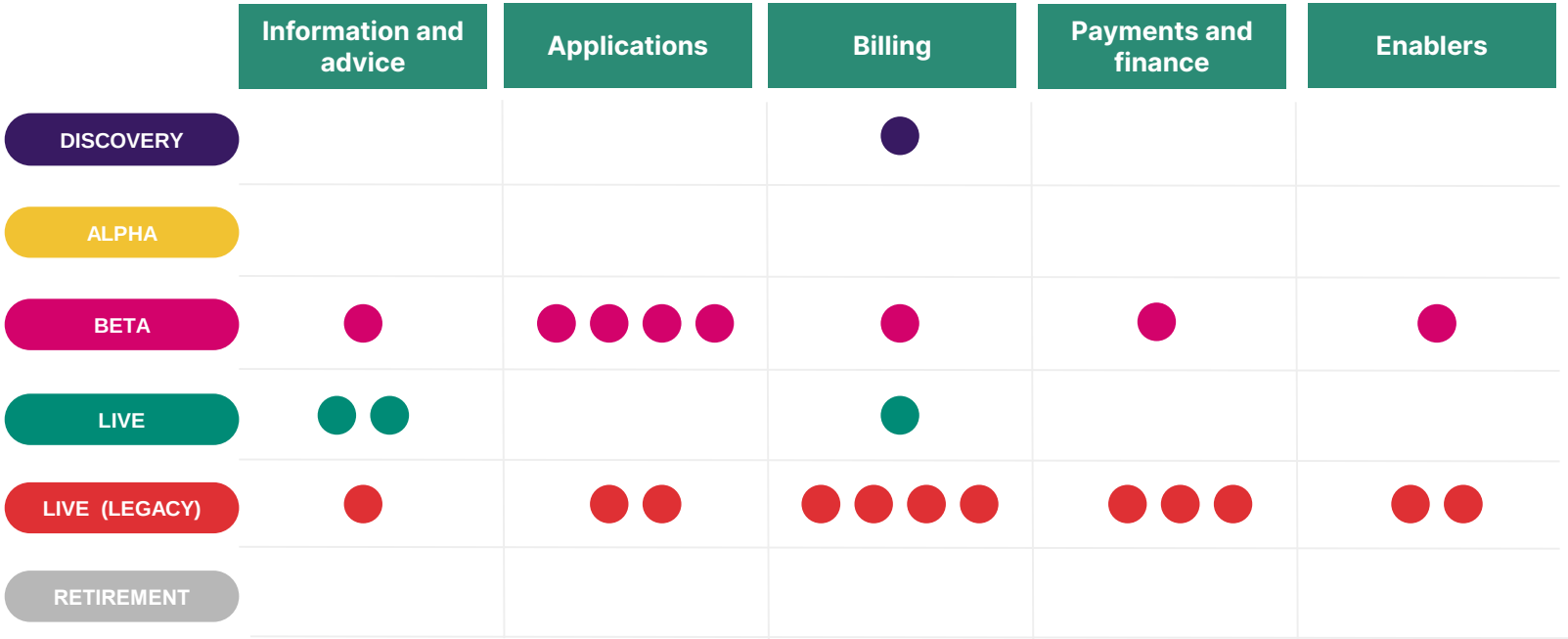
How we group our products

Most of our products fit in to one of the following product groupings. These are outline on our product strategy for 2023-25.

Access to legal aid		Payment of legal aid		
Information and advice	**Applications**	**Billing**	**Payments and finance**	**Enablers**
Enabling access to justice for everyone in society through easy to understand and efficient access to legal aid services	Applying for legal representation in court allows for simple and efficient access to justice to everyone in society	Support the authorisation and assurance of bills for legal aid by providing accurate, timely and accessible information	Fast, reliable and accurate payments and financial reporting to keep Legal Aid sustainable and available	Supporting the outcomes of products and services across the Access and Payments service areas
Information and advice strategy document	Applications strategy document	Billing strategy document	Payments and finance strategy document	⚠ Work in progress

22 products in 5 product groups (overview)



Our services, users and product teams

22 products in 5 product groups (in detail)

Information and advice

- BETA — CCQ — Check if your client qualifies for legal aid
- LIVE — Check if you can get legal aid
- LIVE (LEGACY) — CHS — Call handling system (Civil Legal Advice helpline)
- LIVE — FALA — Find a legal advisor

Applications

- BETA — Apply for civil legal aid
- BETA — Apply for criminal legal aid
- BETA — Review criminal legal aid applications
- BETA — Review civil legal aid applications
- LIVE (LEGACY) — CCMS Civil applications — Client and cost management system
- LIVE (LEGACY) — Crime core applications

Billing

- BETA — Non-standard crime claims
- LIVE (LEGACY) — Assess a claim — (Crime higher)
- LIVE (LEGACY) — CWA — Contracted work administration (Crime lower and contracted civil)
- LIVE — Claim for payment — (Crime higher)
- DISCO — Billing

Payments and finance

- BETA — Payments and finance
- LIVE (LEGACY) — DCES — Debt Collection Enforcement Service

Enablers

- BETA — Eligibility platform
- LIVE (LEGACY) — DART — Data and reporting
- LIVE (LEGACY) — CCMS platform — Client and cost management system

Cross-cutting

- LIVE (LEGACY) — CIS — Corporate information system
- LIVE (LEGACY) — CCMS Civil billing and all payments — Client and cost management system

