



**acas** working  
for everyone

methods 



# Introduction and approach

## Organisational context

Pressing need to provide greater digital self-service in Individual Dispute Resolution services.

Want to identify system improvements to make the customer experience better. This will:

- Reduce the amount of staff time taken on dealing with procedural errors
- Reduce the amount of staff time taken on explaining the conciliation process and the specific role of the Acas conciliator
- Provide a platform for being able to handle increasing volumes of work
- Provide a consistent experience for our customers

Notifying Acas is a legal requirement for anyone intending to make a claim to an employment tribunal, and c. 20% of claims are inappropriate due to incomplete / inaccurate information, or because they're too early or late.

Customers need to be able to understand the notification process and conciliation service, know if it is suitable for them, understand what their options are and be able to submit a notification easily and accurately.



## Vision and scope

Vision: *“For all claimants to be able to successfully notify first time by providing the right information at the right time, and for users of the notifications service to have a clear understanding of the conciliation process and well-informed expectations of the Acas role”*

### Aims:

- To significantly reduce (if not eliminate) the number of inappropriate notifications
- Give users a better understanding of the Conciliation service and the role of Conciliators

Focus on the point from when the user arrives at the notification form up to when the notification is validated or the Early Conciliation Support Officer issues an Early Conciliation Certificate.

Complementary to the work on the Acas website. We will lead on references or links to the notification form, the Conciliation service or the role of the Conciliator.

### Out of scope:

- Approach to explaining the Notification process and the role of the Conciliator on the Acas Helpline, or by Support Officers or Conciliators
- However, we will meet with relevant groups of operational managers during Alpha to encourage them to learn the lessons from our project.



## Discovery phase



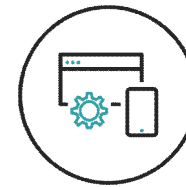
Discovery is an information-gathering phase designed to dig deep into the details of what is important to the user.



Ongoing user research at the heart of the agile process, ensuring we build user focused services.  
We use this to understand who our users are, their needs and how we're meeting them.



We develop initial service design through collaborative workshops, and build prototypes to visualise these.



We assess the technology landscape to determine how we might build a technical solution given the constraints of Acas's legacy systems.



We make recommendations about the people we will need on the team in the Alpha phase.

The Discovery phase is followed by the Alpha phase.



## Agile ceremonies

We are running this project using agile techniques and via a number of 'ceremonies'.



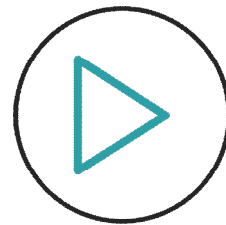
### **Sprint planning:**

Plan the work for each sprint – or two-week period of work.



### **Daily stand-ups:**

Team members outline what I did yesterday; what I will do today; blockers



### **Show-and-tells:**

Play back our achievements from each sprint. Short video summarising sprint progress for those who can't attend show-and-tell.



### **Retrospectives:**

Team event to discuss continuous improvement of how the team works together.



### **Final discovery playback**

outlining findings and recommendations.



**Our users**

## User research overview

We have gathered feedback from a total of 20 users - all with EC experience.

We talked to 8 members of staff from Acas

We had access to user testing videos from around 8 sessions.

Mix of gender / experience / stage they've got to in EC process and represented or unrepresented users.

### User research techniques:

One to one interviews

Phone interviews

Listening to Helpline, ECSO and Conciliator calls

Accessing existing user research done by Acas





## Main user research questions

Some of the main questions we have asked in our user research are as follows:

- What are users' motivations to make a notification?
- Do users understand Acas's role within EC process?
- Do users want/need to know what the entire process looks like?
- What do users expect from Acas services?
- Do users know what a representative (in the form) is?
- Do users know when and why to contact Acas?

## User research techniques:

One to one interviews

Phone interviews

Listening to Helpline, ECSO and Conciliator calls

Accessing existing user research done by Acas



## Themes from user research

### Knowing and understanding what Acas is

*"If you would ask me now, 'what did ACAS do for you', and I would say 'nothing' cause I still haven't got my job back" Male, unrepresented*

*"I understood what ACAS stood for and what it was there to do, arbitrate, conciliate, and sort of becoming a third party sounding board, but never having actually dealt with them, I wasn't aware that they were sort of doing things behind the scenes and don't involve the person" Male, represented*

### User needs

- Users need to know who Acas is and what to expect from them
- Users need to know what Acas can do for them
- Users need to know what EC is



