



A process review and evaluation of 'Virtual Advocacy' support
from seAp

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Acknowledgements

The process of developing digital tools to replicate key aspects of advocacy support was a new venture for seAp and one that gave us unique opportunities to engage with a range of specialists and supporters.

The process was exhilarating and immensely enjoyable and rewarding. We had an insight into a new world of digital development and ended up with a service that is reaching and helping thousands of people who may otherwise have remained unsupported. We learned so much, and made so many friends along the way.

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Introduction

This document has been written with two main objectives:

- To share seAp's experience of developing a digital tool as a guide for others who may be thinking about creating a digital product
- To document the results achieved in the first 8 months

seAp is one of the leading advocacy organisations in the UK. We work with vulnerable people living in the South of England, protecting their rights, supporting them to express their wishes, and ensuring they receive the services that they need.

Significant numbers of our clients have been left struggling by changes to benefits for disabled people under the Government's welfare reform programme, namely the introduction of:

- Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), to replace Incapacity Benefit
- Personal Independence Payment (PIP), to replace Disability Living Allowance

Too many clients were, and are, facing huge stress within the assessment processes, and too many were and are receiving inaccurate decisions. The result of negative decisions can have profound impact on people's lives, as well as their incomes.

In Hastings, support from the Borough Council has meant that we have been able to develop an innovative face-to-face advocacy service which prepares people for assessments, and supports them during assessments. This model has been replicated on a pilot basis in four areas of Scotland, supported by the Scottish Government.

However, we were and remain very aware that constricted funding is placing huge pressure on the advice and advocacy sectors. There will be many people across the country who do not have access to any support during and before ESA and PIP assessments. To address this, we decided to explore how digital tools might assist those affected.

Our intention was not to develop a tool that would replace the need for face-to-face advocacy or advice for those that need them. That would be impossible. Rather, it was to develop a website based tool that *some* people could use to get *some* help. For some users, this might be a prompt to seek further support, and for others it would help them to proceed by themselves.

Users would be able to:

- Get more information about the benefits they were thinking about claiming through written information and a video.
- Look at some of the questions they might be asked at the assessment.
- Think about their answers to those questions.
- Save a reminder of those answers, and other key prompts/ things to remember.
- Get a predicted result for their assessment.

The development phase of our work was supported by the Legal Education Foundation, who provided us with the money to commission Neontribe, a web design and development company, to deliver our tool, and to put in place the necessary project management and marketing support, along with the funding of this evaluation.

This was followed by an additional tranche of funding from Comic Relief, which enabled the beta version of the site to undergo a significant phase of further development, including further user testing, improvements to copy used on the site, and improvements to the design of the site to facilitate a full understanding and evaluation of its use and utility.

seAp believes that there is much to be learnt from our experience of managing and contributing to the development of the website. We hope that what follows provides useful pointers to advice, advocacy, health and social care organisations, as they consider the potential value of digital tools, particularly at a time of funding constraint.

From the start, this project was a true collaboration between seAp; our funders, the Legal Education Foundation and Comic Relief; our web developers, Neontribe; our local advice partner, Hastings Advice and Representation Centre (HARC); and the clients of our benefits advocacy service who helped us test our ideas and product. Our thanks to all involved.

This evaluation was carried out by an independent consultant from The Centre for Acceleration of Social Technology, but rather than publishing a report that simply describes the outcomes of the project, we have set out this report to share what we did and what we learnt so that others can benefit from the extraordinary talents of the project team.

We hope to enable the reader to become more prepared in undertaking a project that uses digital technology to achieve social and charitable outcomes.

At the end of each section are simple tips, further resources or reflections to support you in undertaking a digital project. These are underpinned by our research and evidence, and presented alongside the information to give you confidence in using technology to achieve your social and charitable objectives.

For an overview of the process, please see the flowchart at Appendix 2, page 40.

Headlines at a Glance

The Process

In January 2016 seAp launched the 'virtual advocacy' c-App, a mobile responsive website, to provide support to people seeking help when applying for disability related benefits, ESA and PIP.

c-App was developed through a strong partnership between seAp, HARC and Neontribe, specialists in user centred design and development, with funding and much other practical support from the Legal Education Foundation and Comic Relief.

The process of achieving a live website had very significant user involvement and user product testing at its heart and took over a year from publication of our tender brief.

The Strengths of the Partnership

The strength of the partnership was based on supportive, responsive and flexible funders, and the 'domain expertise' of seAp, HARC and Neontribe. The organisations' knowledge of the benefits system, client need, and user centred web design, were magnified by the ability of partners to recognise each other's expertise, to support each other's learning, and to cede leadership to others when the project required it.

Critical friends and advisers at key points of development played an important role in developing the final product.

Significant efforts are being made to market c-App and to grow the number of people who benefit from interacting with it. This is too often a weakness associated with 'tech for good' development, and seAp has worked hard to overcome it, with some success. The number of users – nearly 80,000 between the ESA and PIP sites during the first 8 months - is significant for a social product of this type.

Use of the Product

From the lean metrics embedded in the site:

- We can be confident that about 38,000 users have found the information sections of the sites useful.
- We can be clear that nearly 34,000 users have found the opportunity to practise questions useful.
- We can be very confident that 14,000 users are more familiar with the questions they will be asked at their assessment, and quite confident that they are better prepared for their assessment.
- We can be very confident that nearly 9,000 users are better prepared for ESA or PIP assessments due to c-App.

In terms of 'market' penetration:

- The number of sessions involving engagement with the PIP essential guide is equivalent to 5% of the total number of PIP registrations in England and Scotland during this 8-month period. We can be confident that people undertaking these sessions found the site useful.
- The number of people completing PIP practise questions is equivalent to 4.1% of the total number of PIP registrations over this period.
- We can be very confident that, because they reviewed their answers to questions, up to 1.9% of those registering for PIP over this period are more familiar with the types of questions asked at assessment, and quite confident that they are more prepared for the assessment process.
- We can be very confident that up to 1.1% of those registering for PIP over this period are more prepared for their assessments as a consequence of the use of c-App.

- The number of sessions with engagement with some of the ESA site's content is equivalent to 5.2% of the total number of people who have progressed, or will progress, to ESA assessment over this period.
- The number of sessions involving engagement with the ESA essential guide is equivalent to 2.6% of the total number of people who have progressed, or will progress, to assessment over this period. We can be confident this information was useful.
- The number of people completing practise questions is equivalent to 2.9% of the total number of people who have progressed, or will progress, to assessment over this period.
- We can be very confident that, because they reviewed their answers to the questions, up to 0.8% of those registering a claim for ESA over this period are more familiar with the types of questions asked at assessment, and quite confident that they are more prepared for the assessment process.
- We can be very confident that up to 0.7% of those registering for ESA over this period are more prepared for their assessments as a consequence of the use of c-App.

Whilst there is no doubt about the irreplaceable value of the in-depth support provided by seAp's existing face-to-face advocacy, c-App has enabled seAp to multiply its client reach by 1000 times in the first eight months, for just 10 times the level of investment in the face-to-face service. Even by looking only at the number of people who we're *very confident* that c-App has supported to prepare for their assessment, this reach has increased 100 times over the number of people that seAp has been able to help face-to-face.

These figures are remarkable in demonstrating how well-designed 'tech for good' can support an expert organisation to scale the support it offers. c-App is an excellent complement to the services that seAp offers.

Identifying the need

Designing effective digital products and services requires a clear focus on the problem you're trying to address. The starting question is to understand the need for the tool. What problem are we trying to address, for whom, and in what circumstances??

The Impact of Welfare Reform

For seAp, the start of this journey was observing the impact on clients of two changes within the ongoing welfare reform process:

- The introduction of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) to replace Incapacity Benefit (IB) for people unable to work due to ill health or disability.
- The introduction of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) to replace Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for people of working age, with existing DLA claimants migrating to the new benefit over the course of the next four to five years.

These changes have affected, are affecting and will affect millions of people in the UK; disabled people, and those with long and medium term physical and mental health problems:

- Around 720,000 people annually submit a new application for ESA.
- An estimated 400,000 people annually will submit a new application for PIP.
- 1,751,000 existing DLA claimants will seek to migrate to PIP by the end of the phasing out of DLA for working age adults.
- Over half of those claimants were initially expected to see their award reduce, or disappear altogether.¹

These changes take place in the context of the Government's commitment to reducing public expenditure as a means of reducing the deficit, including making savings from the overall benefits budget. PIP was specifically created with an expectation that it would reduce the spending on disability-related benefits.

Access to ESA involves the assessment of claimants' fitness to work, and in most cases, will involve a face-to-face medical with a health professional. People awarded ESA may be reassessed at any time after the initial award.

Access to PIP similarly involves the assessment of claimants against a range of criteria relating to their mobility and their ability to carry out daily tasks. Around three quarters of PIP applicants will be seen by a face-to-face assessor. There are no lifetime awards under PIP, in contrast with the situation under DLA, and the DWP predicts the average length of time after an award before a reassessment will be 2 years.

The Work Capability Assessment (WCA) at the heart of the ESA application process has been the subject of intense criticism. These concerns have included:

- Its failure to take proper account of the variability over time in people's health; the impact of pain, medication or fatigue.
- Its lack of consideration of the social model of disability, with people with lower skills and education being passed fit for work despite the combination of this and their disability/illness meaning that they are likely to struggle greatly in the labour market.
- Inaccurate assumptions being made during the assessment process, inaccurate recording of findings, and unsophisticated tools being provided for the use of health professionals carrying out the assessment.