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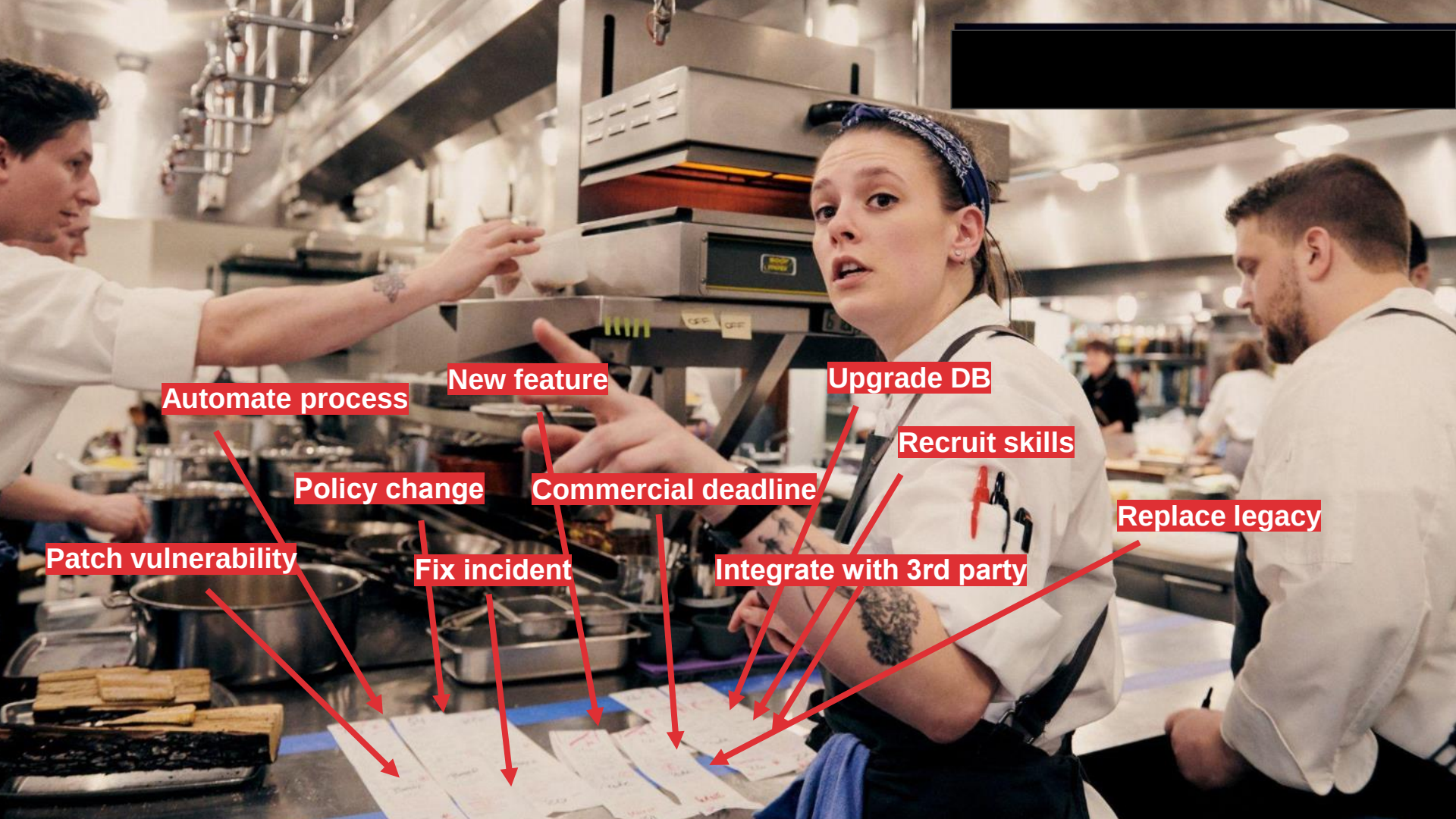
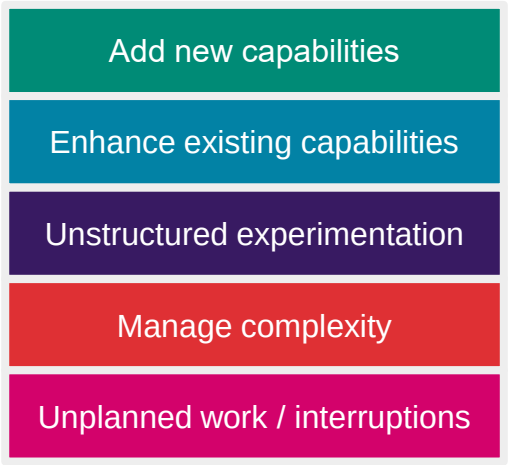
Technical debt

- Debt can help you achieve your goals
- Debt carries an implied future cost
- Debt can grow to become a significant burden

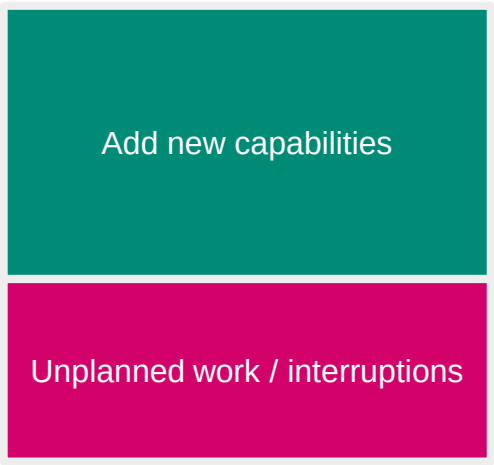

Automate process
New feature
Upgrade DB
Recruit skills
Policy change
Commercial deadline
Replace legacy
Patch vulnerability
Fix incident
Integrate with 3rd party

Technical Debt Trap

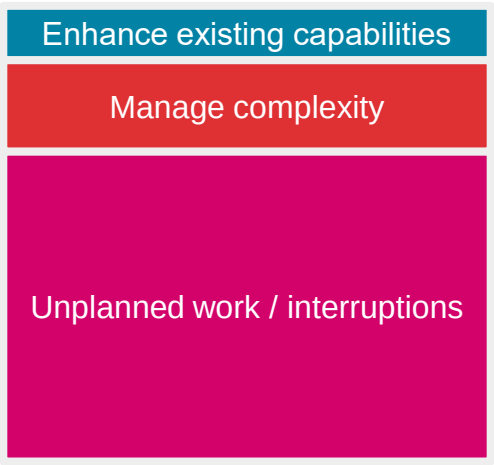
Do this:



Not this:



…or this will happen.



Case study

Tackling problem debt in applications for criminal legal aid

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The situation

Time consuming and difficult

Lots of evidence and information required

Multiple steps and manual connection of systems to inject data

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The IMPACT

- Gaps in information
- Unnecessary administrative burden
- An increase in the potential for errors and time taken to process applications
- We believe that this also has an impact on the likelihood and ability of individuals to apply for and be correctly assessed as eligible for legal aid

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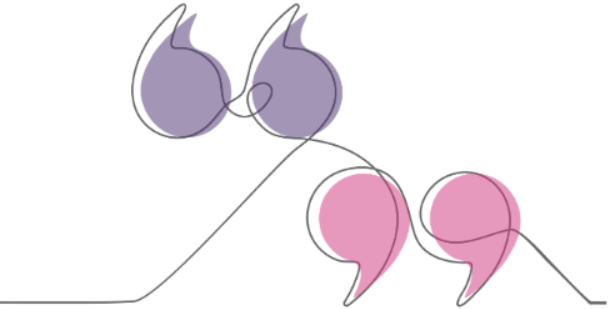
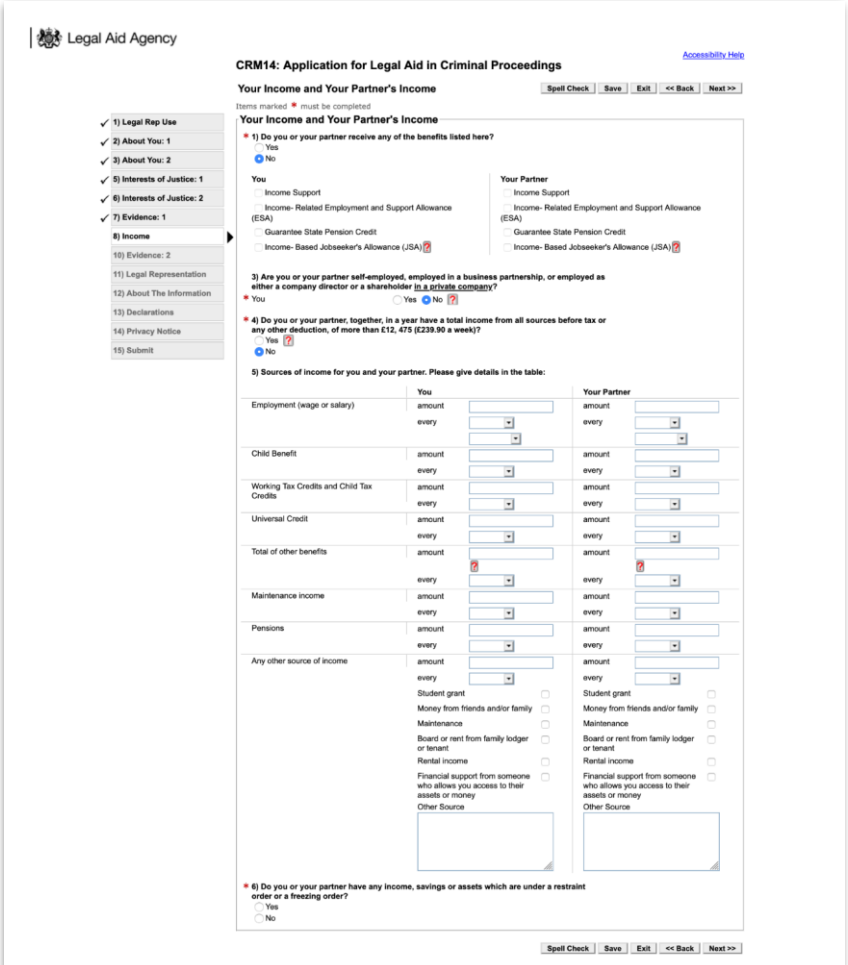
The CONSTRAINTS

