Reply to Jury Summons Digital Transformation in Government

Introduction

In 2018 HMCTS transformed the Juror Summons Reply Service by providing citizens with a new digital platform that enables them to respond to a jury summons using their choice of device or computer rather than having to use a paper form.

The need for change:
cutting out paper and delay

To improve the efficiency of summons replies processing an automated capability was developed to process non contentious responses, and a 'simple to use' administration tool was created to help back office staff manage deferral and excusal requests, and to respond to jurors asking for assistance to do their Jury Service.

For the citizen, the aim of the new service was to provide an accessible experience that would give them the flexibility and choice to respond to their summons in a way that met their needs.

For HMCTS, the goals were to reduce the time and effort required to process summons replies and to move the service towards a digital first approach.

The service was designed to meet the government digital service standards and was developed by HMCTS, CGI and UX consultancy Cogworx.
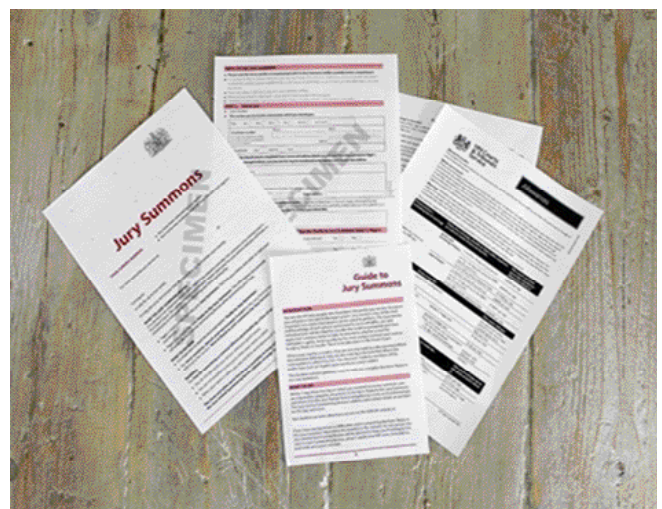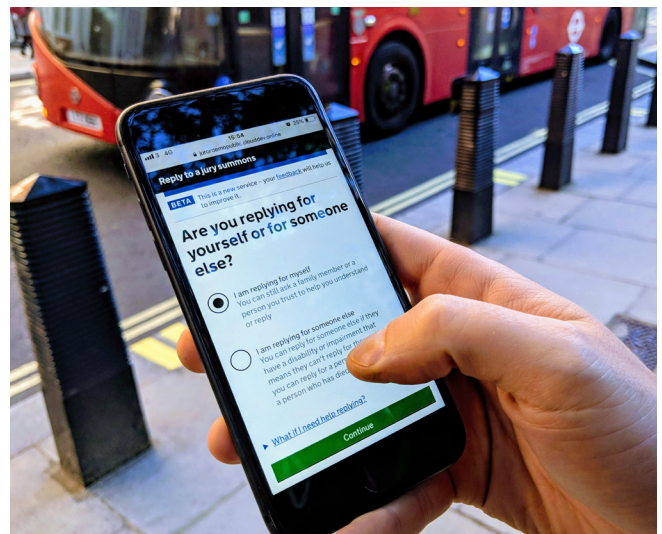
Juror Summons Reply

The aims of the service are to:

Improve the citizen experience, by providing a more convenient channel of response

Provide an intuitive and accessible experience that will enable the majority of people to return their summons reply without assistance

Provide alternative means (assisted digital) of replying for people who, for whatever reason, are not able to use a digital service by themselves

Improve the clarity of information received in summons replies and reduce the number of phone calls to and from HMCTS

Reduce the effort required by HMCTS to complete summons processing

Decrease the reliance on paper and enable a reduction in printing and postage

The service enables citizens (including appointed helpers) to reply to their Jury Summons online through a web application hosted on gov.uk on their own phone, tablet or computer.

One team

A multi disciplinary team was assembled with people from HMCTS, CGI and Cogworx- a specialist UX consultancy.

From the very beginning of the project, the core team was embedded within HMCTS and worked to an agile delivery methodology.

The team had regular access to HMCTS business and operational users, enabling the team to confidently iterate and evolve ideas quickly.

Collaboration tools were used extensively to enable the team to work together effectively from multiple locations, and share progress with stakeholders on a regular basis.

"Juror Digital is a great example of collaborative working between us and multiple suppliers, providing a digital solution for Jury Summonsing and improving the experience for citizens and HMCTS staff. The HMCTS led team have worked closely together throughout delivery and the use of open technologies and agile techniques enabled us to rapidly enhance the service in line with our business needs and feedback from users."

Geraint-Wyn Jenkins
Head of Crime DCD
HM Courts & Tribunals Service

Developing the service

The development of the service followed the delivery phases set out in the Digital Service Standard to iteratively develop and deliver the service in small increments, guided by continual user feedback, to create a live service that works for everyone.

