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INTERACTION - PRODUCT - GRAPHIC DESIGN

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE DIGITAL AND TECHNOLOGY
CASE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE CASE STUDY

Ministry of Justice case study
Saving time and money with a user-centred workflow

Overview

In order to allocate new Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) cases to caseworkers for processing, team leaders at the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) use 'SIRIUS'- a case management system.

Over the course of a day, a team leader assigns batches of cases over to each caseworker, who has a target number to hit each day. Complex cases could be blocked or time-consuming but simple cases are quick to process and when the caseworker runs out of tasks they must ask their team leader for more.

Understanding the problem spaces

This allocation process had a growing list of problem statements:

Time-consuming for team leaders to attend to frequent requests from case workers.
Frustrating for caseworkers to depend on a caseworker being available to allocate them work.
Impractical due to the escalating need for flexible shift patterns.
Large batches of cases being assigned as a work-around, led to case workers cherry-picking.

Business requirements

The task from a business point of view was to design and develop a more efficient workflow, that would:

Simplify the data journey of allocation.
Expose progress data and prevent cherry-picking.
Save time for team leaders leaving them free to concentrate on other tasks.
Improve productivity, autonomy and morale for caseworkers.
Save the business time and money.

Personas

User persona: Alex

Alex is a team leader using the SIRIUS case management system at the OPG.

"I am always at work at 7.30am so I can finish in time to make the school run. Allocating cases is time-consuming as I have to put each one through a workflow of: central pot > unit pot > team managers in units > case workers. I will assign batches of cases to my team to save time and also leave them with an appropriate amount of cases to work through later on, so they can hit their daily targets.

It is still time consuming to allocate work out on-demand, due to how the system is set up. There is so much other work I would like to be getting on with and as I leave early I worry about my team getting stuck with nothing left to do if they get through more cases than estimated.
I can't see my team progress without running a pivot table outside of the system, it would be good if I could have everything in one place.

There can be bad practices in place due to assigning large batches out. People will naturally cherry-pick cases from their batch that look less complex to progress to 'perfect' so that they can work more cases and hit or exceed their targets. This can build a backlog of difficult cases left towards the end of the day, which is obviously a problem in terms of the distribution of work and comparing productivity data and also in terms of ensuring oldest ones are worked first"

User persona: Mags

Mags is a caseworker using the SIRIUS case management system at the OPG.

"I usually get to the office at around 9.30-10.00am, I am not a morning person! I like to have a lot of cases in a batch to work through and I get into a flow state. My team leader leaves a lot earlier than I do and I don't want to be left with nothing to do as I like to get my numbers up as much as possible.
I tend to quickly scan each one first to get an idea of it then go back in and work each one, I like to get the simple ones out of the way first"

User persona: Andie

Andie is a caseworker using the SIRIUS case management system at the OPG.

"I like to get in around 8.30, I have a long commute each way. I work in a linear way and start with the oldest case first and progress this as far as I can before opening the next case. It bothers me that people cherry-pick easy cases, it is unfair. I don't like having to go asking for work, it is sort of demoralising. It is difficult to say how many more you will need near the end of the day as each case is different."

Technical and design considerations

Legacy software!

For SIRIUS as a whole platform the roadmap is that all areas are required to undergo a phased update to use a Government Design System compliant interface.

The SIRIUS platform has case management areas at various stages of user experince and user interface improvement. The area handling LPA management is using the oldest possible legacy front end.

From a user-centred design point of view the current SIRIUS user interface:

Has usability issues.

Has accessibility issues

Has information-architecture and user journey issues.

Has technical debt blocked by data model and logic issues.

From the product side the judgement was that conducting any further user research prior to a first design iteration at this point would not give a great deal of return on effort. It put it more simply:

"I don't think they will know what they want until they see something new or what is possible".