- The product used for applying for criminal legal aid is owned by a third party supplier
- Any changes are high cost with an extremely long lead time
- The contract comes to an end in 2024
- The products used for assessing applications are legacy systems which are very risky to make changes in
- There is a large scale policy change due to come into effect in 2025 which impacts all of the criminal legal aid systems and products



“Why can’t you give us an API so we can automatically populate the application with information from our own systems?”

– Solicitor


Legal Aid Agency

Accessibility Help

CRM14: Application for Legal Aid in Criminal Proceedings

Your Income and Your Partner's Income

Spell Check | Save | Exit | << Back | Next >>

Items marked * must be completed

- ✓ 1) Legal Rep Use
- ✓ 2) About You: 1
- ✓ 3) About You: 2
- ✓ 5) Interests of Justice: 1
- ✓ 6) Interests of Justice: 2
- ✓ 7) Evidence: 1
- 8) Income
- 10) Evidence: 2
- 11) Legal Representation
- 12) About The Information
- 13) Declarations
- 14) Privacy Notice
- 15) Submit

Your Income and Your Partner's Income

* **1) Do you or your partner receive any of the benefits listed here?**
  - Yes
  - No

You	Your Partner
Income Support	Income Support
Income- Related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)	Income- Related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
Guarantee State Pension Credit	Guarantee State Pension Credit
Income- Based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)	Income- Based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)

3) Are you or your partner self-employed, employed in a business partnership, or employed as either a company director or a shareholder in a private company?

* You: Yes / No

* **4) Do you or your partner, together, in a year have a total income from all sources before tax or any other deduction, of more than £12, 475 (£239.90 a week)?**
  - Yes
  - No

5) Sources of income for you and your partner. Please give details in the table:

	You		Your Partner	
Employment (wage or salary)	amount		amount	
	every		every	
Child Benefit	amount		amount	
	every		every	
Working Tax Credits and Child Tax Credits	amount		amount	
	every		every	
Universal Credit	amount		amount	
	every		every	
Total of other benefits	amount		amount	
	every		every	
Maintenance income	amount		amount	
	every		every	
Pensions	amount		amount	
	every		every	
Any other source of income	amount		amount	
	every		every	
	Student grant		Student grant	
	Money from friends and/or family		Money from friends and/or family	
	Maintenance		Maintenance	
	Board or rent from family lodger or tenant		Board or rent from family lodger or tenant	
	Rental income		Rental income	
	Financial support from someone who allows you access to their assets or money		Financial support from someone who allows you access to their assets or money	
	Other Source		Other Source	

* **6) Do you or your partner have any income, savings or assets which are under a restraint order or a freezing order?**
  - Yes
  - No

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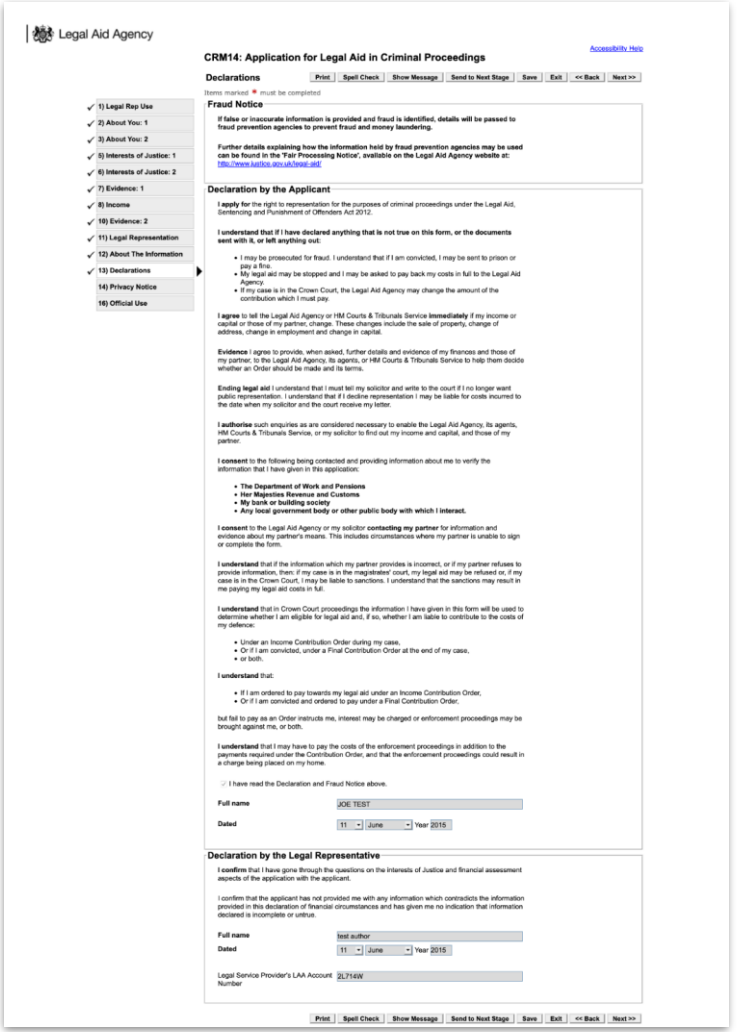
Legal Aid Agency

Accessibility Help

CRM14: Application for Legal Aid in Criminal Proceedings

Declarations

Print | Spell Check | Show Message | Send to Next Stage | Save | Exit | << Back | Next >>

Items marked * must be completed

- ✓ 1) Legal Rep Use
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- ✓ 7) Evidence: 1
- ✓ 8) Income
- ✓ 10) Evidence: 2
- ✓ 11) Legal Representation
- ✓ 12) About The Information
- ✓ 13) Declarations
- 14) Privacy Notice
- 16) Official Use

Fraud Notice

If false or inaccurate information is provided and fraud is identified, details will be passed to fraud prevention agencies to prevent fraud and money laundering.

Further details explaining how the information held by fraud prevention agencies may be used can be found in the 'Fair Processing Notice', available on the Legal Aid Agency website at: http://www.justice.gov.uk/legal-aid/

Declaration by the Applicant

I **apply for** the right to representation for the purposes of criminal proceedings under the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012.

