



Department
for Culture,
Media & Sport



Mind the gap:

Bridging policy and agile service design

11 March 2026, 11:20 - 12:05

Presented by:

Ezequiel Serrano, David Campbell and Ellie Bryant

Welcome

1. Context and background
2. Overview of the service development
3. What we learned
4. Tips
5. Q&A

Let's see who's in the room...

Introduce yourself in the chat

- Who you are
- Your role / what you do
- Where you work

About us



David Campbell
Senior Policy Advisor
(DCMS)



Ellie Bryant
Lead Service Designer
(Made Tech)



Ezequiel Serrano
Senior Service Designer
(DCMS)

About DCMS



About DCMS

2021

**DCMS is one of the only
Departments in UK Gov
without a dedicated
Digital, Data and
Technology function**

About DCMS

2021

2022

**Digital, Data and
Technology function is
established**

About DCMS

2021

2022

2023

**DCMS Product & User
Experience team is
formed**

About DCMS

2021

2022

2023



**Product & User Experience
team connect with
Short-term Lets Policy team**

About short-term lets (STLs)



About short-term lets (STLs)

Benefits



**Additional
source of
income**



**More
choice for
consumers**



**Wider
economic
benefits**

About short-term lets (STLs)

Benefits



**Additional
source of
income**



**More
choice for
consumers**



**Wider
economic
benefits**

Challenges



**Impact on
housing
supply**



**Health and
safety
compliance**



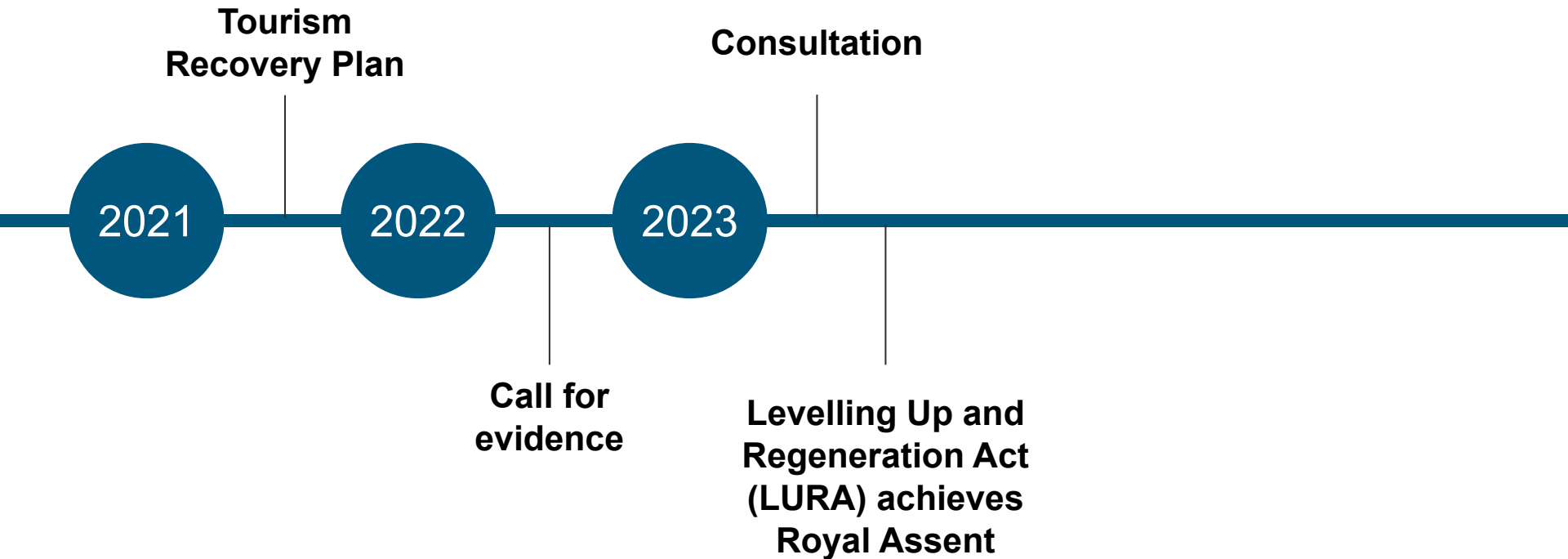
**Noise and
anti-social
behaviour**

About short-term lets (STLs)

“There currently is no single, definitive source of data on short-term and holiday lets in England, in part due to (i) difficulties defining which lets are considered short-term, and (ii) lack of obligations for short-term let owners to report information on staying guests to local or national authorities”

(DCMS, [Developing a tourist accommodation registration scheme in England: analysis of the call for evidence](#), 2023)

About short-term lets (STLs)



About short-term lets (STLs)