¹ 'Personal Independence Payment Reassessment and Impacts' DWP Dec 13th 2012

- Its poor recognition of mental health problems, particularly those accompanying physical problems.
- Reported unprofessional conduct by staff carrying out the assessment.

These failings of the system are such that 40% of WCA decisions are appealed by claimants; 34% of those successfully².

The PIP assessment has not yet been the focus of as significant a level of criticism, but research does suggest levels of inaccurate decision making and poor practice from assessors, who are not always well trained, are still too high.

The Role of, and Pressures on, the Advice and Advocacy Sectors

Our experience working with clients and our advice partner HARC on our benefits advocacy project led us to conclude that:

- Preparing clients for the assessment had a significant impact on their understanding of the process and preparedness for the assessment, and on their ability to communicate within it.
- Preparing clients has some impact on the levels of worry and stress they experience, though it cannot completely eradicate such.
- The presence of advocates in assessments also increases clients' confidence and ability to communicate, and provides reassurance to significant numbers of vulnerable clients who otherwise would not have attended the assessment and would therefore have seen their claim fail.
- The advice sector has an essential role to play in supporting clients to complete application forms and represent them at appeal.
- Clients were more likely to receive an appropriate decision if they received support from advocacy and advice services³.

Our experience, and the figures on the impact of welfare reform mentioned above, suggest strongly that more investment is needed in the advice and advocacy sectors to respond to these pressures, needs and opportunities.

However:

- Legal Aid funding for benefits related work has been lost.
- Whilst some local authorities have managed to maintain or slightly increase funding to the sector to help mitigate the impacts of welfare reform, others have reduced their funding as part of overall cuts.
- Advocacy organisations report both the loss of funding to services other than those which are statutorily required, and a squeeze on existing contracts reducing their ability to be flexible in terms of the range of support they offer clients.

A critical part of good digital development is identifying assumptions, so that they can be tested. These assumptions might be about the nature of the problem, its causes, or the behaviours and motivations of service users. To help identify assumptions a simple activity is to sort your view of the problem into three columns (see next page).

² Employment and Support Allowance: Outcomes of Work Capability Assessment', figures from <http://tabulation-tool.dwp.gov.uk/100pc/tabtool.html>

³ Conclusions backed by this report into the Scottish projects based on the Hastings model available here: <http://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/policy/welfare-advocacy-support-project/>

What we know

Demand for our services is greater than our ability to fulfil that demand

Action

Confidence to continue to use this information

What we think we know

Service users will use a digital tool in lieu of a face to face alternative

Action

Test this with the relevant user group through: interviews, surveys and workshops

What we don't know

How technologically competent and confident our clients are

Action

More research is needed, either: gathering research others have done or doing our own

Our Starting Point for a Digital Solution

seAp's starting point in looking at a digital solution was therefore the recognition that the demand for advocacy, advice services and support outstripped, and would continue to outstrip, our ability and the ability of the advice and advocacy sectors to meet the level of need experienced by claimants through face-to-face advocacy and support.

We knew that face-to-face support services would remain vital, but it was not acceptable to us that those living in areas that could not be served by ourselves or colleagues in the advocacy sector would be left without additional support.

Recognising that our digital work wasn't aiming to replace face-to-face service provision was more than just a value statement of the importance of face-to-face advocacy.

It also provided a rationale for focusing our digital work on the elements of advocacy and support that might be done at a distance.

We were familiar with digital tools that support people in preparing for meetings (such as www.mindofmyown.org.uk), or to become familiar with a process (www.docready.org).

Our experience strongly suggested that clients needed to feel **confident** about the assessment process, and **empowered** to communicate if they were to achieve an appropriate outcome.

Our ambition was therefore to commission a product that helped our clients **to become confident** in the process they were to engage with and **empowered** to achieve the appropriate outcome. That became the heart of our theory of change.

We had also done some further thinking about the different elements involved in the product achieving that ambition. The product would need to:

- Give people more knowledge about the process that they are going through and the benefits they are applying for.
- Give people advice about how to complete their application forms to reflect their situation fairly, and how to conduct themselves in the assessment.
- Give people a sense of the questions they will be asked and the topics covered in the assessment.
- Give people a sense of their likely result in an assessment, to encourage them to make appropriate decisions about applying at an earlier stage, give them confidence for the assessment, and empower them to seek support if the assessment process didn't go as planned.
- Create a personal list of important answers to remember for the assessment.

As focused as those ambitions were, we were very aware of the challenges we were presented with:

- Two complex benefits:
 - Containing assessment processes involving fine judgements about conditions which might have variable impacts on different days.
 - Designed to support both people with mental health problems and people with physical health conditions.
- A high proportion of potential users who would be in some way vulnerable, subject to cognitive difficulties or high levels of stress during, and often triggered by, the assessment process.



Identifying how your proposed activities will achieve your intended outcomes is important in ensuring you are heading in a clear and logical direction. Developing a Theory of Change is a useful tool to comprehensively describe and plan for social impact. NPC have written a useful guide to developing a Theory of Change, which you can find here: <http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/creating-your-theory-of-change/>

- High levels of controversy about the benefits meaning that many claimants and potential claimants would have absorbed one or more of several myths propagated by the media, ranging from the idea that most claimants are scroungers to the idea that it is impossible to get a correct result from either the WCA, or PIP assessment process. These act as a barrier to people thinking with clarity about the benefits and engaging with the process effectively.
- It would also be necessary for the users of the sites to input sensitive information about their mental and physical health if they were to receive an answer on their likely entitlement. They would have to place a high degree of trust in the confidentiality and security of the site to do so.

Development Process

This section reflects on the key stages within the development of c-App, drawing out several key lessons for the management and delivery of successful 'tech for good' products.

It looks in turn at:

- The commissioning process
- The first development phase, of co-design and test-driven development
- The second development phase, involving critical friends to finesse the product, supported by Comic Relief
- Marketing

Commissioning Process

After seAp's initial identification of the need for an online product, the organisation worked to identify potential sources of funding, accepting from the start that it would not be able to fund the development itself.

An initial approach was made to the Chief Executive of the Legal Education Foundation (LEF), seeking funding for the development of the product and for additional investment in face-to-face advocacy.

After feedback from the LEF, the formal proposal finally submitted in May 2014 focused solely on the production of what was at the time described as an 'App'.

Support was received prior to submission by web developers working with seAp, particularly in respect of setting a budget that would be sufficient to attract interest from potential developers.

The bid, for a total of £61,000, was successful, with the funding awarded in July 2014.

seAp's next task, slightly delayed due to staff changes, was to develop a tender brief. The project manager drew up an initial version, but critical input and support was provided at this stage by the web developer advising seAp, and by the LEF. This round of feedback fleshed out the brief, and ensured that it would be fit for purpose in attracting interest from potential suppliers.

One particularly important change was made at this point. The initial plan had been to produce an 'App'. On the advice of the web developer and the LEF it was decided that the product should be a mobile responsive website rather than an App; a format that was seen as having none of the potential disadvantages of the latter, and all the strengths. A mobile responsive website was seen as more directly accessible, avoiding the need to download an App, and as facilitating people's use of the site through laptops and PCs as well as tablets and smartphones. This mode of engagement would be critical if people were accessing the site through public facilities in libraries and Job Centres etc.

The Brief

The brief set out a number of product and process specifications:

- The website was to be accessible to as many as possible of those applying for disability related benefits, including people with mental health problems, neurological conditions and learning disabilities.
- The site would aim to demystify the benefit assessment processes, familiarising applicants with the questions they would be asked, enabling them to prepare their responses, and helping them to identify if the decisions and scores they ultimately receive were accurate.
- The main focus of the website was to be on walking applicants through the assessment processes by means of a multiple-choice questionnaire.

- Applicants would be able to submit their own responses to the questions, generating a predicted score for their forthcoming assessments.
- The website would also host:
 - A short film outlining the issues for clients in applying for the two benefits.
 - Longer form resources that could be printed.
- The site should enable the generation of usage data and feedback to support evaluation and seAp's campaigning work.

Critically, the brief required that contractors set out proposals for 'working with groups of potential users provided by seAp, to carry out an initial exploration of the requirements for the site and to test the usability of the website'.

This meant that the site would be developed through an agile and user-led process, according to best practice in digital development, especially in complex areas such as developing technology to address charitable and social outcomes.

The tender document's requirement for such user-centred development was crucial to ensuring that the products created matched the needs and digital behaviours of the user group.

The brief set out a condensed background to the development of the proposal in terms of the current process of welfare reform and austerity, and the specific difficulties and challenges associated with the assessments for ESA and PIP.

Critically, it made clear from the start where the domain expertise of seAp and its partner HARC lay, and the roles that they would perform. They would provide the contractor with information about the benefit system and the scoring systems underpinning ESA and PIP, and they would recruit and facilitate the involvement of users in the testing.

Contractors were required to have:

- Extensive experience of developing responsive websites.
- Experience in developing digital services for people from vulnerable groups.
- Experience in engaging with vulnerable groups in terms of concept/ requirements and product testing.

Explaining the Jargon

Agile processes involve digital teams working closely with relevant communities of end users to understand their problems in more detail; quickly developing product/service concepts that can be tested by those groups, and then iteratively developing those solutions in line with feedback and use.