This approach ensured that confidence in the new service was progressively developed over time. The team developed the service using agile scrum methods, working through a sprint backlog over 2 week sprints with daily stand ups to check and share progress.

To ensure a wide spectrum of needs was met, a programme of ongoing user research informed the design and development process. Based on the feedback from research and user testing, designs were then iterated at increasing levels of fidelity, moving from GDS prototyping tools to live code.
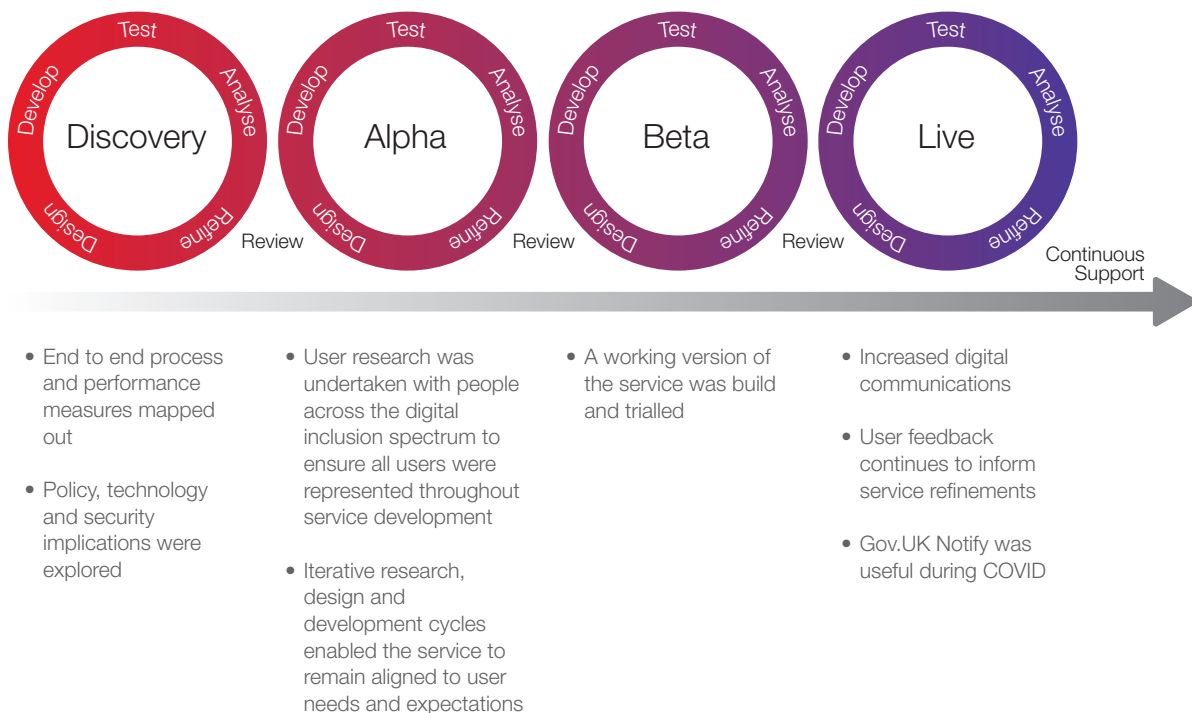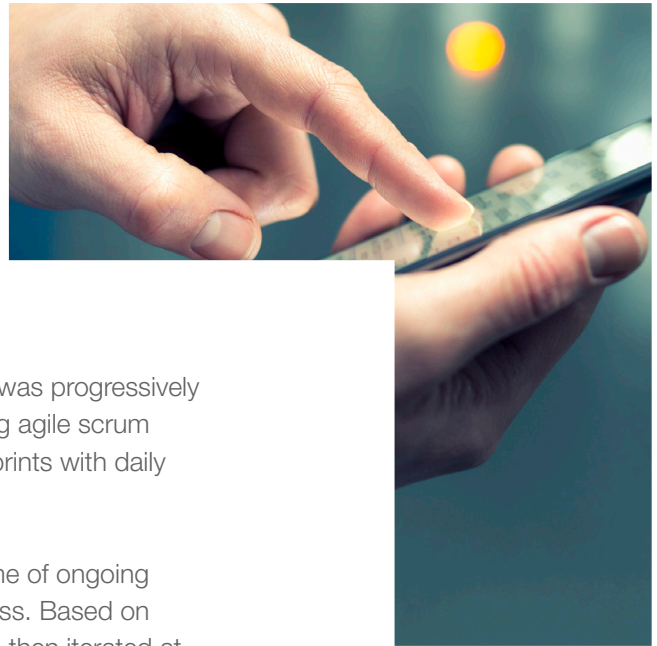