I understand that if I have declared anything that is not true on this form, or the documents sent with it, or left anything out:

- I may be prosecuted for fraud. I understand that if I am convicted, I may be sent to prison or pay a fine.
- My legal aid may be stopped and I may be asked to pay back my costs in full to the Legal Aid Agency.
- If my case is in the Crown Court, the Legal Aid Agency may change the amount of the contribution which I must pay.

I **agree** to tell the Legal Aid Agency or HM Courts & Tribunals Service **immediately** if my income or capital or those of my partner, change. These changes include the sale of property, change of address, change in employment and change in capital.

Evidence I agree to provide, when asked, further details and evidence of my finances and those of my partner, to the Legal Aid Agency, its agents, or HM Courts & Tribunals Service to help them decide whether an Order should be made and its terms.

Ending legal aid I understand that I must tell my solicitor and write to the court if I no longer want public representation. I understand that if I decline representation I may be liable for costs incurred to the date when my solicitor and the court receive my letter.

I **authorise** such enquiries as are considered necessary to enable the Legal Aid Agency, its agents, HM Courts & Tribunals Service, or my solicitor to find out my income and capital, and those of my partner.

I **consent** to the following being contacted and providing information about me to verify the information that I have given in this application:

- **The Department of Work and Pensions**
- **Her Majesties Revenue and Customs**
- **My bank or building society**
- **Any local government body or other public body with which I interact.**

I **consent** to the Legal Aid Agency or my solicitor **contacting my partner** for information and evidence about my partner's means. This includes circumstances where my partner is unable to sign or complete the form.

I **understand** that if the information which my partner provides is incorrect, or if my partner refuses to provide information, then: if my case is in the magistrates' court, my legal aid may be refused or, if my case is in the Crown Court, I may be liable to sanctions. I understand that the sanctions may result in me paying my legal aid costs in full.

I **understand** that in Crown Court proceedings the information I have given in this form will be used to determine whether I am eligible for legal aid and, if so, whether I am liable to contribute to the costs of my defence:

- Under an Income Contribution Order during my case,
- Or if I am convicted, under a Final Contribution Order at the end of my case,
- or both.

I **understand** that:

- If I am ordered to pay towards my legal aid under an Income Contribution Order,
- Or if I am convicted and ordered to pay under a Final Contribution Order.

but fail to pay as an Order instructs me, interest may be charged or enforcement proceedings may be brought against me, or both.

I **understand** that I may have to pay the costs of the enforcement proceedings in addition to the payments required under the Contribution Order, and that the enforcement proceedings could result in a charge being placed on my home.

☑ I have read the Declaration and Fraud Notice above.

Full name JOE TEST

Dated 11 June Year 2015

Declaration by the Legal Representative

I **confirm** that I have gone through the questions on the Interests of Justice and financial assessment aspects of the application with the applicant.

I confirm that the applicant has not provided me with any information which contradicts the information provided in this declaration of financial circumstances and has given me no indication that information declared is incomplete or untrue.

Full name test author

Dated 11 June Year 2015

Legal Service Provider's LAA Account Number 2L714W

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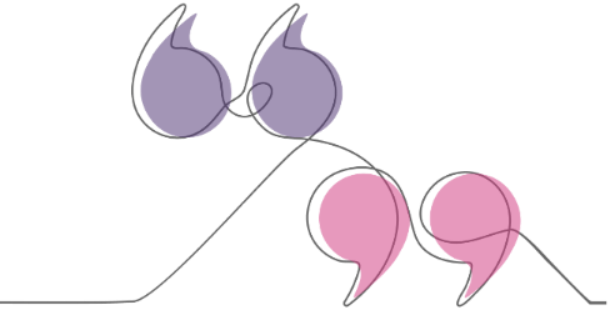
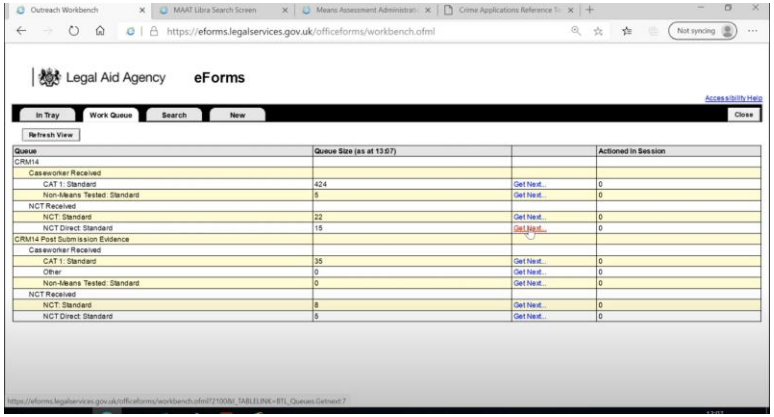
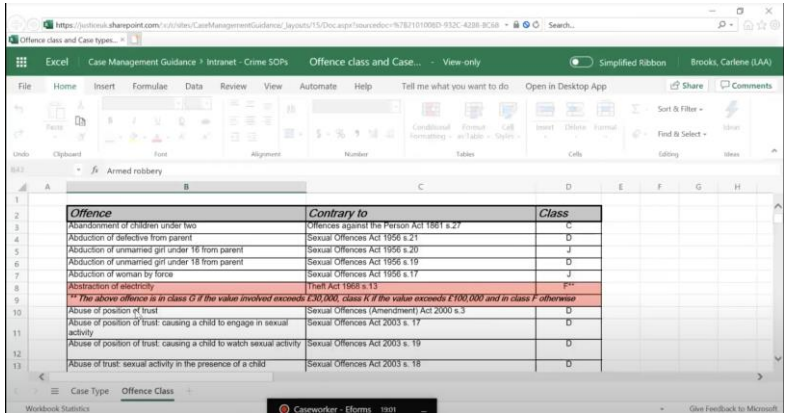
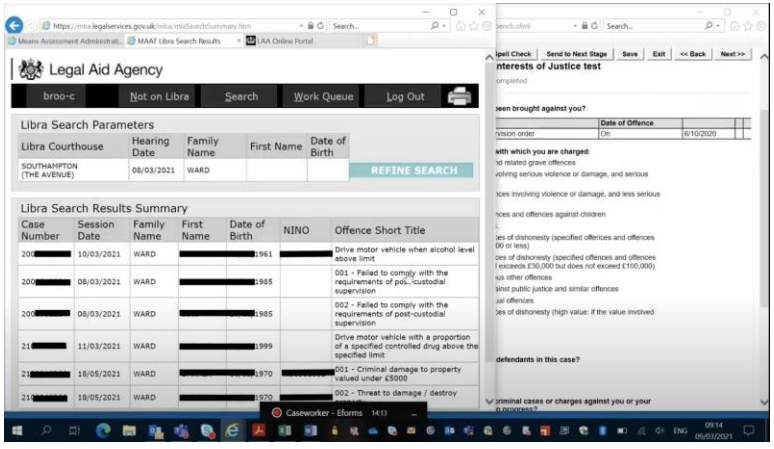