However, contractors were not expected to have any knowledge of the benefits system or associated assessment processes.

The tender required contractors to produce clear proposals for each aspect of the work, in particular user testing, and discuss their understanding of the purpose of the site and the ways in which it could facilitate feedback without compromising usability and/or willingness to use. The proposal would identify the staff to be employed on delivery of each element, their experience and the time and cost involved.

7 contractors submitted proposals to seAp. Neontribe was identified as the preferred contractor after a review of tenders in December 2014, and was appointed contractor after a further meeting in January 2015.

Reflections

The commissioning / procurement process can be difficult for organisations new to digital development. Procuring for an agile development process can be unfamiliar. In such a process, the social ambition, timescale and budget are fixed, but the specifics of the actual deliverables will vary.

There were a number of key elements that ensured an effective procurement process, and ultimately a productive relationship between Neontribe and seAp.

Introductions from the Legal Education Foundation to a number of high quality development teams (including Neontribe) which provided trust and confidence in the process.

External support and challenges from the LEF and other existing partners who had more experience of digital development during the development of the brief.

Use of a score sheet to assess the quality of the interview with the shortlisted development partners.

A clear tender document that provided enough detail and enough flexibility for a development house to lead an agile process within seAp's constraints. The tender document was seen as a 'starting point' rather than a 'brief' to be delivered.

A two-stage selection process, involving identification of a preferred contractor based on their tender response and references, and then a clarification meeting. This meeting moved beyond discussion of the technical capability of Neontribe into the detail of the proposed user-led development process and ensured the chemistry was there between the two organisations.

First Development Phase: Co-Design

seAp convened a team to oversee delivery of the project:

- An external consultant managed the project. The consultant also provided a significant amount of the copy for the site, based on extensive experience of producing user guides, and a basic knowledge of the benefit system.
- seAp's Strategic Service Development Manager provided support and direction and a link to the organisation's strategic management team.
- seAp's IT officer provided in-house technical knowledge.
- seAp's benefits support project advocate provided expertise on the experience of a wide range of clients and the content of benefit assessments and recruited some of his service users to participate in the user testing.
- HARC's senior welfare rights adviser provided expertise on the benefit system.

There were two phases to the first development phase:

- Paper prototyping.
- Usability testing of online prototypes using client generated content.

Paper Prototyping

Neontribe often begin user-driven development with a less formally defined brief, allowing service users themselves to identify what products / tools they might find of assistance in meeting the challenges they face. On this occasion, the tender brief had set out more explicitly the product that was expected.

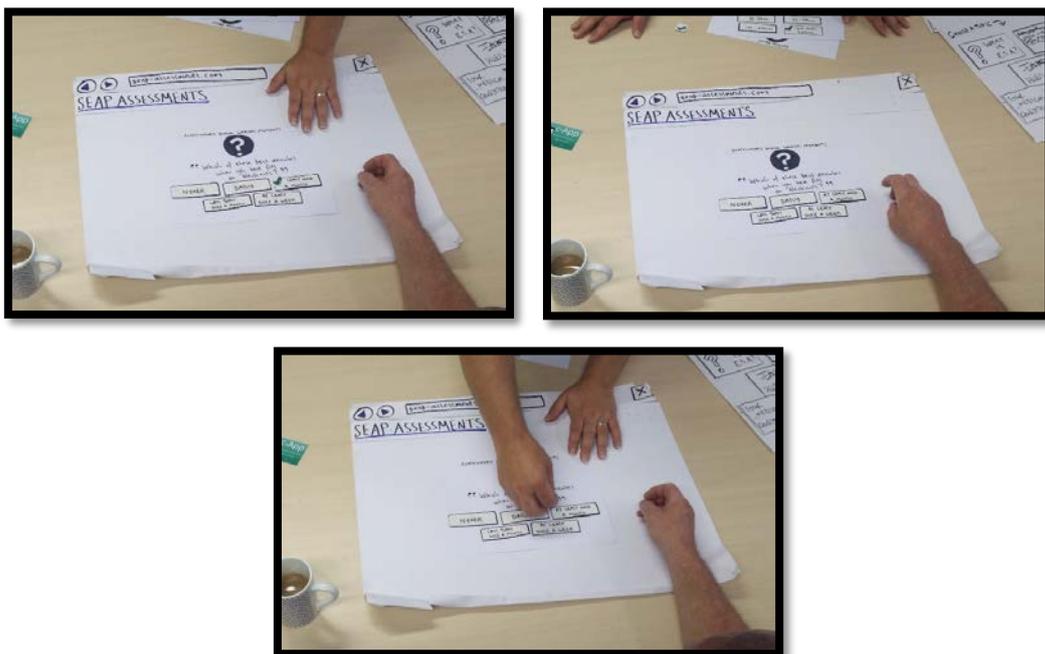
The initial scoping session in February 2015 was an opportunity for Neontribe to revisit the tender brief, really thinking through the detail of what was required with the project team. This involved the development of 'personas', standing for the range of people who might make use of the site, and exploring what their needs might be. In this instance, seAp's benefits support project advocate provided extensive

input into thinking through the sort of situations in which his clients find themselves. This session concluded with the production of a 'cereal box' model of the site, describing its 'key ingredients' and 'features' in paper format.

The initial 'cereal box' scoping session identified / confirmed the key features of the site:

- Free of charge to the user
- A tool for individuals to use
- A tool for advisers to use in support of individuals
- Completely anonymous, no personal data is collected or stored
- A mobile-responsive website, not an App
- Accurate
- Clear, simple and friendly
- Two separate websites with an overarching landing website – which other tools can be added to
- Completely independent

The second stage of development in March 2015 involved further engagement with the project team. Based on the features proposed in the 'cereal box' version from the previous session, Neontribe had produced a paper prototype of the site. This allowed the project team, and a group of seAp client volunteers, to find their way around the structure of the site and its features. This paper prototype was subject to addition, subtraction and re-organisation in response to the project team's feedback. By the end of the session a structure for the site had been agreed, and Neontribe could begin the process of coding.



Content Production and User Testing Online Prototypes

seAp and HARC had significant contributions to make at the start of this next part of the development process.

HARC's senior welfare rights adviser produced a spreadsheet setting out the scoring system under which clients are assessed as being entitled to ESA/ PIP or not. This was used to create the logic underpinning the self-assessment preparation tool at the heart of the site.

The external consultant developed guides to the ESA and PIP assessment processes in both short and long format, finessed by comments and feedback from HARC and seAp's benefits support project advocate.

These formed the bases of the 'Essential Guides' to ESA and PIP to be found on the final version website, the script for the video hosted on the site, and the 'Long Guides' to ESA / PIP that sit on the site in PDF format.

Neontribe proceeded to develop an "Alpha" and then a "Beta" version of the sites; testable digital prototypes of the ESA and PIP virtual advocacy services, based on the paper prototype, and incorporating the content and assessment process logic provided by HARC and seAp.

This went through two rounds of user testing, in April and June 2015, with people who had used the Benefits Advocacy Service, with changes incorporated after each round of testing.

The usability testing had a particular format, with Neontribe developers focusing on observing the way that users navigated around and used the site, and recording their comments about its usability and the extent to which it might meet their needs, rather than seeking to help them to navigate the site, or peppering them with questions.

Extensive comments on the usability of the prototypes and the design, format, content and language used on the site were made by users. Each individual testing provided essential feedback, with testers ranging from users who were nervous about using IT to one who had previously worked as a games tester, who understood very well the process in which Neontribe were engaged.

The websites were also tested, and website content reviewed by HARC colleagues, and by colleagues of the external consultant who had extensive welfare rights experience.

Creating personas (typical clients) to inform the design team's decision making and conversations allows exploration of issues in a way which does not load too much on an individual's personal understanding/ views, or risk surfacing the experience of those who may well have significant challenges in their lives.

The development of a low-fidelity prototype in paper allows testing out of interface ideas, and the making of rapid strides in understanding what will work and what will not on the site, before a single line of code has been written.

Formal consultation sessions must be supplemented/ complemented by ongoing close contact between the project manager and developer and, where possible, directly between the content provider and the web developer.

Consultation with users was supplemented after each session with discussion with members of the project team, to ensure that development was not side-tracked by views of testers which might be unhelpfully atypical.

Recruitment of potential users to test the site is not easy, particularly when people are from groups that might be described as vulnerable. However, even four or five users over a session can provide real insights that immeasurably improve what is being produced.

Such recruitment will always be the responsibility of the charitable partner.

Second Development Phase: Engagement with Comic Relief

As the websites approached their second set of usability testing, seAp and Neontribe were clear that a number of design issues remained.

In particular, uncertainties / difficulties remained with:

- Thinking through how the assessment tool could really get to grips with variable conditions, and the need to incorporate more subtle answers into a tool inevitably based largely around a yes / no logic.
- The wide range of conditions covered by the benefits, with a particular need to find an appropriate way of responding to the feedback from people with mental health problems that they might be put off by the number of categories of questions which appeared mainly to be of relevance to people with physical health conditions, although in fact many such categories also contain questions of relevance to them.
- Agreeing the best format for presenting information to be saved, and for the site to communicate with users whilst they were undertaking the test.
- The best way of organising the landing page(s) for the website(s).

Although the website could have been launched in late summer 2015 and still have been of use to the people in the target group, it was agreed that more development and more testing would be useful.