Users had become very accustomed to the legacy system and the 'work-arounds' used to deal with it's challenges and often as a designer you have to accept that in a situation of familiarity, it can be difficult to visualise anything different.
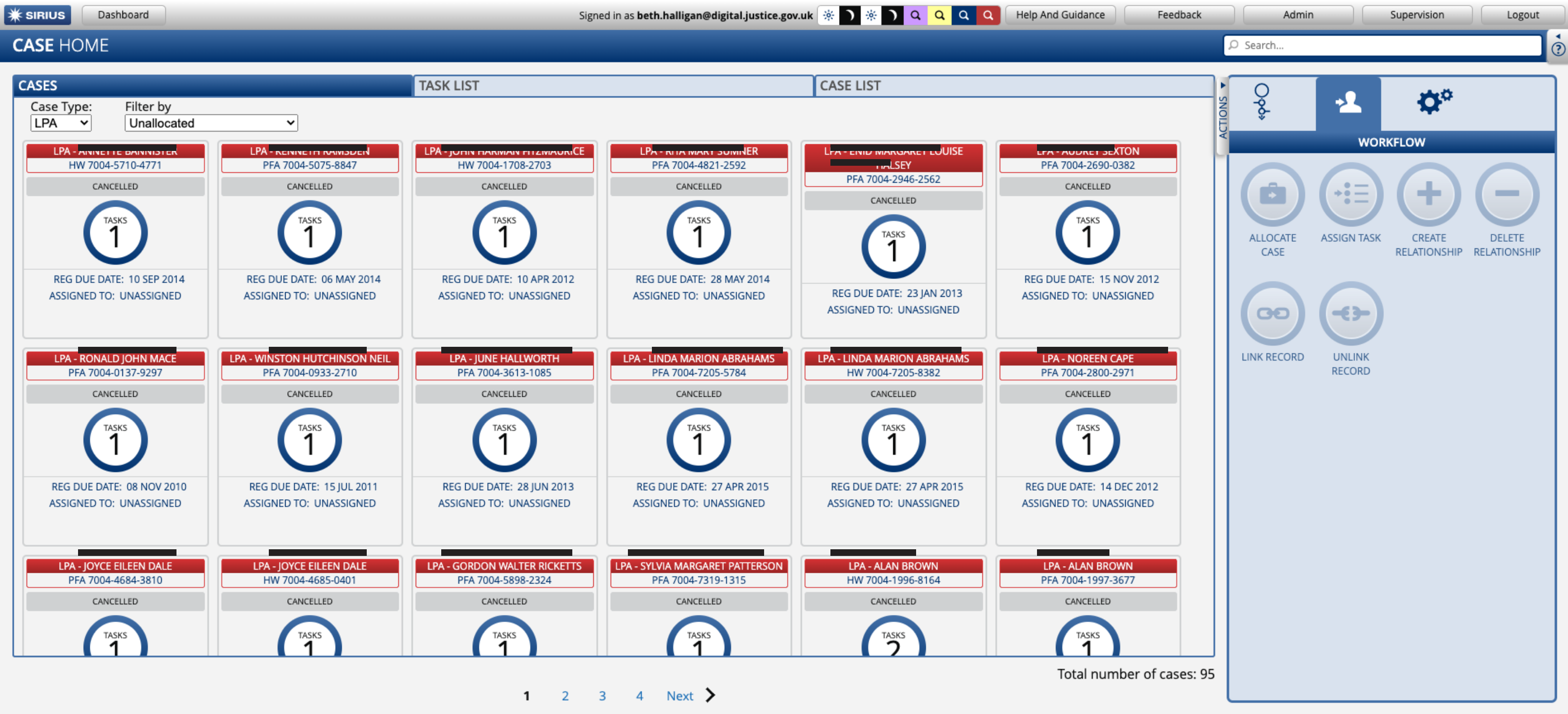
Solving the problems

Caseworker dashboard

For the caseworker, I began to design an interface specific to caseworker workflow. The key improvement being they could request new cases to work on via the system and have it automatically allocate them the oldest cases in the backlog, without the need to approach a team leader to carry out this task.

Solving the problems

Caseworker dashboard (continued)

The system also administrates their work-in-progress level to keep it stable. Two tasks can be requested at a time but they must be opened and worked on before the next two can be requested.