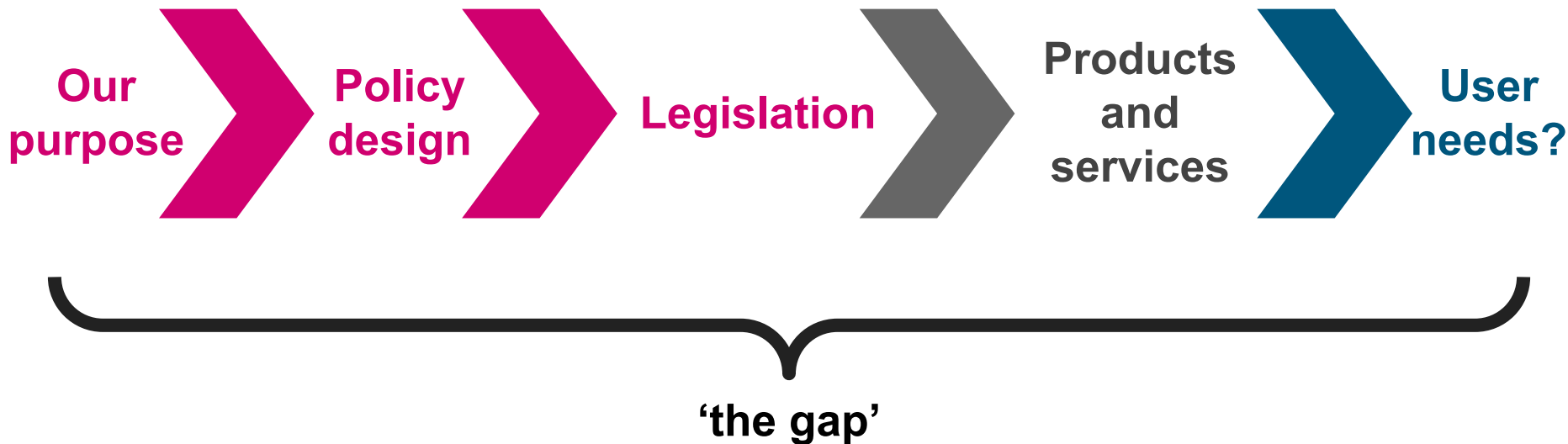
Our vision

To become the centralised data source on short-term lets in England to support the sustainability and safety of the sector



'The gap'

How do we go from this...



'The gap'

... to this?



Adapted from Downe, L. (2025) - [What is a service?](#)

'The gap'

In your experience, how wide is 'the gap' between service design and policy?



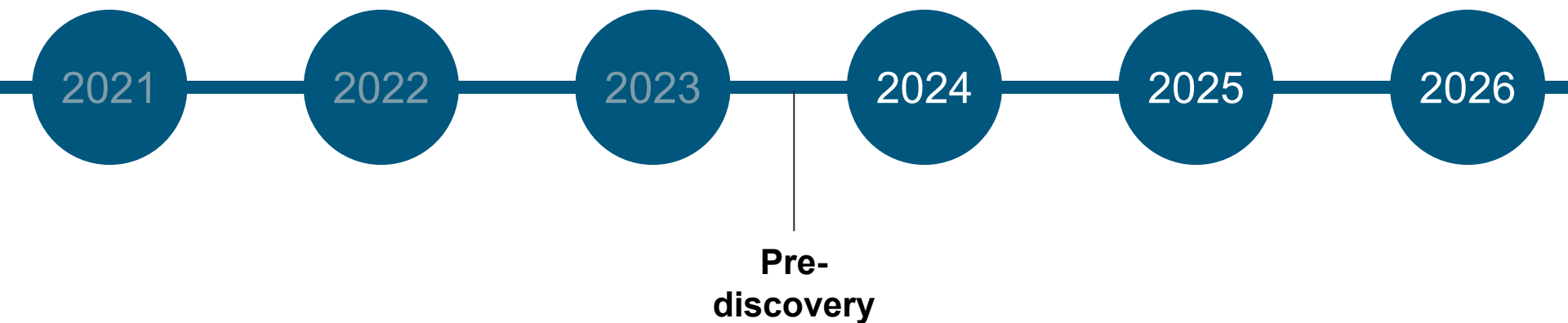
I have my policy team on speed dial and they actually know what a service blueprint is



We design services based on a 100-page legislation document written by someone I've never met