## Themes from user research

### Understanding the different roles within the process and having the right information at the right time

*"S: Would you use a representative if you were to go through the process again?"*

*"No I don't think so cause ACAS are there to give that support, and the way I envision it, and correct me if I'm wrong, but I don't feel that you should need to have a representative cause that is what ACAS is there do to, to represent you, is that right?" Male, unrepresented*

*"If ACAS isn't talking to me about what they are doing, if they only talk to the company and my solicitor, then it is not fair is it. Because I put her (solicitor) name down, they don't even deal with me. She is obviously representing me, but I don't know what ACAS is doing" Male, represented*

### User needs

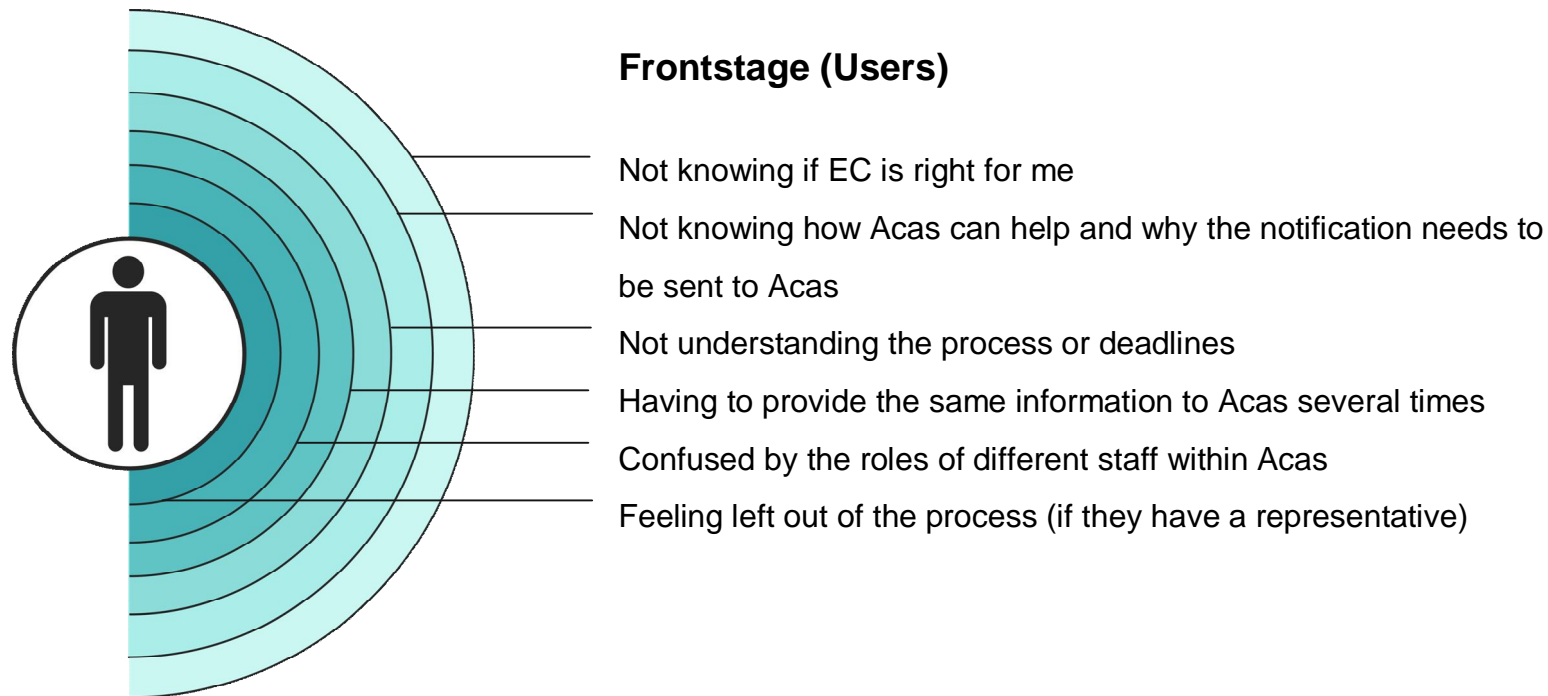
- Users need to know the role of ECSOs and conciliators
- Users need to know that Acas is not there to take sides
- Users need to know what it means to have a representative and which role they have
- Users need to know their own role (as claimants)
- Users need to know if they are presenting at the right time with the right information