This is to address a request from the operations team to try and establish a better culture of practice among some caseworkers who would build up a large 'batch' of new cases to work through in an uninterrupted way. Although this 'getting in the flow' manner of working is preferred by some it had its caveats from an operations perspective.

Solving the problems

Caseworker dashboard (continued)

In thier 'Tasks' tab, the caseworker can see the data on all open tasks related to processing the applications and in 'All cases' they can see all the cases in their ownership.

OPG Sirius LPA

Supervision   LPA   Admin   Log out

New dashboard   Legacy dashboard   Unallocated cases pot   Search by Order Number, SIRIUS ID or Name

Your cases

Request next cases

Pending cases   **Tasks**   All cases

Showing **1** to **10** of **36** cases   ‹ Previous   1   2   3   4   Next ›

Donor	Case	LPA type	Open tasks per case	Case status
Christopher Allinson	9136-6879-3518	HW	(1) task	IMPERFECT
Shanice Kingsley	9236-4323-7104	PFA	(3) tasks	PENDING
Hui Yin Chen	9236-4327-1002	PFA	(1) task	PENDING
	9236-4327-1003	HW	---	PERFECT
Mohammed Abdul	9136-6879-3518	HW	(1) task	PENDING
	9136-6879-3519	PFA	Not worked	PENDING
Alanah Thwaite	9732-1082-2597	PFA	(1) task	IMPERFECT
Ricardo Allegra	9136-1479-3508	HW	(1) task	PENDING
	9136-6879-3519	PFA	(1) task	PENDING

OPG Sirius LPA

Supervision   LPA   Admin   Log out

New dashboard   Legacy dashboard   Unallocated cases pot   Search by Order Number, SIRIUS ID or Name

Your cases

Request next cases

Pending cases   Tasks   **All cases**

Showing **1** to **10** of **585** cases   ‹ Previous   1   2   3   4   5   6   Next ›

Donor	Case	LPA type	Received	Case status
Briony Spence	9136-6879-3518	HW	01 Feb 2021	PENDING
Maureen Huxley	9236-4323-7104	PFA	03 Feb 2021	PENDING
Ainsley McHale	9236-4327-1002	PFA	09 Feb 2021	CANCELLED
Andrew Burrows	9136-6879-3518	HW	01 Feb 2021	PERFECT
Celia McDermott	9236-4323-7104	PFA	03 Feb 2021	REJECTED
Bindhu Shah	9236-4327-1002	PFA	09 Feb 2021	WIDTHDRAWN
Paula Hendrick	9136-6879-3518	HW	01 Feb 2021	REVOKED
Daniella Fiorelli	9236-4323-7104	PFA	03 Feb 2021	IMPERFECT
Brian Kadinsky	9236-4327-1002	PFA	09 Feb 2021	INVALID

Solving the problems

Team leader dashboard

For the team leader I designed a dashboard with an overview of their team's progress and a component to slice that data in different ways, with the aim of reducing the reliance on using pivot tables in spreadsheets.

≤ **OPG** Sirius LPA   **Supervision LPA Admin** | Phillipa Louise Hambleton **Logout**

New dashboard   Legacy dashboard   Unallocated cases pot | Search by Case number, SIRIUS ID or Name |

Team 2   Change view | Team 2 ⬍ |

Team 2	**Show caseworker data for**	Cassie Abedayo **25**	George Hale **15**	Tremaine Forbes **10**	Nick Sharma **00**
128 Worked cases		Anish Badwan **23**	Vanessa McAndrew **14**	Jade Turner **09**	
Today: 21 Feb 2021	New cases worked today ⬍	William Allesandro **18**	Artem Blenkov **13**	Alan Cadogan **00**	

| Hide filters |

Filter the list

Selected filters
No filters selected

⌄ Allocation
☐ Cassie Abedayo
☐ William Allesandro
☐ Anish Badwan
☐ Anrtem Blenkov