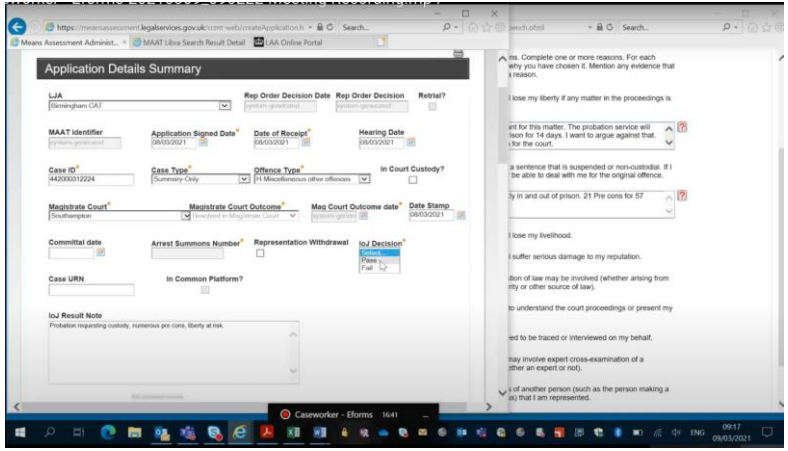
“Extra processing steps, double searching, unlinking-relinking to locate correct case, filling out the spreadsheet – all of this added to extra stress when processing...as caseworkers are aware of time-standards and allocation”

–Caseworker









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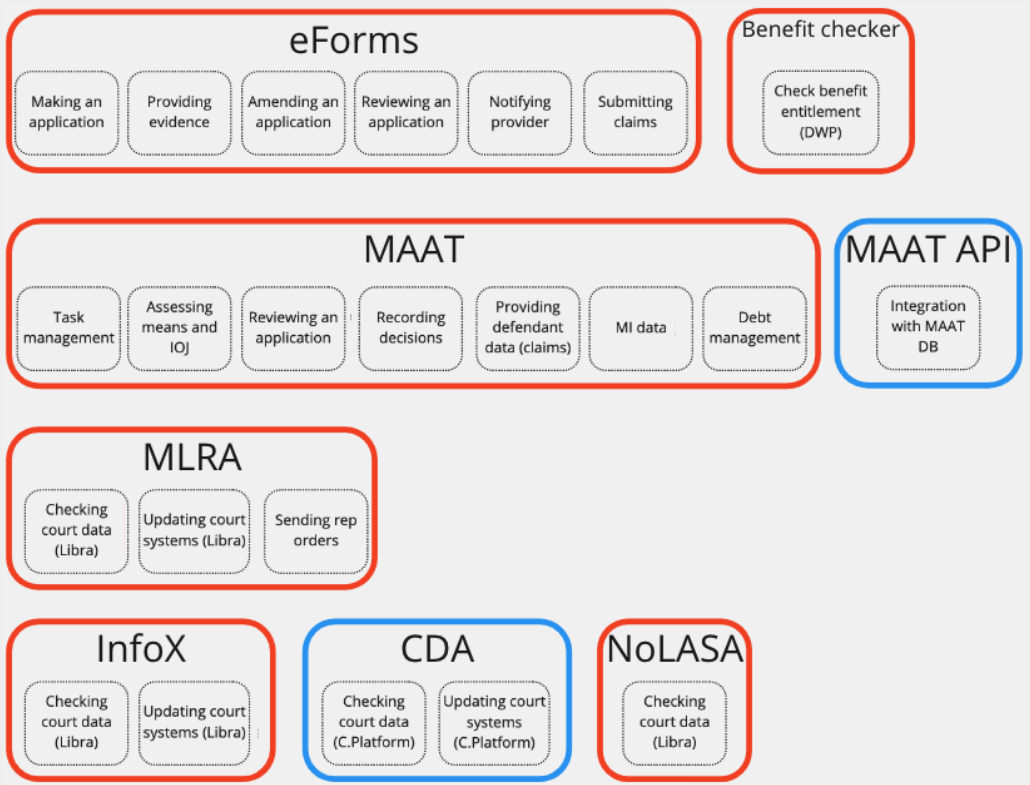
Our Systems



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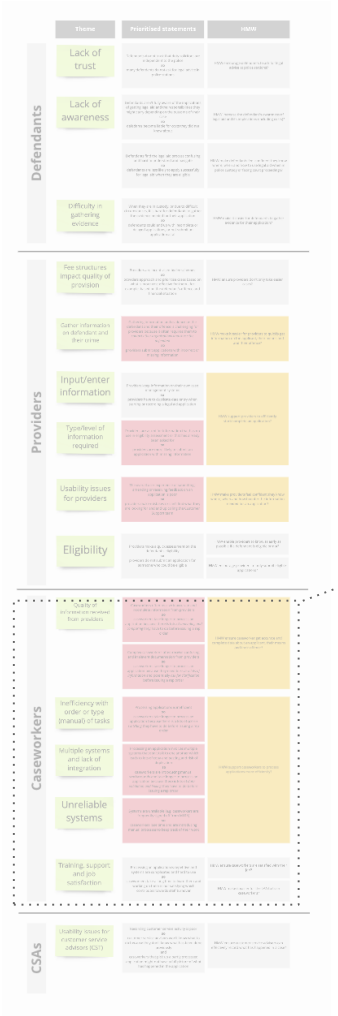

Caseworkers

Quality of information received from providers

Caseworkers often receive inaccurate and incomplete information from providers
so
caseworkers take longer to process an application because there is lots of *amending and comparing* they have to do before issuing a rep order

Complex caseworkers often receive confusing and irrelevant documentation from providers
so
caseworkers take longer to process an application because they need to *review lots of information* and potentially *ask for clarification* before issuing a rep order

HMW ensure caseworker get accurate and complete data about an applicant, their means and their offence?

Inefficiency with order or type (manual) of tasks

Processing applications is inefficient
so
caseworkers take longer to process an application because there is a lots of *screen switching* they have to do before issuing a rep order

Multiple systems and lack of integration

Processing an application involves multiple systems that don't talk to one another which leads to lots of copy and pasting and risk of duplication
so
caseworkers are introducing manual workarounds and take longer to process an application because there is lots of *data validation and linking* they have to do before issuing a rep order

Unreliable systems

Systems are unreliable (e.g. caseworkers are frequently signed off from MLRA)
so
caseworkers lose time and are introducing manual processes to keep track of their work

HMW support caseworkers to process applications more efficiently?