Comic Relief's 'Tech for Good' fund provided an opportunity to take that forward. A bid for £36,800 was submitted for further development work to Comic Relief in May 2015, with confirmation of success received the following month. In addition, Comic Relief made a further £5,000 available to pay for consultancy support.

Comic Relief Bootcamp

In July 2015, Neontribe and seAp's Strategic Service Development Manager and IT Officer attended the 'boot camp' for projects funded under the Comic Relief 'Tech for Good' programme.



This introduced the project team to a number of critical friends allowing them to think hard about:

- The basic purpose of the site.
- The branding and marketing of the site.
- How feedback on usage and utility might be formed based on analytics data gathered from the site.
- Whether the content and language used on the site was fit for purpose.



Engagement with these critical friends at this point, with the team having the budget and time to respond to their feedback and insights on an already well developed site, set the scene for the next development effort and deepened our understanding of how we might best brand and market the site. As a result of the input from the boot camp, effort in the development phase focused on two areas: Analytics and Content.

Analytics

Measurement of the success of websites for social use is an extremely thorny issue. Post-use feedback forms are rarely used, can be overly long, and are often considered intrusive. Our solution was to un-pick our theory of change and consider how we could infer outcomes from users' journeys through the site, an approach also referred to as using "lean social metrics". An analytics expert engaged as a result of the Comic Relief funding helped us monitor the steps in these journeys. The results of this approach are covered in more depth later, in the "Analysis of Use" section, below.

Further Content and Language Development

Comic Relief helped us engage a copywriter at this point, who helped the project team to review and think critically about the voice and tone of the site. The focus became ensuring that the site replicated the face-to-face experience of people using the Benefits Assessment Project, by 'using' the voice of 'Pete', the project's advocate, tweaking the copy to ensure it reflected the style and tone he would use.

Specific copy improvements were carried out in relation to the:

- The initial landing pages for the site.
- Essential and long guides to the assessment.

Particularly focused and important work took place on the phrasing of the questions in the self-assessment preparation tool, involving the copy writer, the external consultant and the HARC senior welfare rights officer.

Further usability testing

In addition to the input from the boot camp, two further rounds of usability testing were held with seAp clients, in October 2015 and January 2016. Each of these resulted in significant changes to the site.



Notably, this testing inspired change to the way in which people could save or print the personal document, containing key answers and tips, which they could use to help them prepare for their assessment.

Testing was also supported by input from the project manager, who had been managing the Scottish version of seAp's Benefit Assessment Project and had conducted an extensive evaluation of its impact, including detailed exploration with clients of the challenges faced in going through assessments.

Final content editing

The public beta version of the sites went live on 26th November 2015. In the immediate run up to the launch, the project manager ran a last check on the operation of the self-assessment tool preparation.

Explaining the Jargon

Lean social metrics are those which can be used to infer socially positive outcomes in the lightest weight manner possible; "metrics" because we're attempting to infer an outcome rather than simply displaying some analytics data; "social" because we're measuring a socially positive outcome rather than one with commercial value; and "Lean" because we measure as little as necessary and no less. The notion behind lean social metrics is explored further at <http://www.nominettrust.org.uk/knowledge-centre/publications/lean-social-metrics>

A number of errors were identified at this point. The reviewing of the sites had focused so much on the content of the questions, the essential and long guides, and the landing pages, that the accuracy of the logic of the tool itself had not been fully checked.

This was despite the site being tested and reviewed by a large number of field experts who were associates of the project team.

One of the problems had been that there was no documentation beyond the spreadsheet used to guide the initial development of the tool that captured its logic. Testing of the tool therefore had to be 'live', i.e. by actually using it, meaning that any errors were not always immediately picked up.

The errors were corrected at that stage, the beta went live, and initial marketing of the website progressed.

Shortly before the launch of the final version of the website, Neontribe produced a text version of the logic of the tool to ensure that the problems around the requirement for live testing did not repeat themselves.

This was the basis for intensive final discussions about amendments to the tool's logic, particularly relating to the way it treated situations in which clients were not able to give yes or no answers to questions. This final editing very much improved the final product.

Reflections

In a situation where the client has all the expertise relating to the content of a site which includes an interactive tool, it is essential that an easy to check paper version of the logic that underpins that tool is made available to the client, for ease of testing.

Final checks are always worth carrying out. It is worthwhile spending time perfecting something that was already very good.

An acceptance by both client and developer of each other's shared need for perfection, and what that involves in practice goes a long way to ensuring an effective working relationship.

Video Commissioning and Production

From the start, seAp was clear about the potential value of hosting a video on the website as an additional / alternative means of communicating key messages about the assessments to users. Some users were felt to be likely to prefer to access information in this way.

seAp approached a video production company, Lensbox, who had previously carried out high quality work for them and asked for a quotation to carry out the work.

Initial discussions focused on the type of video that could be produced for the limited budget available.

seAp's initial idea had been for a longer video that might feature some acted out scenarios set within assessments. It was quickly agreed with Lensbox that this would both be impossible within the budget, and not the most effective way of communicating with users who would only want to sit through a short piece.

It was agreed instead that two short animations would be produced, one focused on ESA and one on PIP. Each would last about five minutes.

In April and May 2015, Lensbox and the project team worked together to produce a script for the videos, effectively a further condensed version of the essential guides that had been developed. The process was challenging, given the tight constraints on the length of the videos.

Over this period, Lensbox developed ideas for simple, clean animations for the videos, reflecting the colour scheme used on the developing website and the key text that would accompany the voiceover.

The initial voiceover was recorded in May 2015 and very minor adjustments and re-recordings were made the following month.

In June/July 2015 The Royal Association for Deaf People prepared BSL translations to make both videos more accessible for hearing impaired people.

Given concerns about maintenance, bandwidth and the potential impact on the experience of the end user, seAp decided to host the videos with an online video host, choosing its existing paid account with Vimeo to do so.

Reflections

Videos can be an effective way of delivering information, but realism is required about users' attention span and budgets available.

Clean, crisp animation can be very effective as a communication tool.

Time taken to perfect a script saves frustration and prevents the waste of money through re-recording. Getting the script nearly perfect was a nit-picking process, but one that paid off.

Marketing

The Comic Relief Bootcamp provided significant support to seAp in developing our marketing strategy, helping us to think through the process of user-adoption, and using storytelling, identifying goals, creating a manifesto, and viewing the launch as an ongoing process.

The marketing plan that developed in response had three objectives:

- To ensure that the site's inbuilt features and usability would lead to word of mouth recommendation and sector/community specific endorsement.
- To ensure that people looking for support on these issues on other websites might find links from those sites to c-App.
- To ensure that people searching for support on ESA or PIP assessments were likely to come across the websites through search engines.

The first objective had been finely honed during the second development phase. In pursuit of the second objective, seAp began a process of direct approaches to those working with national, largely condition focused, voluntary organisations, asking them to consider hosting links to c-App on their website, and giving other publicity to the site through electronic and printed media.

Information about the site was also circulated to Local Authorities and to voluntary organisations in contact with seAp staff, and through national representative bodies working with the advice sector and welfare rights advisers. Further promotional work was undertaken on social media through Twitter and Facebook, and seAp's blog - sometimes linking to stories about ESA and PIP in the news.

Marketing materials were also produced to support presentations and displays to relevant audiences.

The third objective led to a successful application to Google for support, which resulted in \$10,000 worth of free Google advertising per month.

This AdWords funding came as part of the 'Google for Non-Profits' package awarded to the organisation. Whilst the application for use of the Google Business Suite as a Non-Profit was not directly in relation to the c-App project, the timing was perfect, and this was immediately applied to the c-App project. The application process took approximately 1 year from start to finish and entailed many checks, the submission of various documents and several calls to Google for support.

The benefit of the AdWords awards has been huge. Google 'paid' searches form by some distance the highest percentage of all the external referrals to the sites. 77% of visitors to the ESA-assessment site, and 56% of visitors to the PIP-assessment site between launch date and the end of August 2016 came through this channel.

The further-reaching implications and benefits of this 'paid search' outcome are that as the c-App sites become more widely used through AdWords marketing, their ranking on Google for particular keywords and phrases is bolstered and boosted too. This drives up the 'organic search' results and creates a Google snowball effect. The more that people click, the more often the c-App sites show up. The AdWords funding has been invaluable in this process and to date remains the strongest aspect of spreading the use of the c-App project.

The AdWords package has in-built analytics and constantly makes suggestions on how to improve keyword searches and other aspects of online advertising. The latest reports suggest that the campaign is now limited by its budget, meaning that Google has recognised many more opportunities and potential referrals to the c-App sites but our \$10,000 a month of free ads can't cover them all. This in itself exemplifies the online demand for exactly the kind of information and support the c-App sites are providing.

Evaluation

The publication of this Evaluation Report has provided further opportunities to raise awareness of the sites. Through contacts made via 'Tech for Good' seAp has been named as the 'preferred charity' of Microsoft Accelerator UK.

In November 2016 Microsoft Accelerator hosted an event at their London offices to allow seAp to present the background and outcomes of the project. The planning for this event also included extensive press and media contact, although very little interest has been raised as a result of this. The materials produced for this event are currently being used to further raise the profile of the project on social media with the aim of increasing the numbers of people who are aware of it.