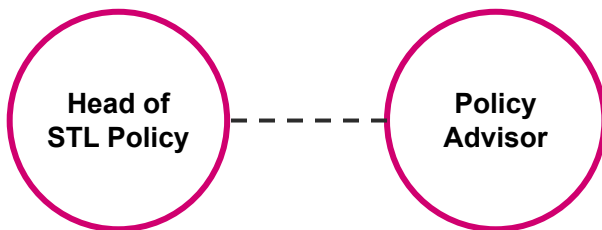
How we did it

Timeline

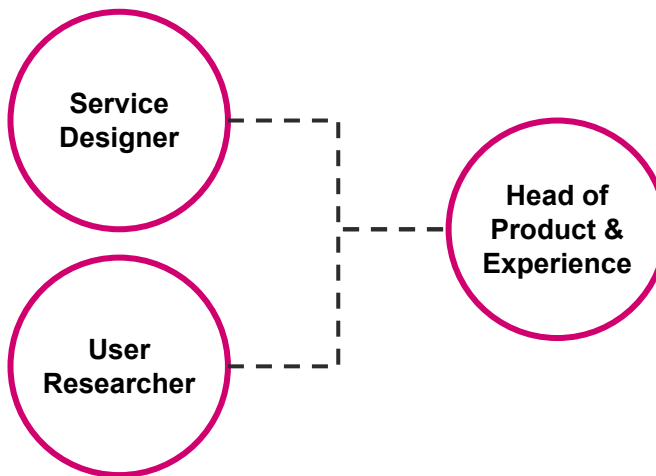


Pre-discovery team

Policy

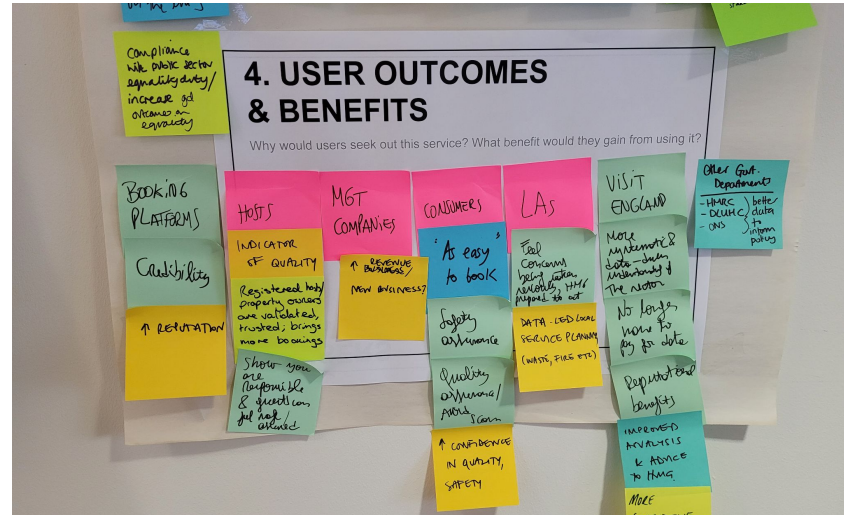


User-centred design



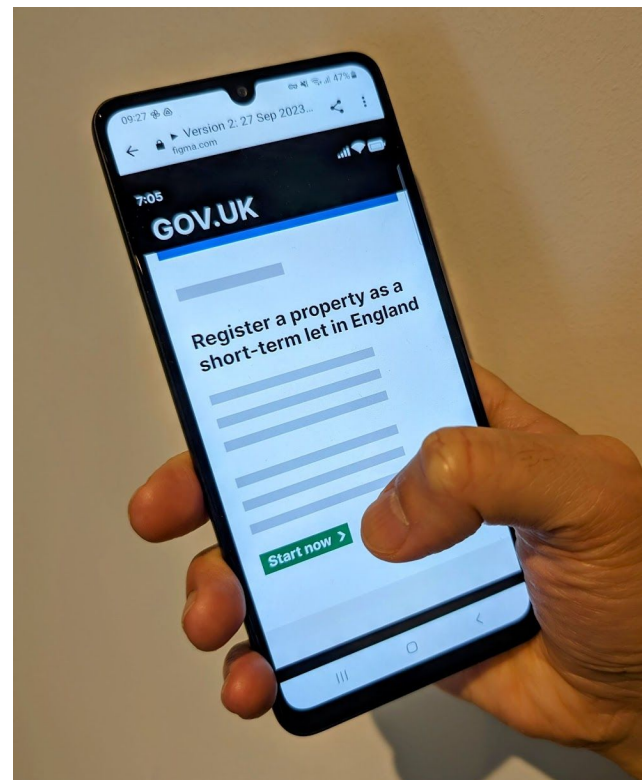
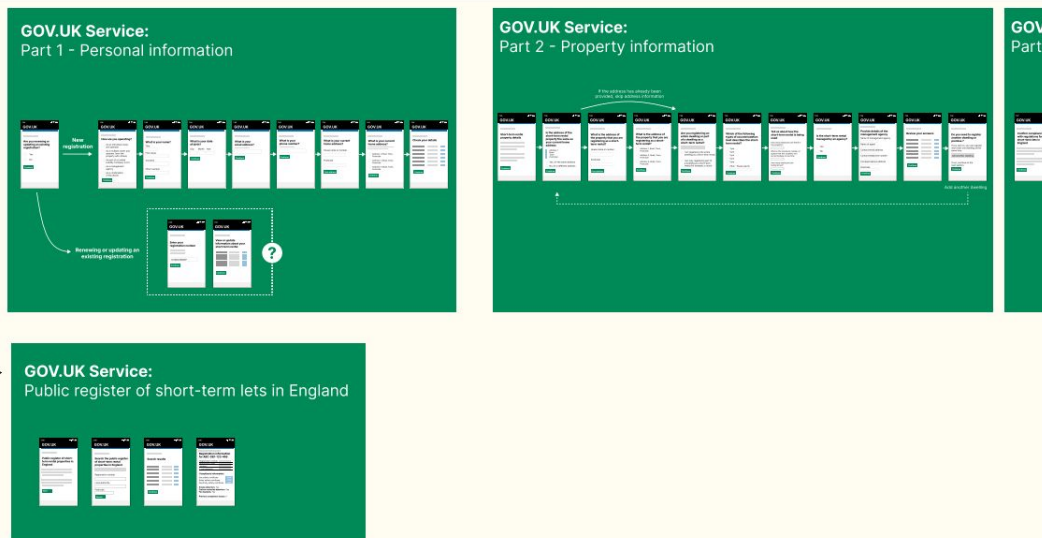
Pre-discovery phase