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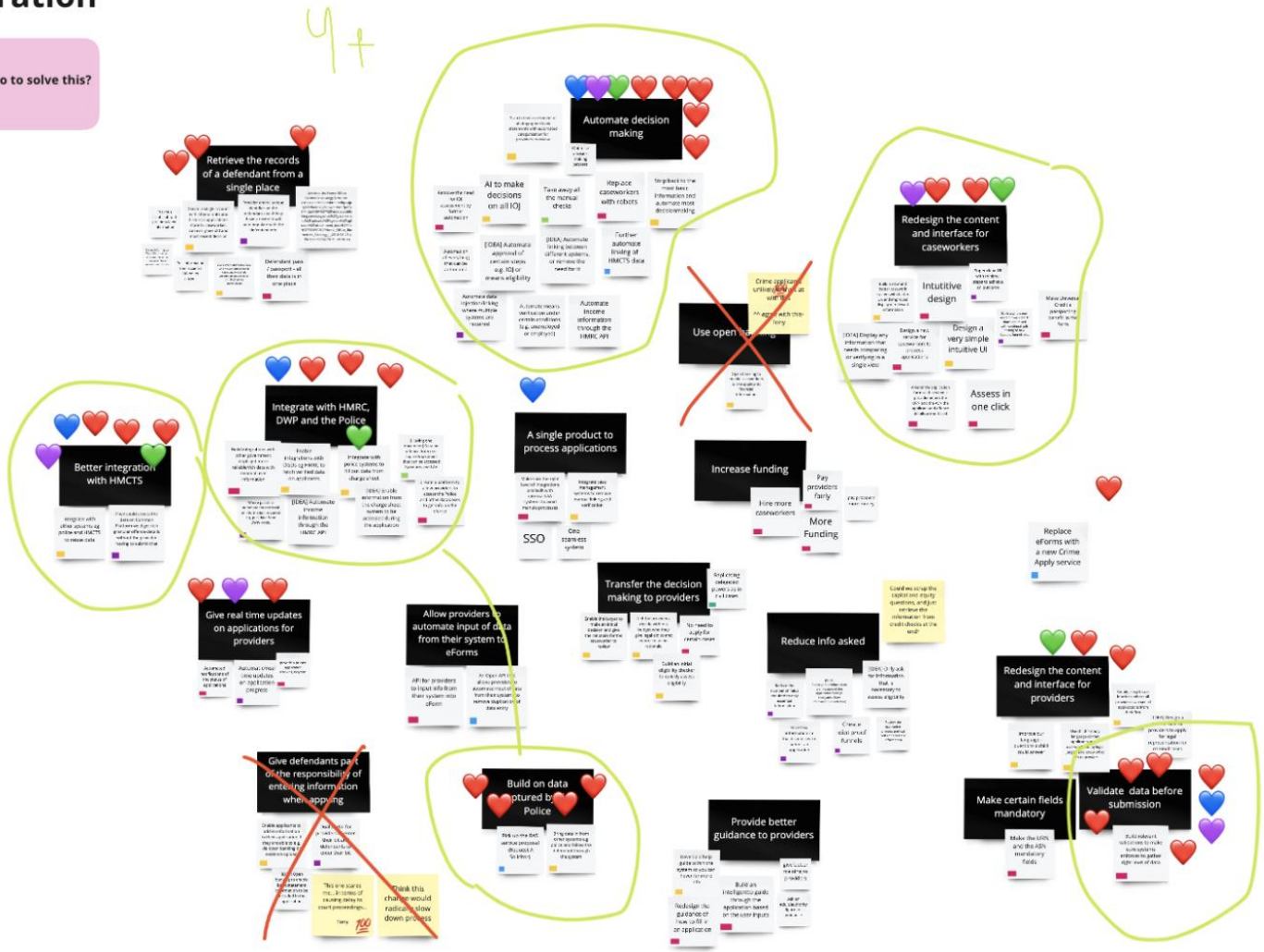
Idea generation

What would your grandmother do to solve this?



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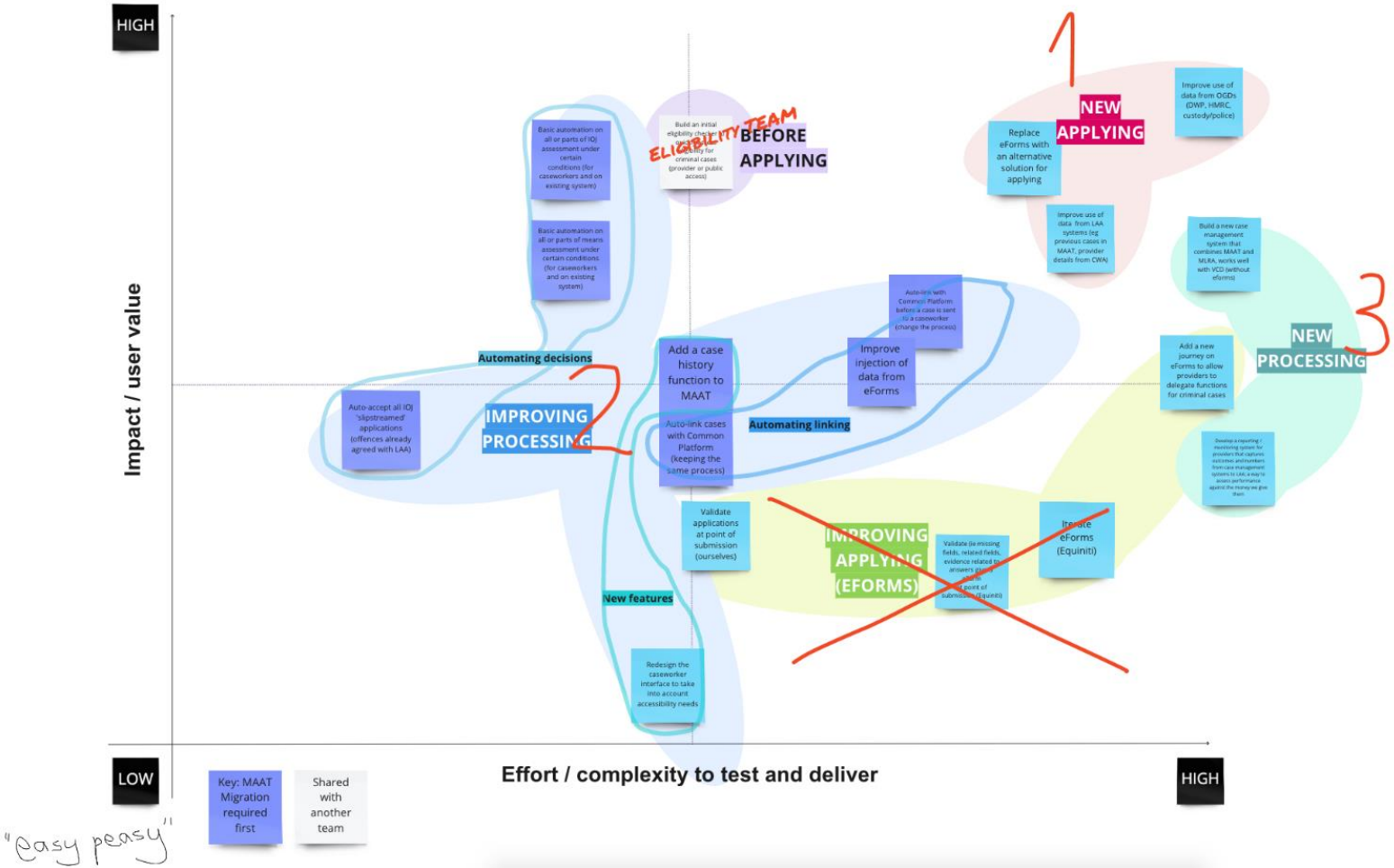

HIGH
Impact / user value
LOW
Effort / complexity to test and deliver
HIGH
1
NEW APPLYING
Replace eForms with an alternative solution for applying
Improve use of data from OGDs (DWP, HMRC, custody/police)
Improve use of data from LAA systems (eg previous cases in MAAT, provider details from CWA)
ELIGIBILITY TEAM
BEFORE APPLYING
Build an initial eligibility check (eg MAAT eligibility for criminal cases (provider or public access)
Basic automation on all or parts of IO) assessment under certain conditions (for caseworkers and on existing system)
Basic automation on all or parts of means assessment under certain conditions (for caseworkers and on existing system)
Automating decisions
2
IMPROVING PROCESSING
Auto-accept all IO) 'slipstreamed' applications (offences already agreed with LAA)
Add a case history function to MAAT
Auto-link cases with Common Platform (keeping the same process)
Auto-link with Common Platform before a case is sent to a caseworker (change the process)
Improve injection of data from eForms
Automating linking
3
NEW PROCESSING
Build a new case management system that combines MAAT and MLRA, works well with VCD (without eForms)
Add a new journey on eForms to allow providers to delegate functions for criminal cases
Develop a reporting / monitoring system for providers that captures outcomes and numbers from case management systems to LAA, a way to assess performance against the money we give them
Validate applications at point of submission (ourselves)
New features
Redesign the caseworker interface to take into account accessibility needs
IMPROVING APPLYING (EFORMS)
Validate (ie missing fields, related fields, evidence related to answers given) at point of submission (Equiniti)
Integrate eForms (Equiniti)
Key: MAAT Migration required first
Shared with another team
"easy peasy"

If...