In hindsight, it would have been extremely useful to document the project process as we went along, and to take photos. Many of the development tools, such as 'cereal boxes' are now lost and would have made a useful addition to this report.

Reflections

Lack of expertise, as well as slim marketing budgets, mean that marketing is often lower priority than the initial creation of a digital product.

It is important to consider marketing and client acceptance issues throughout the life of the project.

Having achieved the first stage of marketing, the team are now planning a marketing exercise aimed specifically at Local Authority funders, more directly making the case for both the c-App and face-to-face advocacy in meeting local anti-poverty strategies by maximising benefit uptake.

Timeline for the Process

The timeline below shows how the sprint process (a short-burst of focused development effort) included user-led development and testing throughout the project.

Tender Brief Issued	November 2014
Neontribe identified as preferred contractor	December 2014
Neontribe appointed contractor	January 2015
Lensbox commissioned	February 2015

Initial Paper Prototyping	February/March 2015
Site usability testing	April/June 2015
Video produced, edited, finalised	April/June 2015
Comic Relief Bootcamp	July 2015
Private Beta live for testing by associates	August 2015
Private Beta usability testing	October 2015
Content editing	October 2015
Tool corrections	November 2015
Public beta live	26th November 2015
Public beta usability testing	January 2016
Deployment	8th February 2016

Reflections on the Whole Process

The flexibility and support beyond the funding offered by both the Legal Education Foundation and Comic Relief has been essential to the success of this project.

The Legal Education Foundation provided critical advice in relation to commissioning, and has been flexible about how their funds have been used at every stage.

Comic Relief provided access to a wealth of support beyond the funding which paid for Neontribe's work.

Comic Relief's support and belief in the value of the project, built on the back of the LEF's investment, ensured that the project did not stumble at the moment at which it needed to progress to finish and launch.

Testing is at the heart of digital product development, and especially that of products that aim to support a social or charitable outcome. The challenge is to identify effective ways of addressing the problem identified in a way that also links to users' everyday digital behaviours.

Users should be involved from the very start, and time should be invested in supporting their recruitment and engagement, and in getting this part of the work right.

The agile development process used is resource and time intensive for the commissioning organisation, to an extent that seAp did not initially appreciate when we began the process. The changes driven by the process, in the overall conception of the product, and in its detail, made for an immeasurably more effective product. There is no substitute for taking the time to get it right.

The investment of substantial effort in marketing is essential if products are not to sit unused. Marketing cannot be an afterthought.

Don't forget to document the process and take photos!

The project could not have been delivered without an effective working relationship between the project team and Neontribe. seAp and Neontribe are both experts, though their domains are clearly very different.

Being able to work constructively across two different organisations requires confidence in the ability of the others; trust in their motivation and ability to deliver, and a focus on clear communication, recognising the different domain-specific language.

The site needed to be based on the project team's expertise in benefits, but encoded digitally through Neontribe's expertise.

Both organisations have to learn and understand the language and concepts of the other, and be patient around developing that understanding.

In practice, this meant that seAp supported Neontribe to become familiar with the process of advocacy and advice giving, and with the assessment processes for ESA and PIP. The creation of the spreadsheet underpinning the practise/ self-assessment tool was led by the seAp team as experts in this domain, but presented in a way that Neontribe could use to underpin the logic within the c-App.

The need for a shared understanding of this process was vital – to ensure Neontribe could build a digital version of the process, but also so that seAp could check their implementation.

Having a non-technical document setting out the logic underpinning any interactive tools on a website is essential.

Advocacy is a complex process; advice giving the same – yet good digital design is as simple and crisp as possible. In the design processes seAp wanted to add features to the interaction on the site, such as creating pop-up' messages after more user interactions, yet Neontribe's understanding of the need for simple/elegant digital solutions enabled them to push back towards creating a tighter, better product.

An early conversation about responsibilities and sign off is crucial, but both partners should be prepared to learn from the other organisation's experience and ways of working, and be flexible about the processes that lead to project completion.

Analysis of Use

Evaluating the social impact of digital projects is difficult as, beyond quantitative analytics showing numbers of users etc., there is little opportunity to engage with users to understand how c-App qualitatively impacted them.

As part of the Comic Relief Bootcamp, the team implemented a novel approach to data-driven evaluation, identifying 'lean metrics' that followed the users' route through the site. For example, if a user chose 'Learn more about ESA' rather than 'Take a look at some questions', we can assume they are more interested in finding out more information than practising (at that point). Similarly, after viewing information, if the user selected 'try some questions', we can be confident that they have enough information at that stage, but want to prepare in order to become more confident.

This mapping of user activity and the social value of c-App meant that we can use Google analytics to give us confidence about the social impact of the work. Note, this isn't to say that we're 'proving' the social value of the work, but that we can be more confident about its social effect, and more confident in pursuing further development of c-App.

It should be stressed that this analysis relates to the journey through the site, and not on collecting data on individual client responses.

The following resources are useful for preparing to engage with user centred design, and lean and agile development.

For those looking for support from a community of charity workers interested in digital, sign up for this slack group: <http://goo.gl/forms/9Byhb27D9b>

For a good case study of a charity shifting to a leaner approach to operating, read Clic Sargent's Better By Design: http://www.clicsargent.org.uk/sites/files/clicsargent/field_document/CLIC%20Sargent%20Better%20by%20Design%20programme.pdf

or this video is a great introduction to Lean Start-ups: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBlrLqsjIDw>

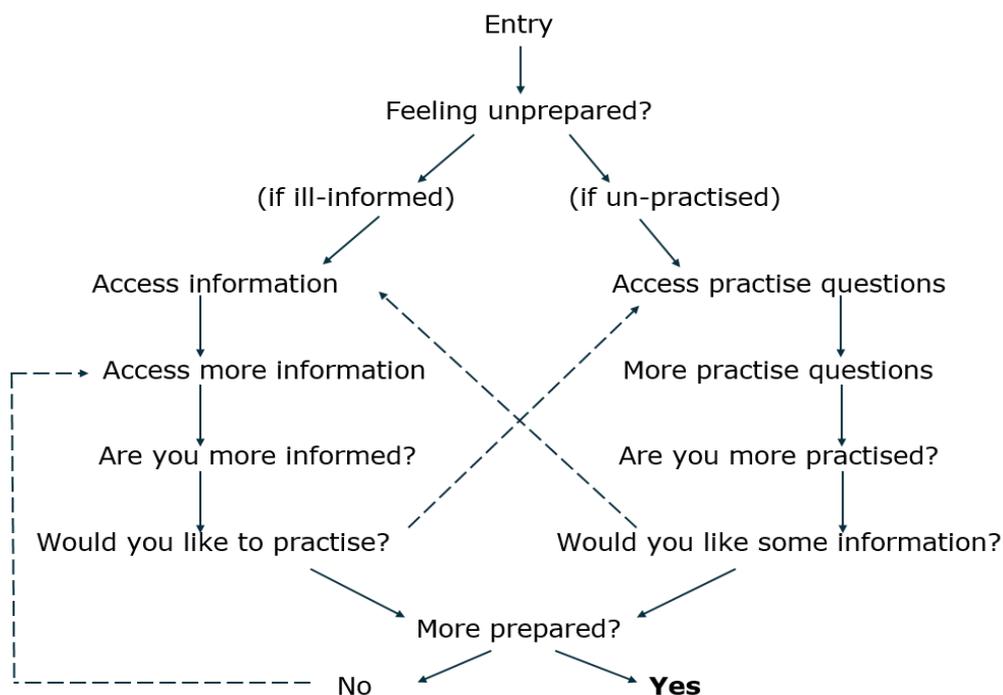
Effective digital development validates assumptions as quickly (and cheaply) as possible. Whether that is testing whether people will use a product, like it, or even pay for it, this process is about creating tests that give 'confidence' to continue the direction of travel, rather than 'proving' effectiveness. As c-App develops into a more stable service, more traditional evaluation can be undertaken. For the purposes of evaluating a digital product at this stage of development however, we focus on the confidence levels generated through the data we have been able to collect.

The logic underpinning the site is that as a user selects an action, they are indicating the type of support they need. Once c-App has responded by sharing the relevant content, the users' next action shows us whether the support has been useful. This approach was developed during the Comic Relief boot camp, which brought together a group of experts and mentors to provide new ideas and support to the project.

We expect users to come to the site because they feel less confident than they would like to be about ESA or PIP. We ask them to identify whether they want to 'Learn more about ESA/PIP' (to get more information) or to 'Take a look at some questions' (to prepare).

The description below shows how a visitor moves from the 'Entry' (which gives us a total number of visitors) to selecting what sort of support they need: ill-informed (I need more information) or un-prepared (I want to try some questions), through to a position where we can assume, with some to strong confidence, that they are more prepared.

- Entry: this gives us the number of unique visitors to the sites and an indication of the number of people we have attracted through our marketing. After selecting an interest in ESA or PIP, the visitor is prompted with a choice to:
- 'Learn more' or 'Take a look at some questions'. The response to this enables us to assume whether the visitor feels ill-informed (they select that they want further information) or that they feel un-prepared (they choose to try the questions). This was our 'first goal' in being able to assume the visitor's starting need for support.
- Once they had selected 'Learn more' or to 'Take a look at some questions', we could monitor the number of visitors who scrolled down the page to look at the other types of information provided. We can assume with some confidence that these visitors are interested in the types of content provided.
- Our next goal was to monitor whether the users viewed the content that we provided. We can assume with some confidence that those who viewed the content gained support through this information / opportunity to try the questions.
- A further goal was to understand how many visitors then chose to move to a different type of support (from information to questions, or visa versa). We can be confident that those who engaged with one content type and then shifted to a different type were supported in preparing for their assessment. A key goal was to support visitors to engage with the information and to then move to questions.
- The final goal was to understand how many visitors then identified as having enough information / preparation (where we can be very confident that they have been supported to prepare).