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Please do not share

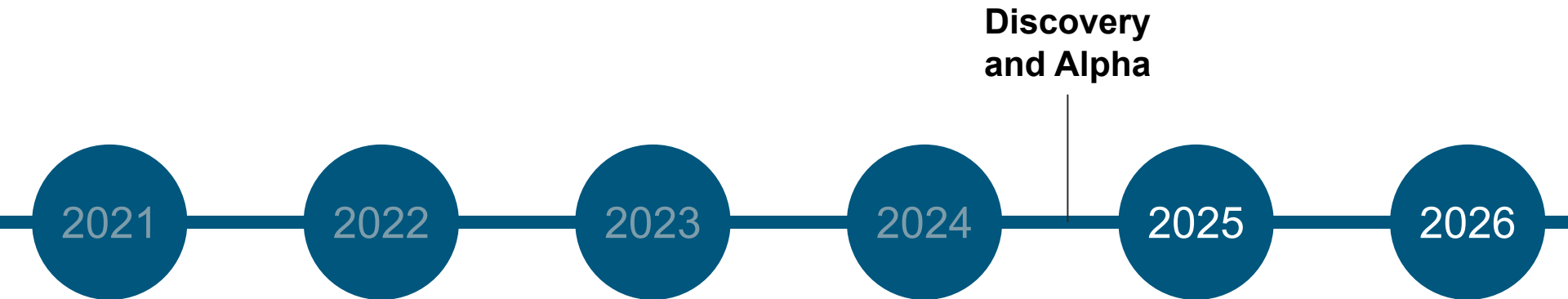


Pre-discovery phase

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Timeline



Discovery and Alpha team

Policy, Product & Delivery

Head of
STL Policy
& Service
Owner

Policy
Advisor &
Product
Manager

Delivery
Manager

Policy
Advisor

Head of
Product &
Experience

Delivery
Director

User-centred design

Service
Designer

Service
Designer

2 x
Interaction
Designers

User