⌄ Status
☐ Pending
☐ Worked, pending

Showing **1** to **10** of **128** cases   ⟨ Previous   **1** 2 3 4 5 6   Next ⟩

Donor	Case	LPA type	Received	Allocation	Status
Mohammed Abdul	9136-6876-2310	HW	03 Feb 2021	**George Hale**	WORKED, PENDING
	9136-6879-3519	PFA	03 Feb 2021	**George Hale**	WORKED, PENDING
Maureen Huxley	9236-4328-3658	PFA	03 Feb 2021	**William Allesandro**	WORKED, PENDING
Ainsley McHale	9236-4321-2956	PFA	03 Feb 2021	**Anish Badwan**	PENDING
Charlotte Schimkov	9236-4328-3658	PFA	04 Feb 2021	**Cassie Adebayo**	WORKED, PENDING
Gary Woodville	9236-4321-2956	PFA	06 Feb 2021	**Alan Cadogan**	PENDING

Solving the problems

Team leader dashboard (continued)

It also allows team leaders to view a breakdown of any team members current workload and reassign or return their cases in progress, if a caseworker is finishing their shift or has to leave unexpectedly.

Gathering feedback

Lots of opinions...which is great!

I was receiving and processing feedback from a variety of sources:
- End users via user research sessions.
- Product team/ user researchers via regular three amigos and informal slack messaging and video calls.
- Delivery team via ceremonies.
- Sirius operations team via regular video calls.
- Stakeholders and end-users at regular Power of Attorney show & tell meetings where I would be required to demo the latest iteration of the prototype, and highlight changes and improvements since the last iteration.

As often views and requirements from different sources were in conflict I had to operate to produce solutions in a challenging environment, however this was something I found an interesting and valuable experience

User needs vs user desires (example1)

Setting the limit on how many cases a caseworker request at once.

Case workers wanted control of how many cases they could request from the automated system at once. They indicated they would like to pull either 2, 5 or 10 at a time.

The reason for this was liking to 'get in the flow' of working cases in an uninterrupted way, rather than a request-work-request cycle.

Business and operations wanted to limit the number to a maximum of 2 at a time. They said the need to pull more was based on the previous reliance on a team leaders availability and also enabled bad practices and made it difficult to monitor progress.

The business were confident that the new automated system required a change in culture that once trialled would eradicate the desire in user to pull large batches of cases.

So it was pitched that this was a user desire rather than a user need.

User needs vs user desires (example 2)

Frequent referrals in research sessions to the phrase 'TRUE PENDING'

Before a case is allocated it is tagged with a status of 'pending'. Case workers use an informal term verbally- 'true pending' to describe a case that has been allocated to them that they have opened but cannot progress to any other available status.

Business and operations did not want to add this new status This subject was mentioned as an issue by users frequently in research, as the inability to make something they had worked on distinct from something they hadn't was a bad reflection on their productivity- "it can make you look like you have done less work".

So it was pitched that this was a user need and we have introduced a new status 'worked pending' to cover this grey area.