This means that following the 'information' thread, the user can opt for more information, leave because they are more informed, or switch to practising the questions. From the 'practise' thread, users can practise more, leave because they have now practised (printing their information to take with them), or choose to access information.

These routes through c-App provide us with lean metrics that can give us confidence that we are supporting users to develop their overall preparedness. The following tables present the data at each point of the user's journey, linked to a commentary of what we can learn from their actions. This is followed by a summary of what we might understand from the use of c-App so far.

Usage Statistics

All the statistics in this section cover the period from the start of January to the end of August 2016.

High Level data

	Sessions	Users	Average Session Duration	Bounce Rate
PIP	48,727	34,918	5:03	4.56%
ESA	30,448	24,840	2:19	4.45%

At a very high level, these numbers are really positive for c-App, attracting just under 80,000 visits to the site.

The **very low bounce rates** (the number of visitors who leave after viewing one page) show that the marketing of c-App was well targeted and that those who found the site saw enough value to browse; industry benchmarks expect 40% **bounce rate**.

The **average session times** are also significant, showing good engagement with each visitor. Industry standard for information provision sites is two minutes. Whilst this might not seem a lot of time, it is enough for users to read content and interact with a website. Hitting nearly two and a half minutes for the ESA assessment is positive, and hitting just over five minutes' average session duration is very positive for the PIP assessment site.

At these levels, the high-level data would suggest that c-App has been marketed and designed in a targeted way that engages the right audience with appropriate content.

There is a drop between the number of sessions and then number of visits we might describe as 'active' due to their greater engagement with the site. This might be for a number of reasons (including non-core users accessing just the homepage) but as we start to analyse the use of c-App, we need to place the 80,000 active users (48,727 PIP + 30,448 ESA) in context.

Through our face-to-face advocacy support, seAp currently supports 100 people per year to apply for PIP or ESA (at a cost of £10,000 p.a.) Whilst there is no doubt that this in-depth support provides more value to each individual, c-App will enable seAp to multiply our annual reach by more than 1000 times, for 10 times the investment. This figure is remarkable in recognising how well designed 'tech for good' can support an expert organisation to scale, complementing not replacing, the existing support it offers.

Even looking just at the number of people where we're **very confident** (see below) that c-App has supported people to prepare for their assessment, this will still increase reach by more than 100 times for 10 times the investment.

When we consider the number of people who are medically assessed each month, we can show that the number of people accessing the websites is equivalent to 1 in 17 of ESA assessments and 1 in 14 of PIP assessments over the same 8-month period.

Usage of PIP Support Site

	Number of Sessions	Percentage of Total Sessions	Commentary
Total Sessions	48,727		
At least Minimum Engagement: Scroll half-way down the 'about-pip' page	45,052	92%	Of those who viewed the essential guide – over 90% engaged with the content 'below the fold' of the site. This indicates an interest in the content.
Clicked on Information or Practise Sections	31,283	64%	Almost two-thirds of visitors engaged with some c-App content, clicking on either the information side or practise-side.
Initial Choice: Information	13,839	28%	Over one quarter of users initially selected the information side.
Initial Choice: Visit the Activities selection page	17,444	36%	Over one third of users started with a need to practise the process in order to become more confident (rather than declaring a need to find out more information). This is slightly more than the number who identified a need for information, and validates the need for support <i>beyond</i> information provision alone.
Engaged with Essential Guide/ other information	29,217	60%	60% of visitors engaged with the Essential Guide or other information content looking at specific sections that provided deeper information about PIPs and the assessment process. Combining with the average session duration of over 5 minutes, and in the context of industry standard session duration times, we can be confident that this information was useful in supporting users to understand more about the process.

	Number of Sessions	Percentage of Total Sessions	Commentary
Completed Some Practise questions	23,918	49%	Almost half of visitors completed some practise questions. We can be confident that the articulated 'need' to practise aligns with users' willingness to try online questions as part of their preparation for assessment.
Reviewed Answers:	11,346	23%	23% of all users completed a range of questions and then reviewed the answers to the extent we can be very confident that they are more familiar with the types of questions. We can be quite confident that they are more prepared for the assessment process.
Engaged with both Information and Practise Parts of Site	21,861	45%	45% of visitors engaged with both information and practise content
Both Used Information and completed practise questions	6,474	13%	We can be very confident that the 13% of people who both engaged with the information on the site, and completed practise questions are more prepared for their assessment as a consequence of their use of c-App.

Reviewing PIP site data

60% of those who engaged with the site identified initially as needing to practise, rather than to find more information. Whilst only 10% of those who sought support to practise then wanted more information, 51% of those seeking information then wanted support to practise. This **validates** the need for support in addition to providing information, and **validates** seAp's ambition to develop digital advocacy-based support tools and the necessary interactive nature of c-App.

'Market' Penetration Rate

'Market Penetration Rates' demonstrate the effectiveness of the sites, and provide an insight into how seAp and other advocacy services can begin to use digital tools to maximise reach.

- An estimated 585,000 people registered a claim for PIP over the period from January to August 2016, the initial period of the site's operation.
- The number of sessions with engagement with some of the site's content is equivalent to 5.3% of the total number of PIP registrations.
- The number of sessions involving engagement with the essential guide is equivalent to 5% of the total number of PIP registrations. We can be confident that people undertaking these sessions found the site useful.

- The number of people completing practise questions is equivalent to 4.1% of the total number of PIP registrations.
- We can be very confident that because they reviewed their answers to questions, up to 1.9% of those registering for PIP over this period are more familiar with the types of questions asked at assessment, and quite confident that they are more prepared for the assessment process.
- We can be very confident that up to 1.1% of those registering for PIP over this period are more prepared for their assessments as a consequence of the use of c-App.

Usage of ESA Support Site

	Number	Percentage of Total Sessions	Commentary
Total Sessions	30,448		
At least Minimum Engagement:	28,624	94%	Of those who viewed the essential guide – over 90% engaged with the content ‘below the fold’ of the site. This indicates an interest in the content provided and that most people engaged with the content in some way.
Clicked on Information or Practise Sections	16,356	50%	Over 50% of visitors engaged with some c-App content, either information-based or practise-based.
Initial Choice: Information	7,406	29%	Of the visits to the ESA site, over one quarter chose to find more information as a starting point.
Initial Choice: Visit the Activities selection page	6,231	20%	One fifth of those who visited c-App for support for ESA assessment identified that they wanted to practise, in order to become more confident. This is slightly less than the number of people indicating a need for more information.

	Number	Percentage of Total Sessions	Commentary
Engaged with Essential Guide/ other information	8,950	29%	<p>Almost 9,000 visitors engaged with the Essential Guide information content</p> <p>Again, in conjunction with the average session time of just over 2 minutes, we can be confident that this information was useful in supporting users to understand more about the process.</p>
Completed Practise questions	9,709	32%	<p>Almost a third of visitors completed some practise questions.</p> <p>We can be confident that the articulated 'need' to practise aligns with users' willingness to try online questions as part of their preparation for assessment.</p>
Reviewed Answers:	2,819	9%	<p>We can be very confident that c-App enabled these users to become more familiar with assessment questions, and we can be quite confident that those from this number who did not also access the information on the site are better prepared for their assessment</p>
Engaged with both Information and Practise Parts of Site	9,709	32%	<p>32% of visitors engaged with both information and practise content</p>
Both Used Information and completed practise questions	2,478	8%	<p>We can be very confident that the 8% of people who both engaged with the information on the site, and completed practise questions are more prepared for their assessment as a consequence of their use of c-App.</p>

Reviewing ESA site data

45% of those who came to c-App for support to prepare for ESA assessment identified initially as needing to practise, rather than to find more information. This **validates** the need for support in addition to providing information, and **validates** seAp's ambition to develop digital advocacy-based support tools and the necessary interactive nature of c-App.

Market Penetration Rate

Again, 'Market Penetration Rates' demonstrate the effectiveness of the sites, and provide an insight into how seAp and other advocacy services can begin to use digital tools to maximise reach.

- An estimated 560,000 people registered a claim for ESA over the period from January to August 2016, the period of the site's initial operation, of whom nearly 340,000 have proceeded, or will proceed, to assessment.
- The number of sessions with engagement with some of the site's content is equivalent to 5.2% of the total number of people who have progressed, or will progress, to assessment.
- The number of sessions involving engagement with the essential guide is equivalent to 2.6% of the total number of people who have progressed, or will progress, to assessment over that time. We can be confident this information was useful.
- The number of people completing practise questions is equivalent to 2.9% of the total number of people who have progressed, or will progress, to assessment.
- We can be very confident that, because they reviewed their answers to the questions, up to 0.8% of those registering a claim for ESA over this period are more familiar with the types of questions asked at assessment, and quite confident that they are more prepared for the assessment process over that time.
- We can be very confident that up to 0.7% of those registering for ESA over this period are more prepared for their assessments as a consequence of the use of c-App over that time.

