

# Medical Examiners Service: Alpha and Beta

# CASE STUDY

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“How do you digitise something that doesn't exist?”

## Background

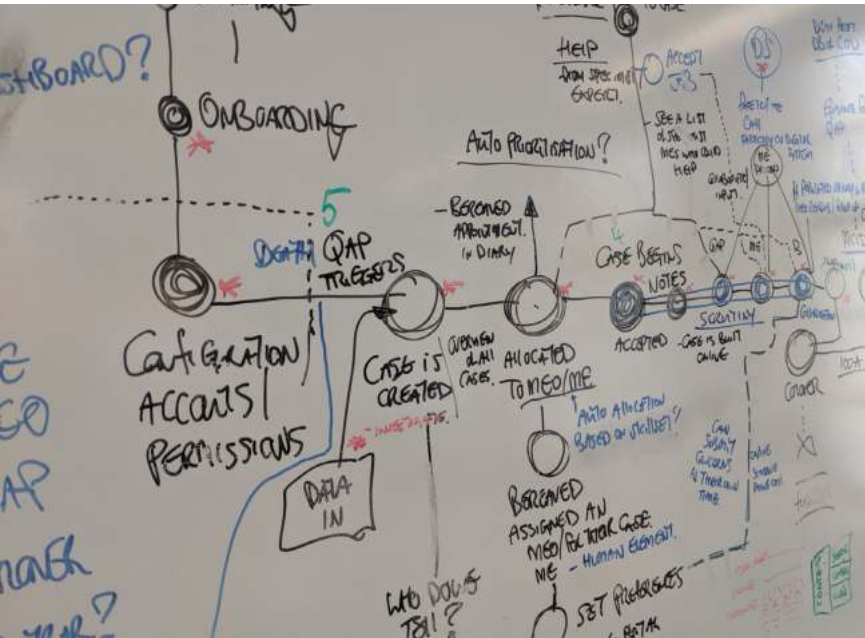
Methods has worked with the Department of Health and Social Care and the NHS since November 2018 to design, build, and roll out the Medical Examiners Service across the country. MedEx is a key part of the department's long-term plans to reform how death certification works in England and Wales.

\* “Existing arrangements for death certification are confusing, provide inadequate safeguards, and there is no mechanism that allows the NHS to see patterns, take action, and learn from them.”

## Challenge

Death certification has not been overhauled in a long long time. The current end-to-end process is very manual, very frustrating for users, and traverses a number of government departments.

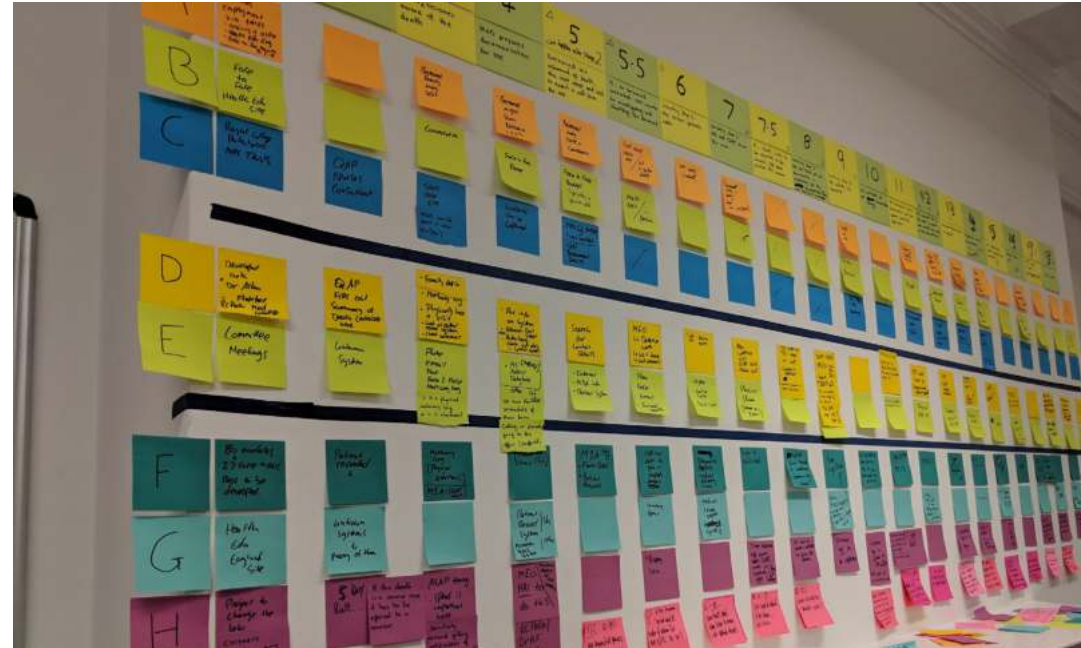
But as a consequence of the Shipman Inquiry amongst others, one of the recommendations was the implementation of Medical Examiners across the country, supported by an online service fit for purpose in the digital age



## But how do you digitise something that doesn't exist?

After a competitive procurement process, Methods was awarded the work by DHSC and contracted to deliver an Alpha and Private Beta, building upon the work undertaken in a Discovery completed in-house by the department.

We hit the ground running, with the team immersing themselves in the subject matter to understand the problem as soon as possible. Time was of the essence, as one of the biggest challenges was that the project had been given a parliamentary deadline of April 2019 to create an MVS.



## Why did the client select Methods?



Expertise in service design and a user-centred approach



Expertise in ethnographic UR



Strong background in healthcare software development



An innovative approach to design and data analytics

## Solution

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Our multidisciplinary team of designers, a researcher, delivery manager, technical architect, and front and back end development teams – designed and built the Alpha and Private Beta services across 6 and 8 Agile sprints.

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Our approach was to first understand how the end-to-end service had been running in the two pilot sites (Sheffield and Gloucester) which were set up by the department 10 years ago and largely ran the service using offline paper forms.

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The ethnographic research in hospitals allowed us to design something that clinicians recognise, whilst also enabling them to carry out their jobs as Medical Examiners, and Medical Examiners Officers.

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Building upon the fledgling NHS design standards, our team created innovative solutions to meet user needs across a case management system that has facilitated the roll-out of Medical Examiners across the country.

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## Results

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This doesn't even feel like IT. It looks like a bit of paper, I like that

The service has been very well-received across the country at participating trusts, as well as at Medical Examiner training events where our team has run demos of how the case management system works.

It has also been highly praised across the NHS design community, in particular how the team have innovated, created, and shared new design patterns.



## Learnings

One of the biggest learnings from the project was how to solve the challenges of creating a service when the policy is still being developed. We turned this challenge into an opportunity, with our research-led approach allowing findings from user research in hospitals to feed into the shaping of the policy.

This has been integral in ensuring that the realities of working life in trusts is reflected in policy formation by the department, and that the Medical Examiners Service has a platform to be successful as it is rolled out across the country.

# methods III



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