User testing and iterations

Research was carried out with team leaders and caseworkers via
video call using Figma prototypes and Miro to document feedback.
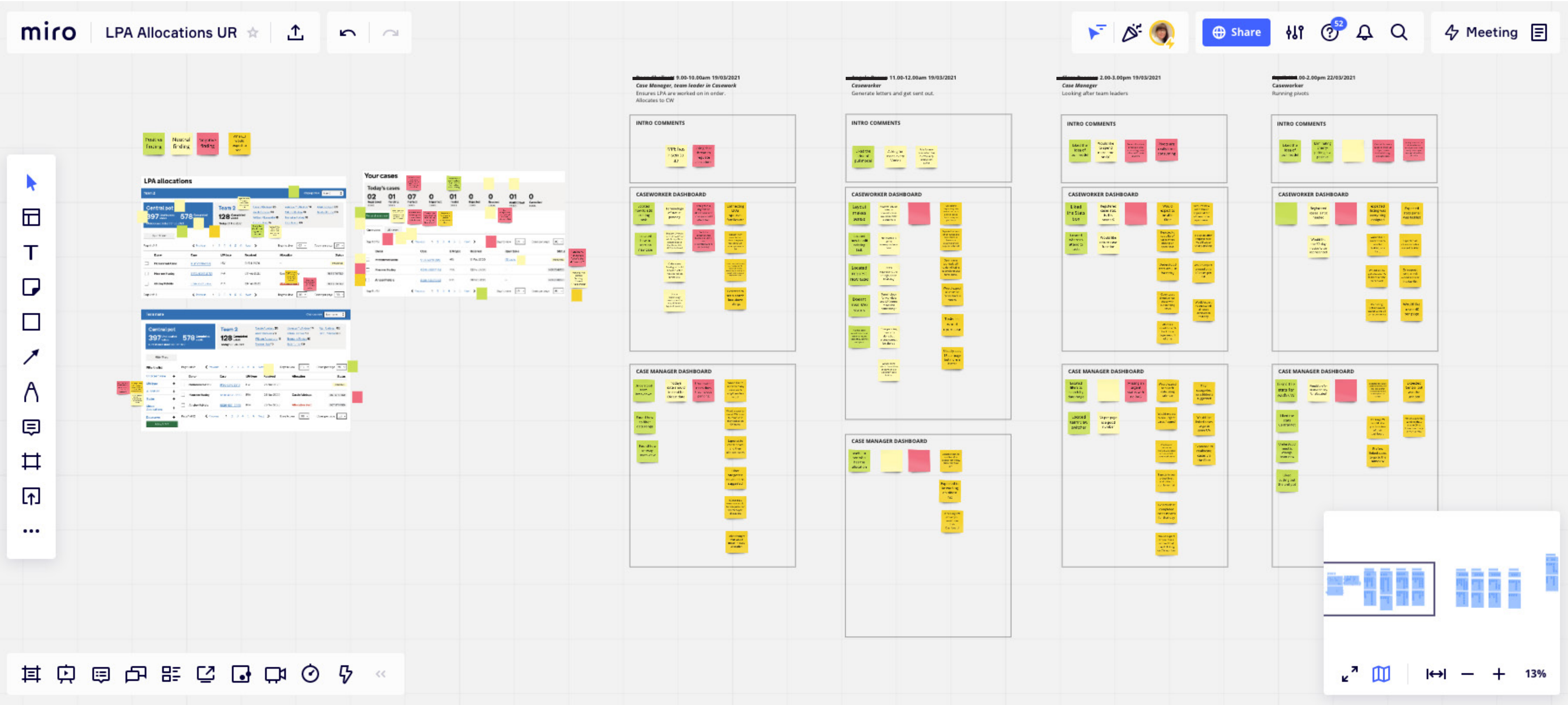
User testing and iterations

**For the caseworker dashboard
we carried out**

3

rounds of user research...

↓

...and moved through

9

rapid design iterations

**For the team leader dashboard
we carried out**

3

rounds of user research...

↓

...and moved through

7

rapid design iterations

Data on time and money saved

Time to deliver and beta test!

As a delivery team, at this point it was felt that we were able begin a production standard code build, to roll out with a beta working test team to use over 2 weeks and feed back on.

The feedback received from the beta group was overwhelmingly positive and it was pretty amazing to see the initial impact this was having. At the end of the 2 weeks we spoke to the BETA users again and got got feedback such as:

"I can't begin to imagine how much time and money this is going to save us"

"When can everyone have this?!"

And my favourite:
"One of the best systems you have ever put in place!"

The data speaks...

After roll-out to the rest of the teams there was no need to try and imagine the savings any more, it was possible to begin to collect data on the time and money savings of the new system:

"For across both sites is 3.61 staff (23.49/6.5) which saves a cost of £75,000. (based on 1690 hours in a year, which is 32 hours a week multiplied by 52 weeks)."

The savings measured in staff does not mean job losses, it equates to time that team leaders can use in better ways.

Success is blogged

Aside from the great feedback, another reason I have chosen this project as a case study was that it made the MOJ Intranet Blog.

Additionally it is a piece of functionality that is transferable to other areas of work-flow in OPG which can in turn unlock more value.

As an interaction designer, it is amazing to see the positive and measurable effect this project has had for SIRIUS operations, team leaders and case workers, the business and stakeholders.