Researcher

2 x URs

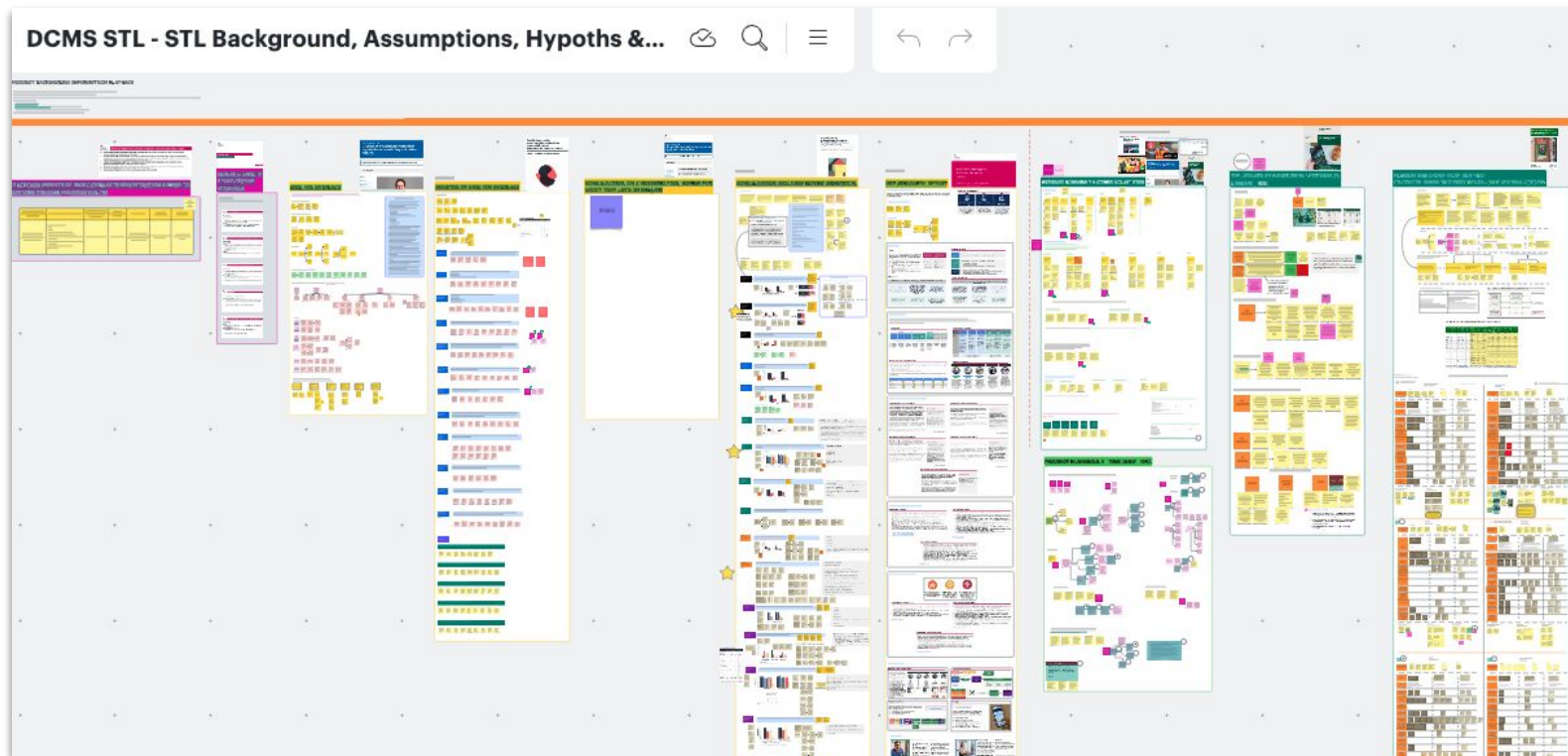
Tech

Technical
Architect

Software
Engineer

Discovery and Alpha phases

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Discovery and Alpha phases

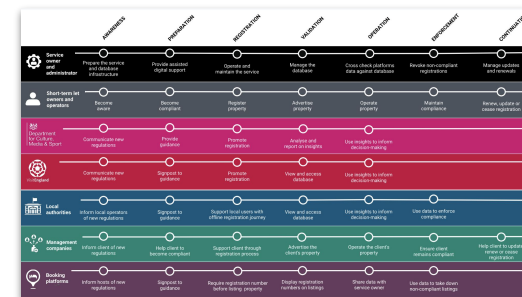
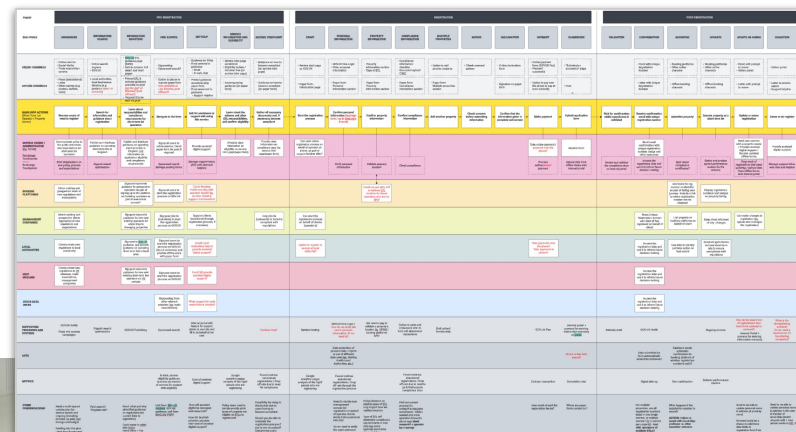
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The screenshots illustrate the Alpha phase of the 'Register a short-term let' service on GOV.UK. The user journey progresses through several sections:

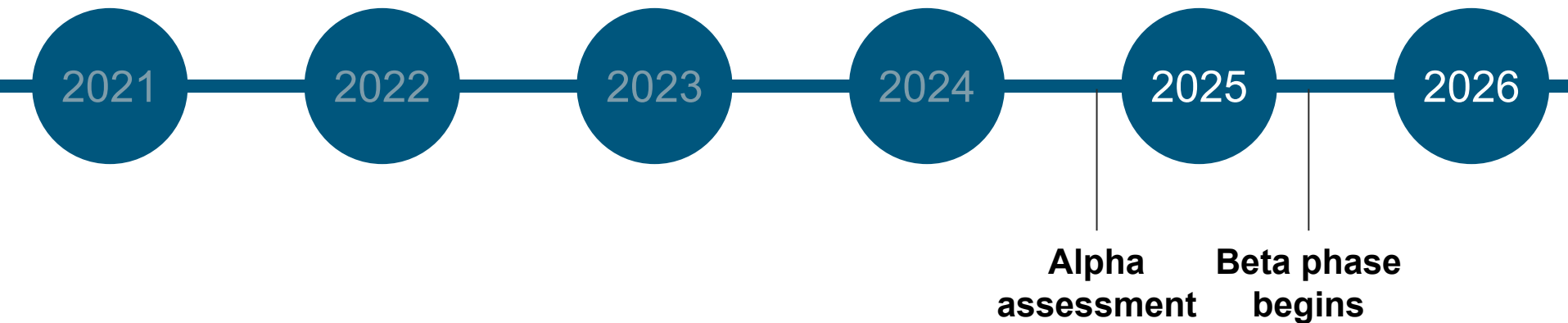
- Section 2 of 6:** Verifies if the short-term let property address is the same as the user's current home address. Options include 'Yes, it's the same address' and 'No, it's a different address'.
- Section 3 of 6:** Adds the short-term let property address and postcode. It includes a 'What should I do if I have multiple properties with short-term lets?' section.
- Section 3 of 6:** Reviews the short-term let property addresses. It shows the 'Property address' as '124 Hill Lane, London, SW13 4AE' and includes a 'Save and continue' button.
- Section 3 of 6:** Reviews the short-term let property addresses. It shows the 'Property address' as '124 Hill Lane, London, SW13 4AE' and includes a 'Save and continue' button.
- Section 4 of 6:** Details the property information, including 'Type of accommodation' (Home letting, Home sharing, Other), 'Bedroom number', 'Guests', 'Management agency', and 'Compliance'. It also includes a 'Registration number' field.
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The final screen shows the 'Property details' and 'Property compliance' sections, with a 'Continue to summary' button and a 'Return to list of properties' button.

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Please do not share



Timeline



Beta team

DCMS

Made
Tech

Policy, Product & Delivery

DCMS
Legal

Head of
STL Policy

Service
Owner

Policy
Advisor &
Product
Manager

DCMS
Wider
stakeholders

2 x Policy
Advisors

Delivery
Manager

Lead
Product
Manager

Programme
Lead &
Officers

Delivery
Principal

Head of
Product &
Experience

User-centred design

Made Tech
SD

Made Tech
UR

Made Tech
CD

DCMS SD

DCMS UR

DCMS CD

Business
Analyst

Interaction
Designer

Tech

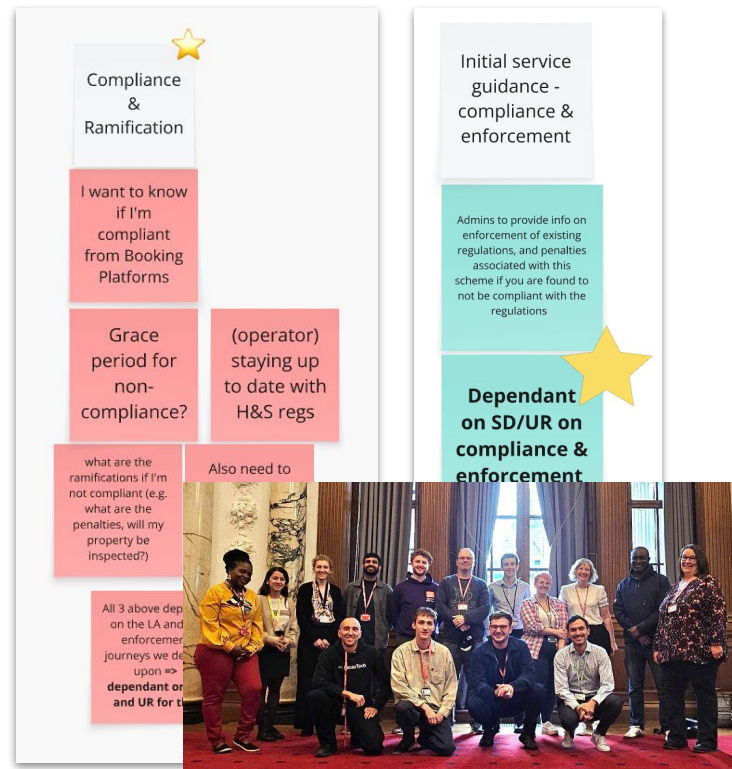
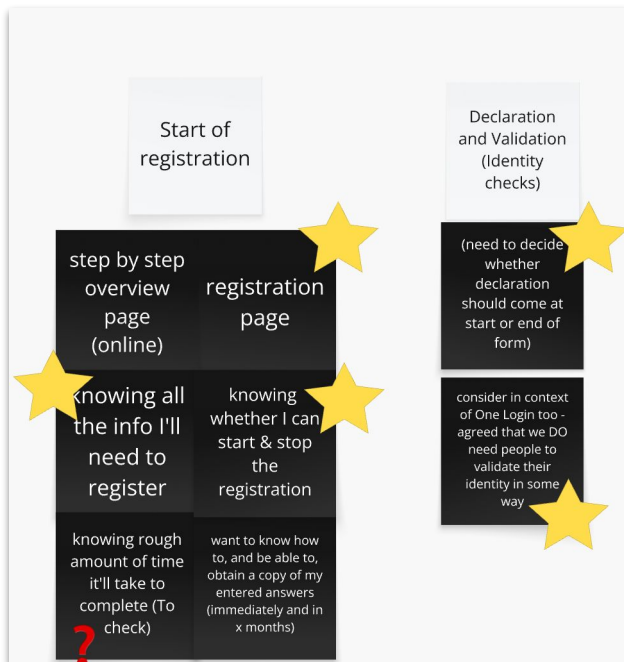
Lead
Engineer