Discovery — Test / Analyse / Refine / Review / Design / Develop

Alpha — Test / Analyse / Refine / Review / Design / Develop

Beta — Test / Analyse / Refine / Review / Design / Develop

Live — Test / Analyse / Refine / Design / Develop — Continuous Support

- End to end process and performance measures mapped out

- Policy, technology and security implications were explored

- User research was undertaken with people across the digital inclusion spectrum to ensure all users were represented throughout service development

- Iterative research, design and development cycles enabled the service to remain aligned to user needs and expectations

- A working version of the service was build and trialled

- Increased digital communications

- User feedback continues to inform service refinements

- Gov.UK Notify was useful during COVID

Diagram 1: Juror Summons Reply phases

Discovery

In discovery, the team worked hard to understand the challenges facing a citizen when they receive their summons and how a digital solution might improve it. The team also researched the requirements for HMCTS staff who would be processing the summons received.
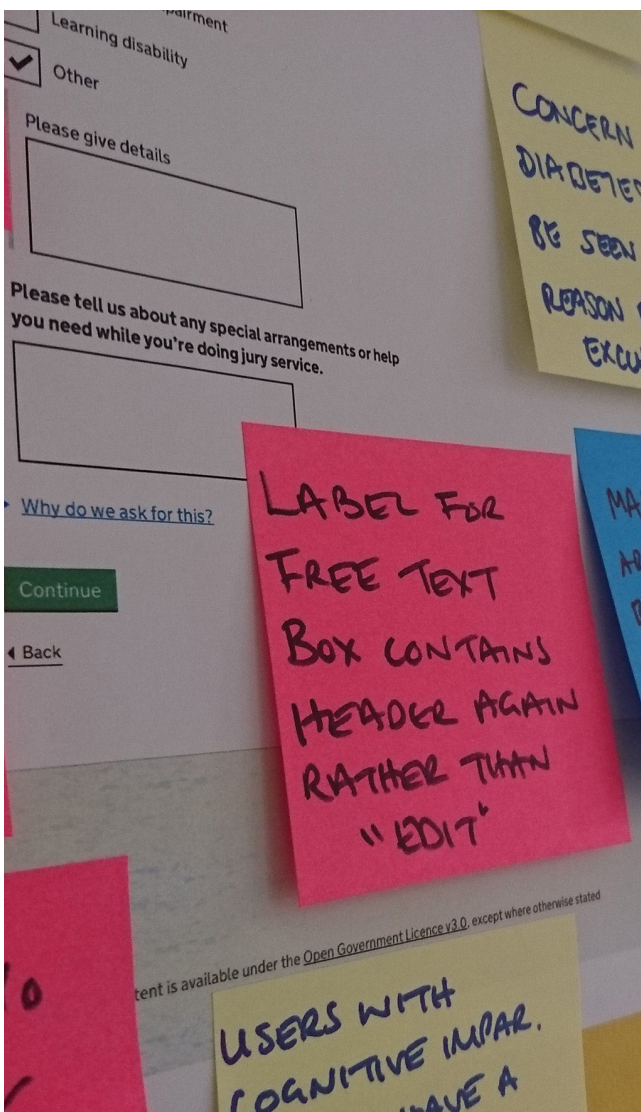
The end-to-end Jury Summons process and performance measures were mapped out

Ethnographic research captured the experience of citizens using the paper summons

Observation and telephone call analysis highlighted consistent challenges faced by citizens

Crown Courts visits helped to further understand citizens' experiences

Workshops with business stakeholders explored HMCTS needs from the service

Policy implications, technology options and security requirements were explored

Alpha

In alpha, prototypes of the juror summons reply service were built and tested with users; demonstrating that the experience could be improved with a digital service and that its implementation was technically possible.

By the end of alpha a Minimal Viable Product was defined and prototyped in line with prioritised user needs, using the chosen technologies.

The system was developed using technologies widely used across government including:

- NodeJS, Java and API's that interface with an existing court application
- Gov.UK Notify provides email confirmations to citizens
- Continual delivery using Azure, with Terraform and Ansible to manage and configure the environments
- Code is stored in GitLab, and uses Jenkins to automatically build, deploy and test the code

Iterative research - design - develop - test sprint cycles enabled the service to remain aligned to user needs and expectations

User research was undertaken with people across the digital inclusion spectrum to ensure all users were represented throughout service development

Relevant performance measures were designed with business stakeholders, measuring current transaction volumes

Beta

In beta, building on the feedback from alpha prototypes, a working version of the service was built. A live trial service was then deployed for selected courts in England. During beta 12,000 citizens replied to their Jury Summons online before national rollout.