We simplify evidence requirements and allow the person applying to only provide information that is:

- The minimum necessary to assess eligibility
- Relevant to the circumstances
- Not information we can already access from LAA or other government departments' systems
- Validated for errors and completeness

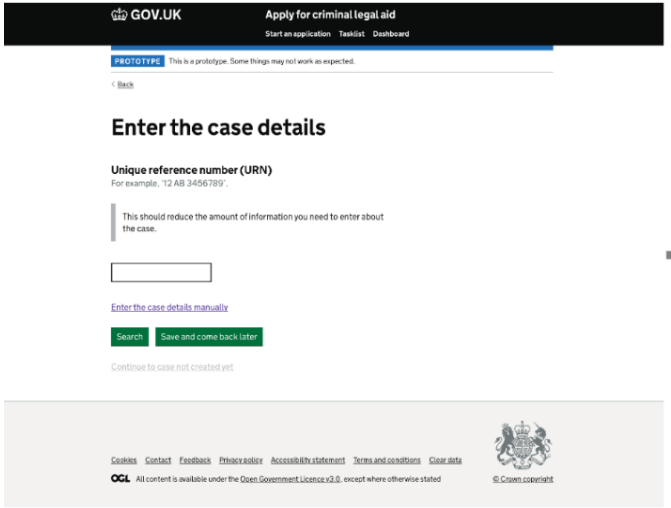
Then...

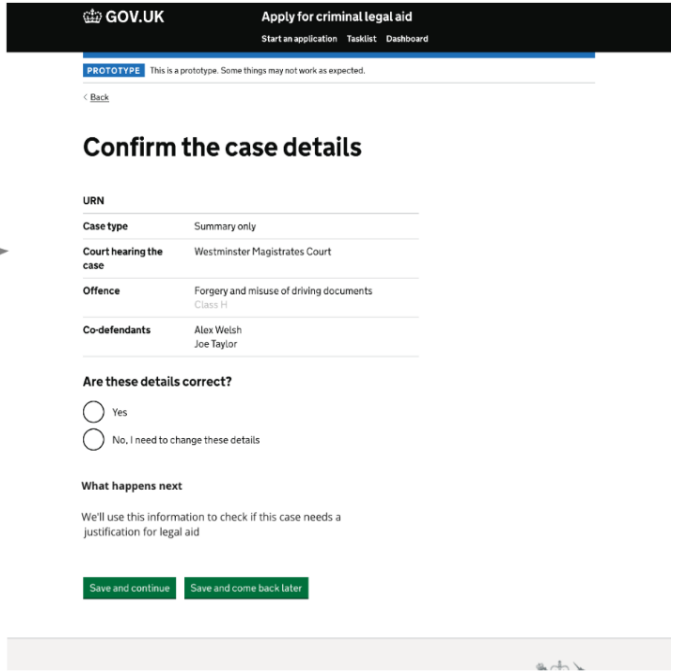
Providers will find it easier and quicker to submit an application

Caseworkers will receive more accurate and complete information and have to carry out less manual work, meaning they can process applications more quickly

LAA would find it easier and quicker to implement changes and continuously improve the application journey

We took on more debt...





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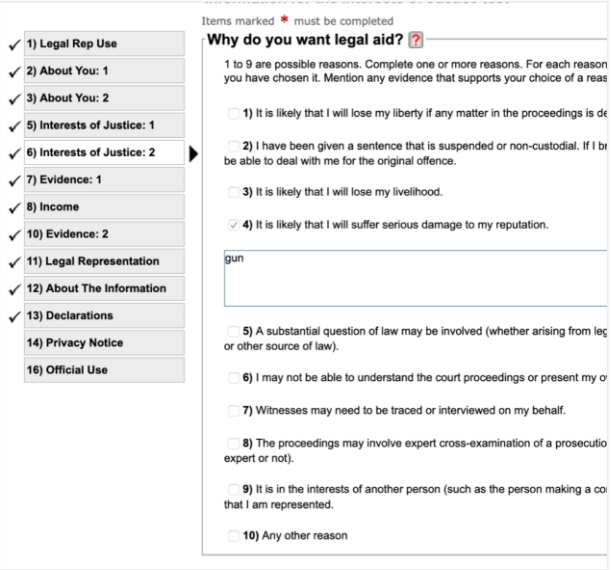
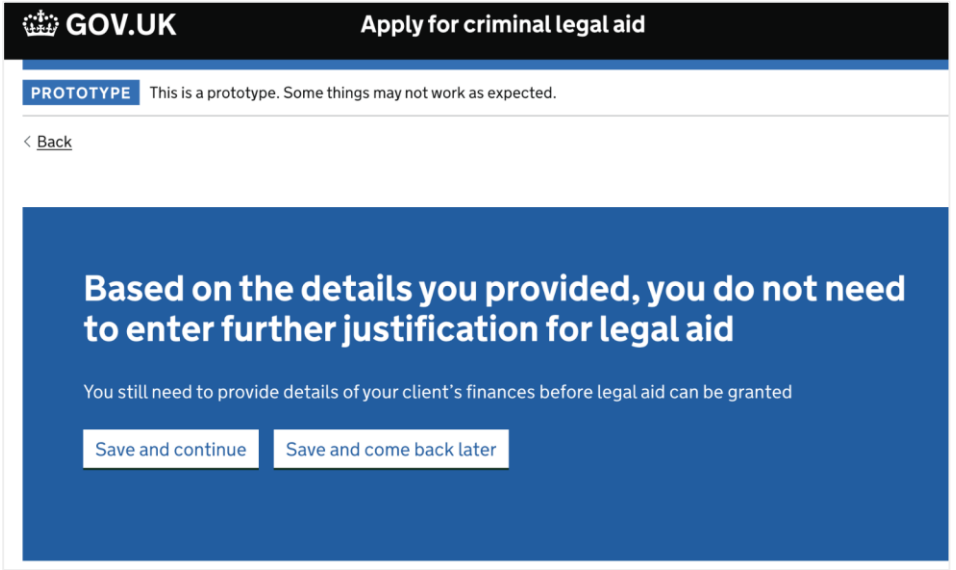
But wrote it off on other parts...





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It's a constant trade-off...