2 x
Software
Engineers

Beta phase

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Please do not share

▲ MadeTech

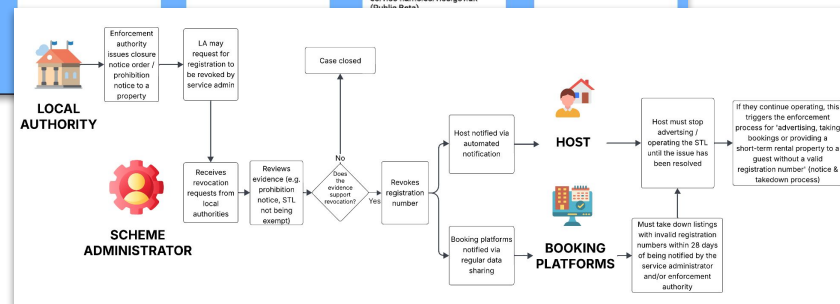


Beta phase

NOT GOVERNMENT POLICY
Please do not share



STAGE	1. AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING			2. INTENT	
SUB-STAGE	AWARENESS	INFORMATION SEARCH	FAMILIARISATION AND ELIGIBILITY	FIND THE SERVICE	START
USER ACTIONS SHORT-TERM LET OWNERS	Become aware of the need to register	Search for information and guidance about registration	Read guidance to determine whether property needs to be registered, how to register and the consequences of not registering	Find and identify the official registration service	Start the registration process
TOUCHPOINTS (including initial journey)	Comms campaigns (online, social media, press, ads/articles, posters, leaflets, radio, other comms) Comms and training for booking platforms, LAs, trade associations Comms, training and briefing for all DOMS stakeholders Webinars	Guidance on GOV.UK Search engine results	GOV.UK guidance page for short-term lets registration scheme, with clear definition of STLs, guidance on scope and exemptions, and a link to 'start' page	Service URL service-name.doms.gov.uk (MVP) GOV.UK/service-name (Public Beta) + service-name.service.gov.uk (Public Beta)	GOV.UK Service Start page including: Scope, H&S Responsibilities, Data Privacy, Cost, Account Creation, Support Info





GOV.UK [GOV.UK One Login](#) [Sign out](#)

Register a short-term let in England [Registered short-term lets](#) [Account](#)

Prototype This is not a real service, it is a prototype used for research.

[Go back to registered short-term lets](#)

**Department for Culture, Media and Sport,
100 Parliament Street, London, SW1A 2BQ**

Your registration numbers

Property name	Registration number	Expiry date
Housie McHouseface	SLYDPV-TT01	5 Dec 2026
↳ Room 1	SLYDPV-TT01-01	
↳ Room 2	SLYDPV-TT01-02	
Annexstasia	SLYDPV-TT02	5 Dec 2026

You will be able to renew your registration at any time in the month before the expiry date. Renewal reminders will be sent before and during this period.

Properties at this address

[Add another property at this address](#)

Property 1 [Remove](#)

Name	Housie McHouseface	Change
Type	House	Change
Let as	A room or rooms inside the property only	Change
Primary residence	Yes	Change
Room details	Room 1, 2 guests Room 2, 2 guests	Change

Property 2 [Remove](#)

Name	Annexstasia	Change
Type	Garden annex	Change
Let as	The whole property only	Change
Primary residence	No	Change
Guests	4	Change

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[Back](#)

**Check your answers before adding
properties to Department for Culture,
Media and Sport, 100 Parliament
Street, London, SW1A 2BQ**

You have added 1 new property

Property 1

Type	Barn	Change
Let as	The whole property only	Change
Name	Barney	Change
Primary residence	No	Change
Guests	2	Change

[Add another property at this address](#)

Continue and pay for registration

If you continue, you agree that the details you gave are correct, to the best of your knowledge.

You will pay a registration fee of £50 for each new property at this address. You will be asked to pay your registration fee in the next step.

[Agree and continue](#)

[Discard new properties](#)

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Register a short-term let in England

Prototype This is not a real service, it is a prototype used for research.