Client Feedback

Because the measurement of success of the sites is based on complex analytics we have not been hampered by the lack of client response to which traditional evaluation methods are subject. Nevertheless, we would now like to offer users the opportunity to feed back on their experience of using the tools and have included a brief survey in the sites.

In the meantime, we have gained useful insights from unsolicited comments received:

"I got help from my advocate to set out the impact of my disease on me, my family and how it affected my quality of life..."

The c-App gave her the opportunity to really think about the impact of her condition on her daily life; something that people who are coping with disability don't necessarily do.

"...It was really upsetting to see what I couldn't do in one long list, but without this I wasn't able to be assessed properly"

That can be a very upsetting experience because, if you're living with an impairment on a day-to-day basis you manage, you downplay the effects, you don't necessarily want to tell people how difficult life is, or you may have adapted yourself to your limitations. This sometimes goes through to the assessment and people don't properly represent the impact of their condition.

“...using c-App meant I could practice the assessment. It gave me confidence to speak up and represent myself properly”

A benefit of a digital tool is that people can use it in the privacy of their own home. They can do it when they're able if they have a fluctuating condition. They are able to think about it when they can and take breaks when they need to. It gives that flexibility.

“c-App has made a massive difference – it's meant I got assessed properly and have the right level of support”

“I burst into tears when I got PIP...the impact of the award is going to be massive and will make a real difference to my life and also my family”

Conclusions

Success of the Project

We can be confident that seAp and its partners have been successful in designing an effective digital product to support people struggling to deal with the introduction of Employment and Support Allowance and Personal Independence Payment.

Key metrics, such as average time on site and users' navigation through c-App give confidence that **c-App is an effective tool in supporting people to digitally prepare for ESA and PIP assessment**. It's clear that further efforts are required to grow the numbers of people engaging with c-App, and if this is executed effectively, we can expect to see significant benefit from c-App in extending the benefit of advice and advocacy services.

In particular:

- We can be confident that about 38,000 users have found the information parts of the site useful.
- We can be clear that nearly 34,000 users have found the opportunity to practise questions useful.
- We can be very confident that 14,000 users are more familiar with the questions they will be asked at assessment, and quite confident that they are better prepared for the assessment.
- We can be very confident that nearly 9,000 users are better prepared for ESA or PIP assessment due to c-App.

Supporters of c-App should be proud of the levels of engagement, use and the effect of the App so far. We can attribute this success to an effective partnership between seAp, Neontribe and their supporters (including the Legal Education Foundation and Comic Relief) and an effective user-led, test-driven process of development.

The central concept of the c-App sites is proven. We can be very confident that seAp's belief that people would value the opportunity to explore, prepare with, and practise the sorts of questions asked in the assessments, and seAp's ambition to develop interactive digital advocacy-based support tools is validated.

Our appreciation of this success is tempered, however, by the size of the challenge that seAp is aiming to address. The 'market' penetration rates for c-App are impressive, but many more people who could benefit from the sites remain to be reached. That will require considerable marketing, partnership and further development. However, the indicators of success to date are more than positive enough to encourage further efforts to grow the use and impact of c-App.

Funders should be confident in supporting further well-designed digital tools to address similar social challenges. The progress made by seAp in creating this tool has been significant and can be held up as a strong example of 'tech for good'.

Lessons from the Process

The process has identified and reiterated a number of issues that are important to effective 'tech for good' development. These are important for those who want to understand the development of c-App, and those who are looking to start their own digital journey.

Strong partnerships are crucial to early development, especially for charities that are new to digital innovation. This isn't just the partnership between charity and development agency, but partnerships with responsive funders willing to support agile development, make introductions to trusted partners, as well as other experts who can support specific elements of digital development.

Really understanding the user is vital to good digital development. In developing 'tech for good', this comes from the deep expertise from the charity and strong user-centred design processes. **This is considered best practice in developing 'tech for good' approaches.**

The **timing of grant funding** is also important – ensuring the partnerships do not break-up at key stages. Comic Relief's funding was well timed to build on the early 'risk' funding from the Legal Education Foundation.

To develop effective 'tech for good', requires a focus on a clear theory of change that indicates how **social value** can be created; a clear focus on **user-led** development to ensure uptake and use; agile **digital development** and an **effective organisation** and partnerships.

Whilst c-App has achieved significant usage, **marketing and growing both awareness and uptake** remain considerable challenges within the sector.

Appendix 1: Tender Document

Contract Opportunity with seAp: Producing Mobile Responsive Design Website to Support Disability Benefit Applicants

Background

seAp is one of the leading advocacy organisations in the UK. We work with vulnerable people living in the South of England, protecting their rights, supporting them to express their wishes, and ensuring that they receive the services that they need.

Many of our clients have been struggling to deal with the introduction of Employment and Support Allowance (to replace Incapacity Benefit) and Personal Independence Payment (to replace Disability Living Allowance). Too many clients are receiving inaccurate decisions, and facing reduced incomes and increased stress as a result. At worst, the impact of negative decisions can be life shattering.

We've responded in part by developing face-to-face advocacy services supporting people going through the assessments for these benefits.

However, we recognise that:

- The current climate of austerity means huge pressure on advice and advocacy services.
- This means that the support services we and others provide will not reach everyone who could benefit from our help before they reach assessments.

Funded by the Legal Education Foundation, we are therefore developing three sets of self-help resources which will cover both benefits:

- A mobile responsive design website.
- Short films.
- Printed resources.

Product Required

seAp now wishes to appoint contractors to develop the proposed mobile responsive design website.

The website must be accessible to all applying for disability related benefits, including people with mental health problems, neurological conditions and learning disabilities.

The main focus of the website will be on walking applicants through the assessment processes by means of a multiple-choice questionnaire.

Applicants will be able to submit their own responses to the questions, generating a predicted score for their forthcoming assessments.

This process will demystify the benefit assessment processes, familiarising applicants with the questions they will be asked, enabling them to prepare their responses, and helping them to identify if the decisions and scores they ultimately receive are accurate.

The website will also provide:

- Links to the printed and video resources.
- Information about local advice and information services.
- Usage data and user feedback to seAp facilitating evaluation and supporting the organisation's campaigning work.

Responsibilities of seAp and Contractor

seAp and its partners will:

- Provide the contractor with all relevant information about the benefit system, assessment processes and scoring systems for ESA and PIP required to develop the website.
- Recruit service users to establish requirements for the site, and test the website itself.
- Facilitate the involvement of users in the testing.

Based on this, the contractor will be required to:

- Develop a mobile responsive design website with the functionality and accessibility described above.
- Work with groups of potential users provided by seAp (including users with mental health problems, neurological conditions and learning disabilities) to:
 - Carry out an initial exploration of the requirements for the site.
 - Test the usability of the website.

Given the client group, an additional easy read version of the website may be required. We welcome the views of potential contractors on this.

Contractor Requirements

- Extensive experience of developing mobile responsive design websites.
- Experienced in developing mobile responsive design websites for people from vulnerable groups.
- Experienced in engaging with vulnerable groups in terms of concept/ requirements and product testing.

The developer will not be expected to have knowledge of the assessment processes for the identified benefits. seAp's partner organisation, HARC, will provide all relevant information about the benefit system and assessment processes that will provide the framework for the interactive element of the website.

Responding to the Brief

seAp invites developers to submit a tender for this work in response to the above requirements.

The tender should include:

- A clear setting out of the developer's understanding of the purpose for which the website will be used.
- A proposal for how the developer proposes to test the concept and website with potential clients, supported by seAp and its partners.
- The developer's understanding of the ways in which the website can facilitate feedback, without compromising usability/ willingness to use.

The tender should:

- Clearly identify staff involved in delivering the brief.
- State the individual relevant experience of each of the staff employed in delivering the brief.
- Set out the time to be taken on the delivery of each element of the brief, by each staff member involved.
- State the daily rate for each of the staff employed in the delivery of the brief.
- Link to examples of work previously undertaken in the field.
- Provide contact details for two referees.

Timescale

seAp intends that the website should be launched and available to service users by the end of March 2015. Tenders should set out a timetable for the delivery of the contract with that in mind.

Cost

Between £16k and £22k inclusive of VAT and expenses, is available for the delivery of this work. Tenders should provide a total cost, including developer's fees, expenses, and VAT if applicable.