**Pain points  
and  
opportunities**

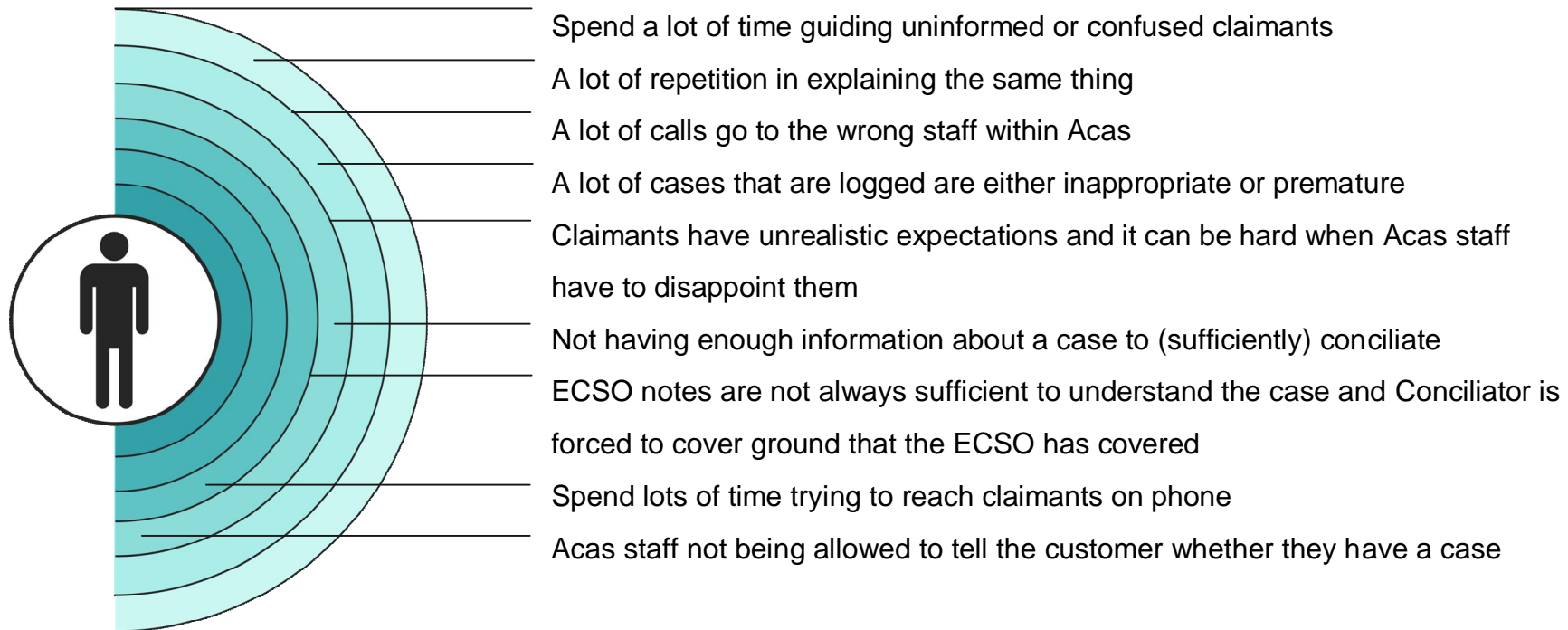
## Identified pain points

Our service design workshops, user research and technical discovery have identified a number of 'pain points' with the current EC notification process:



## Identified pain points

### Backstage (Acas staff)



# Recommendations

**Progress to Alpha to test the priority opportunity areas around:**



**Advice  
to users**



**The form**



**Communication  
with users**

**Key questions in these areas are highlighted in the earlier 'Pain points and opportunities' section.**

Develop simple prototypes to test hypotheses around answers to key questions in these areas. We have designed some early prototypes as part of the Discovery.

Define a technology roadmap that enables us to integrate with the technology decisions that are made by the wider Acas technical strategy team.

Use Alpha to prove what (if any) integrations are possible with the legacy technology and to define a model of integration that will allow a Beta to be built.





Continue to follow GDS service design principles with a view to passing the GDS Alpha Service Assessment at the end of this phase of work.

Form a multi-disciplinary agile team to work on the Alpha, starting on **8 January 2018**, for a **10-week Alpha project** (5x2-week sprints).

### Benefits of moving to Alpha

- Gain an understanding of how to address some of the key user pain points that have been identified in our Discovery user research
- Further user testing insight and opportunities to share our learnings
- Continue our work to align with the wider technology strategy work taking place within Acas, and identify the right technical approach for Beta