[Back](#)

**What type of business or organisation
are you creating an account for?**

☐ Charity
☐ Charitable incorporated organisation (CIO)
☐ Community interest company (CIC)
☒ Limited company
☐ Limited liability partnership (LLP)
☐ Limited partnership (LP)
☐ Sole trader

[Continue](#)

GOV.UK [GOV.UK One Login](#) [Sign out](#)

Register a short-term let in England

Prototype This is not a real service, it is a prototype used for research.

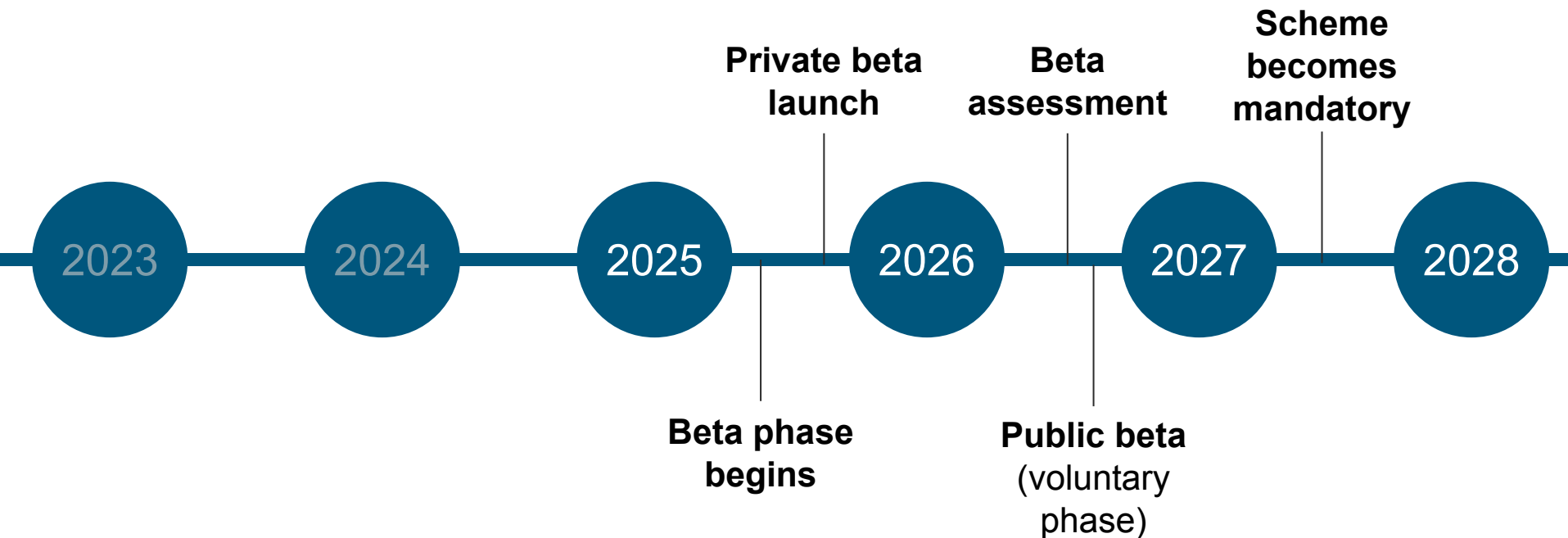
[Back](#)

Limited company's registered name

Acme Ltd

[Continue](#)

Timeline



What we've learned

What we've learned

**It's important for
policy teams to own
service delivery**

- Single team approach
- Upskill policy teams in agile delivery

What we've learned

**It's also important
for the service
delivery team to
immerse
themselves in the
world of policy**

- Show curiosity beyond digital
- Understand each other's constraints

What we've learned

**Uncertainty can be
both a challenge
and an opportunity**

- Navigate the discomfort of designing a service alongside a shifting policy
- Become comfortable with testing policy ideas in the open
- Be ready to flex

What we've learned

**UCD can help to
challenge policy
assumptions...
...sometimes**

- Consultations can tell us what users want, but not always *why* they want it
- User research and service design can help give the 'why' and uncover issues for policy to consider - **but** has limitations for informing policy
- Policy can sometimes pivot based on user needs, but not always

What we've learned

Being open about challenges can help to overcome silos and foster collaboration

- Foster understanding of differing time pressures and priorities
- Encourage working in the open
- Ensure clarity on decision-making processes

Our tips for you

Our tips for you



1) Get talking!

Start those conversations whenever there's an opportunity.
It's never too early to collaborate.

Our tips for you



2) Don't rush to delivery

Designing a service alongside evolving policy is very challenging. Check that you have the time, resources and mindset to work in this way.

Our tips for you



3) Embed policy in the core team

Ensure policy colleagues have a significant role in service teams from the start



Our tips for you



4) Work as one team

Encourage everyone to actively engage and learn from each other.

Our tips for you



5) Bring your organisation along on the journey

By sharing learnings widely, you will encourage others to see the benefits of bridging the gap.

Thank you!

Any questions?

Get in touch:

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- ezequiel.serrano@dcms.gov.uk
- ellie.bryant@madetech.com