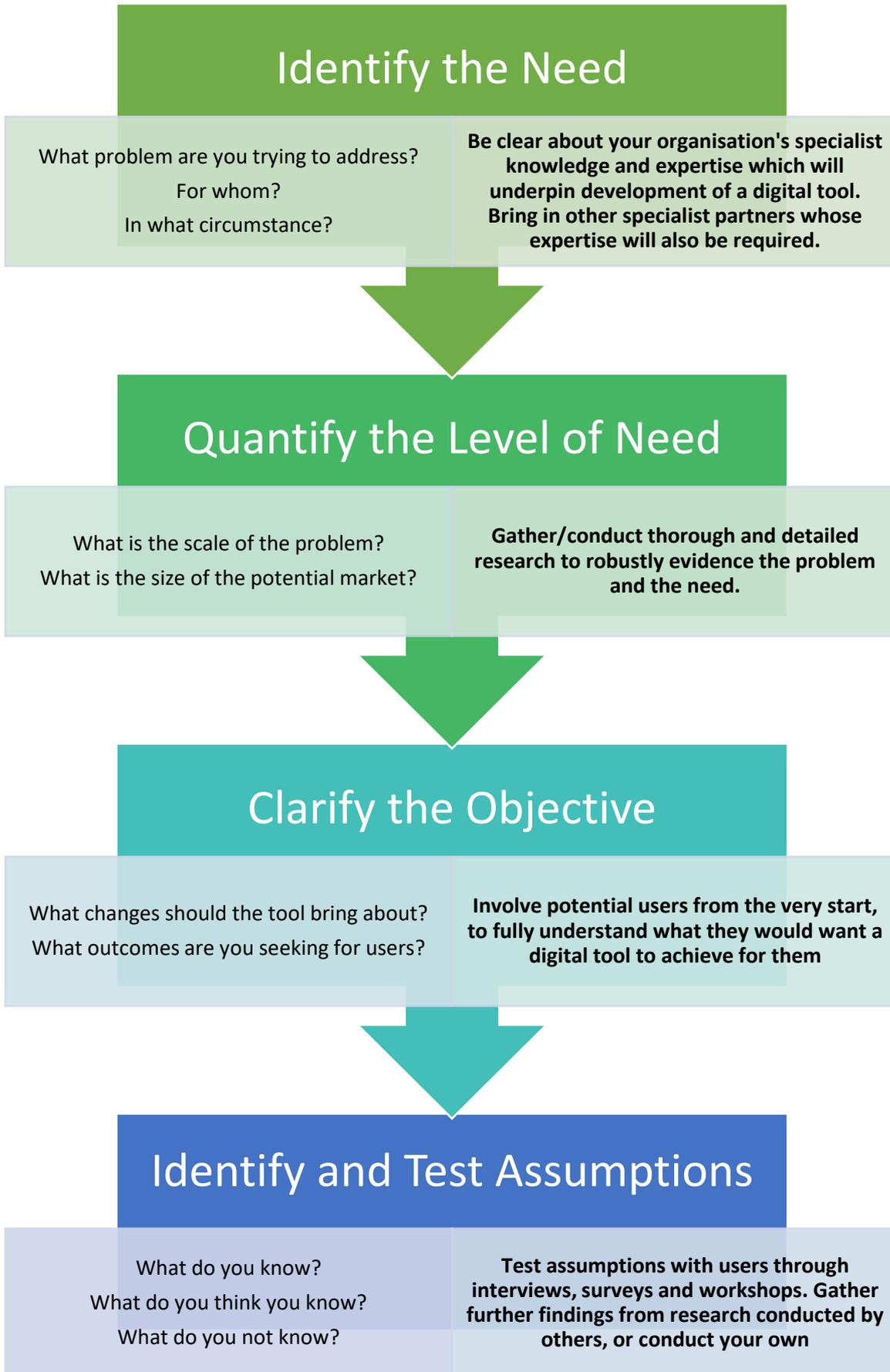
Further Questions.

If you have any further questions about this project, please contact Nick Hopkins, seAp's consultant managing the delivery of the project on 07891 600078, or by email on nick@nhhrconsulting.co.uk

Submission of Responses

Responses from interested parties should be submitted by **12pm** on Friday December 5th 2014 to liz.fenton@seap.org.uk

Appendix 2: Digital Development Flowchart



Clarify Project Direction

How will your proposed activities achieve your intended outcomes?

Are you heading in a clear, logical direction?
Are you clear about how the product will be branded?
Have you considered the analytics you will use to measure and evaluate the success of the tool in terms of reach and impact?

You should comprehensively describe and plan for the social impact of the digital tool. Use available tools such as 'Developing a Theory of Change'

Cost your Project

Have you considered all peripheral costs in addition to product development, e.g. project management, user testing, marketing, evaluation, unforeseens?

Talk to potential product developers to gain a realistic understanding of the true costs and likely timescales of development and ensure that your own project team costs, expenses and resources are included in the budget.

Identify Funders

Does your organisation and your project meet funders' criteria?
Does your project align with the funders' objectives and priorities?

Talk to potential funders in detail about your project, emphasising the evidence of need, potential reach, desired outcomes, impact and costs – Be clear how you would work in partnership to meet the objectives of all stakeholders

Apply for Funding

Do you understand the exact requirements of the application process?
Are you applying to more than one potential funder?

Ensure time and resources are not wasted in applying to inappropriate funders, or in missing any essential details or deadlines. Waiting for the outcome of one application before submitting another may prolong the process considerably. Seek feedback from any unsuccessful bids and learn from this

Develop the Project Brief for Tendering

How prescriptive does the brief for developers need to be?
How flexible can the brief be, to allow developers to bring their own knowledge and creativity into the tool design?

Work with your funder and seek their advice, expertise and useful contacts. Ensure the brief will allow an Agile process of product development, involving end users throughout.

Conduct Tendering Process to Choose Developer

Have you identified a range of potential developers to invite to tender?
Have you followed up on references?
Have you allowed sufficient time for well planned and costed proposals to be developed, and for tenderers' clarification questions to be answered?

Follow a two stage process involving identification of a preferred contractor on their tender response, costs and references, and then a clarification meeting. Ensure the necessary 'chemistry' exists between your organisations

Establish your Team

Do you have the right skills mix in your team?
Are roles and responsibilities clearly defined?

Your organisation, your project manager, the product developer, the funder, external advisers and end users must genuinely work as one team, with a shared purpose and goal. Ensure excellent, open channels of communication throughout the development process. Formal consultation sessions must be supplemented/ complemented by ongoing close contact between the project manager and developer, and where possible, directly between the content provider and the web developer

Key Features

Have you considered the full range of people who might make use of the tool, and explored what their needs might be?

Are you making full use of your organisational knowledge and expertise to think through all the kinds of situations in which users may find themselves?

The product developer will not be an expert in your specialist area of work. You must inject your depth of knowledge into the design at this stage, creating a 'cereal box' model of the site, describing its 'key ingredients' and 'features' in paper format. Create 'personas' (typical clients) to inform the design team's decision making and conversations

Paper Prototyping

Do you and your end users fully understand and agree with the 'cereal box' model?

Are you easily able to find your way around the structure of the proposed tool and its features?

The project team and end users need time to look carefully at the paper prototype and feed back, allowing any necessary additions, subtractions and re-organisation to be made before the developer commences any coding work

Prepare and Finalise Tool Content

Has all the correct, most up-to-date information been included by the content provider and checked by your organisation's experts and external advisers?

Is the information written and presented in an accessible format for end users?

Are alternative formats required to account for the needs of a range of different users?

This is the stage where your specialist knowledge and insight, and your understanding of your clients and their needs, gets fully built into the tool. Ensure all content is not only technically correct but has been proof read several times by different people to weed out any grammar, spelling errors etc. The product developer will then be ready to build an 'Alpha' testable digital prototype

Test the Beta Digital Prototype

Are you involving people who already have non-digital experience of the processes being addressed by the tool?

Are you involving people who have no experience of the processes to date, but who are potential users?

Are you involving people who are nervous about using IT as well as people who are fully familiar with digital platforms?

For ease of testing, it is essential that the developer makes an easy to check paper version of the logic that underpins the tool available to you. Try focusing on observing the way that users navigate around and use the tool, and record their comments about its usability and the extent to which it might meet their needs - rather than seeking to help them to navigate the tool, or peppering them with questions. Ensure all feedback is recorded on the usability of the prototype and the design, format, content and language used in the tool

Review of Beta Testing Stage

Will implementation of refinements required or suggested by those involved in testing be sufficient to launch a Beta version for market testing?
Is further development and more testing needed?

Ensure that development does not get side-tracked by the views of testers which might be unhelpfully atypical. Do not develop and launch a Beta version until you are satisfied that the tool content and functionality is ready to be shared with a much wider (and critical) audience. Conduct further rounds of usability testing with clients if necessary

Launch Public Beta Version

Are partners and stakeholders trying out the tool clear about its purpose?
Do they understand the objectives of the Beta testing and how to feed back usefully with their comments and reaction?
Is the test market large / wide enough to get properly representative feedback?

Engage the support of as many trusted partners as you can, who will share the tool with their clients and partners and act as your critical friends, giving honest feedback on the design, accessibility, functionality and usability of the tool. It is important to consider marketing and client acceptance issues throughout the life of the project

Review of Beta Testing Stage

Have you responded to trends and themes in feedback received when refining the product?
Are you using analytics to evaluate how well you are reaching users and how effectively the digital tool is helping achieve positive outcomes for users?

Take careful note of all feedback received, but as in Alpha testing, be careful not to over-react to individual comments or criticisms which may not be typical. Common concerns and improvement suggestions received from across the market test should definitely be addressed. Undertake a rigorous evaluation and learn as much as you can from the product analytics. This stage provides one more chance to refine the tool before official launch and roll out

Official Launch

Are you clear about your marketing strategy and do you have all the necessary marketing materials and resources in place?
Are you making full use of what you have learnt from Beta testing feedback, product analytics and evaluation to promote the tool and its impact?

Marketing cannot be an afterthought and the investment of substantial effort in marketing is essential if products are not to sit unused. Send out clear, simple messages to the wider audience whose interest you wish to generate. You may wish to consider hosting an actual launch event or prefer a 'virtual' launch approach. Make the most of your Beta test evaluation to highlight evidence of need and impact. Keep working with your funders, developer and other trusted partners to achieve the deepest possible market penetration