During Beta:

User research continued to explore the needs of people reliant on assistive technologies such as screen readers and those requiring support

The system was extended to provide HMCTS staff with a modern application to manage digital summons replies

The service design was expanded to include the needs of citizens wishing to respond in Welsh

A service dashboard was developed to track feedback and performance using Google Analytics and other service data

Performance testing was undertaken to ensure infrastructure readiness for a National rollout

National rollout planning was undertaken along with improvements identified from usability testing in order to increase digital take-up

User training was conducted for HMCTS staff

The team worked with the authority support team to transfer the service support to live operations
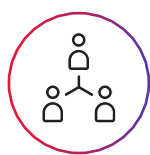
Live

The service was then deployed for all courts in England and Wales and has continued to be iterated using feedback from citizens.
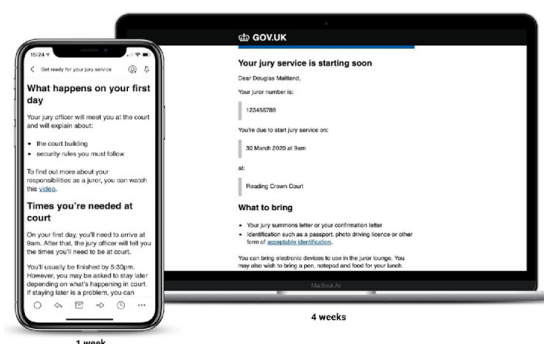
Communication with Jurors before their service

Since the completion of the rollout of the service across England and Wales in 2018, a series of enhancements have been introduced. These included:

Further SMS and email communications were introduced using Gov.UK Notify to keep jurors informed and updated before jury service starts. This uses the GOV.UK Notify platform. During COVID-19 it has been used to inform jurors of changes to court arrangements.

A reporting dashboard to provide information about service usage and performance for managers and stakeholders

A re-designed paper summons pack with improvements taken from developing the digital service, and creating a more accessible and intuitive experience

Accessibility improvements, usability testing and a successful independent audit to ensure the service met the latest WCAG 2.1 AA standards.

Results

"It makes complete sense to move more of our court processes online to fit around our busy modern lives. This impressive new system is a great example of how we are making it quicker and easier for people to exercise their democratic duty."

Lucy Frazer, Justice Minister (2018)

The service has been deployed to all courts in England and Wales. **Updates on results 2021:**

The juror summons reply service has been well received by citizens and staff. Over the past year the HMCTS Juror Summons have received over 220,000 digital summons replies and sent out over 850,000 automated emails and SMS messages using GOV.UK Notify.

Over 95% of users said they were satisfied or better

Today over 25% of users return their summons within seven days compared to one percent when using the paper form
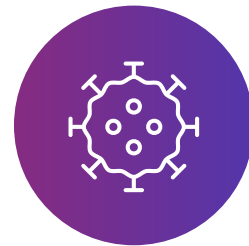
Citizens are making fewer errors when replying using the digital service

Printing and postage costs are lower.

Keeping HMCTS juror officers are completing their work faster and spending less time correcting errors on summons replies

Electronic communication was particularly helpful during the Covid-19 pandemic to notify jurors of court arrangements as the county entered and exited lockdown
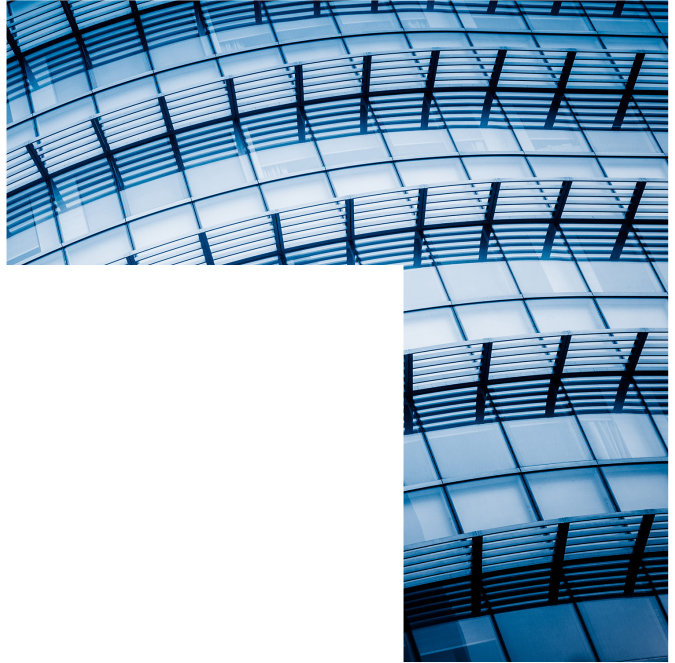
HM Courts and Tribunals Service

HMCTS is the authority with responsibility for the administration of Courts and Tribunals throughout England and Wales

CGI

CGI is a technology services company whose teams of application and support specialists work alongside clients own teams in public and private sector

Cogworx

Cogworx is an SME UX consultancy specialising in designing digital products, user experience design and user research

For further information click here

cgi.com/uk