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	O	P
1	**Category**	**Section and question #**	**What data we need**	**Variables**	**When is this asked on eforms?**	**Case management needs**	**Assurance needs**	**Counter fraud needs**	**Debt collection needs (inc Marston CCO issuing)**		
14	Personal	S2 Q2	First name	-	Always	Must have	Must have	Must have	Must have		
15	Personal	S2 Q3	Other names	-	Always	Nice to have	Must have	Must have	Must have		
16	Personal	S2 Q4	Last name	-	Always	Must have	Must have	Must have	Must have		
17	Personal	S2 Q5	Date of birth	-	Always	Must have	Must have	Must have	Must have		
18	Personal	S2 Q6	National Insurance Number	-	Always	Must have	Must have	Must have	Must have		
19	Personal	S2 Q7	Application Registration Card (ARC) Number	-	Always	No need to have	Nice to have	Nice to have	No need to have		
20	Application	S2 Q8	Welsh communications	-	Always	Must have	Must have	Nice to have	Must have		
21	Personal	S2 Q9 and 10	Home address	-	Always	No need to have?	Must have	Must have	Must have		
22	Personal	S2 Q10a	Search home address by postcode	-	Always	Nice to have	Nice to have	Nice to have	Nice to have		
23	Personal	S2 Q11 and 12	Correspondance address	Your home address Your solicitor's address A different address	Always	Must have	Must have	Must have	Must have		
24	Personal	S2 Q12a	Search correspondance address by postcode	-	Always	Nice to have	Nice to have	Nice to have	Nice to have		
25	Personal	S2 Q13	Email address	-	Always	Nice to have	Nice to have	Nice to have	Nice to have		
26	Personal	S2 Q14	Telephone (landline)	-	Always	No need to have	Nice to have	Nice to have	Must have		
27	Personal	S2 Q15	Telephone (mobile)	-	Always	No need to have	Nice to have	Nice to have	Must have		
28	Personal	S2 Q16	Telephone (work phone)	-	Always	No need to have	Nice to have	Nice to have	Must have		
29		S3 Q1 and 2	Type of usual home address and relationship to owner (if temporary home)	a Tenancy (rented) Temporary Your parent's home (you live with them) Owned by you Owned by your partner Owned by you and your partner jointly Someone else's home	Always	No need to have	Must have	Must have	must have		
30	Personal	S3 Q3	Under 18	Yes / No	Always	No need to have	No need to have	No need to have	No need to have		
31	Personal	S3 Q4	Charged with an adult	Yes / No	Always	No need to have	No need to have	No need to have	No need to have		
32	Personal	S3 Q5	Partner	Yes / No	Always	Must have	Must have	Must have	must have		
	Personal	S3 Q6 and 7	Partnership status and date of	Single	If partner = no	No need to have	Must have	Must have	must have		

A flexible organisation, driven by data and led by users

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If we simply focus on tech debt, we'll only solve our tech problems

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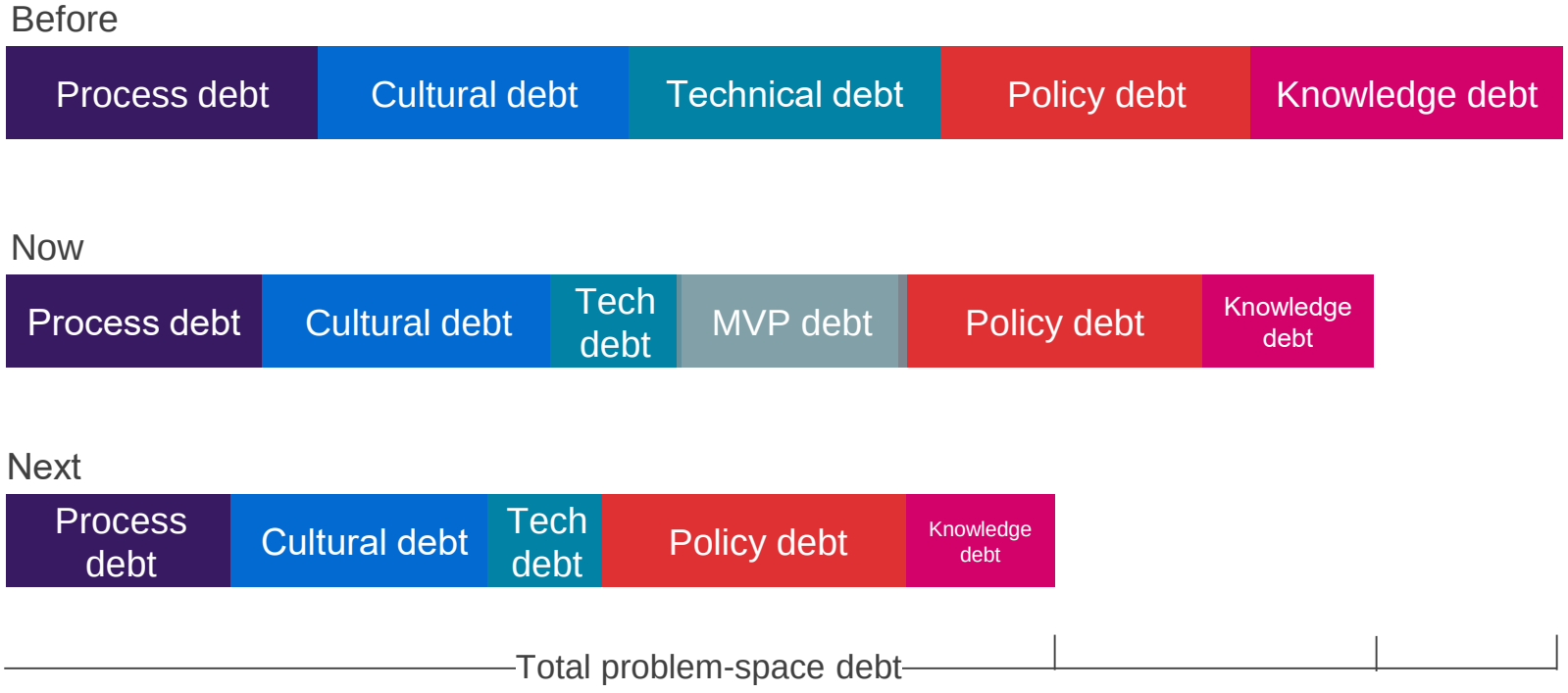
Progress check



A flexible organisation, driven by data and led by users

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How to measure?

Raw numbers

- Tech debt: number of systems; lines of code; % test coverage
- Process: amount of manual data entry; amount of manual process; number of business rules
- Cultural: number of actively involved stakeholders
- Solution: MVP scope and roadmap; decommissioning rate; average age of software
- Knowledge: data mapping coverage; discovery/alpha coverage

Success indicators

- Tech debt: lead time; deploy frequency; failure rate; mean time to restore; chaos/DR/pen testing
- Process: time to complete application; time to accurate decision; £ per application
- Cultural: stakeholder surveys - attitudes to risk, trust in digital, digital transformation
- Solution: delivery success rate
- Knowledge: data availability lead time

In summary

- Problem debt significantly impacts our flexibility
- Technical debt is only one aspect of this, there are other types of debt too
- We can't tackle all debt in one go, we often need to take out new ‘loans’
- Making our debt more manageable will allow us to become more flexible and meet user needs in our new services
- Setting ourselves up for long term flexibility, rather than just short term stability

Thank you

ANY QUESTIONS?

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