Made Tech
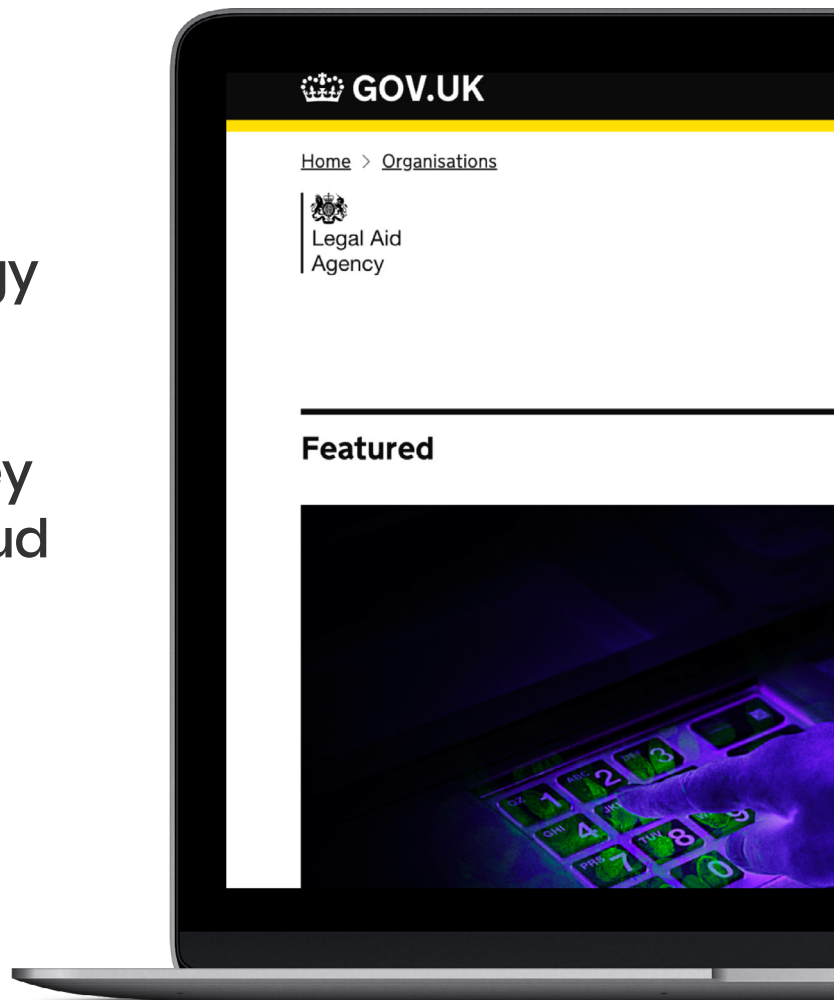
Technology Capability Building at Ministry of Justice

We increased technology capabilities at the Legal Aid Agency within the Ministry of Justice as they moved to the public cloud

Introduction

When the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) was planning to migrate its systems to the public cloud, it also wanted to modernise legacy applications and upskill teams so they could do this. They wanted to introduce modern software development practices, as well as new tools and programming languages.

To help them, we interviewed staff and observed working practices before mapping capabilities in a skills matrix for every team member. Then we defined new technology standards with LAA staff, restructured delivery teams and provided hands-on coaching over six months.

We have trained 40 LAA team members in modern technology capabilities and ways of working. These include agile practices and a range of new languages, tools and processes, which have transformed how the agency delivers digital services.

> "The Made Tech folk have had a real impact on the culture and capability of our team."
>
> **Luke Crosby, Head of LAA Digital**

Migrating to the public cloud

The Legal Aid Agency (LAA) is an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and is one of 33 agencies and public bodies that the Ministry of Justice works with. It provides legal aid and advice for civil and criminal cases in England and Wales.

In 2018, the LAA was planning to migrate its systems to the public cloud. As this took place, it wanted to modernise legacy applications and hand over responsibility for some cloud-based applications to a team that had previously been tasked with maintenance.

Many members of this team had limited experience of modern development practices including continuous integration, continuous deployment, devops and test driven development. To maintain and improve the systems when moving to the cloud, the team would need to become well versed in these techniques.
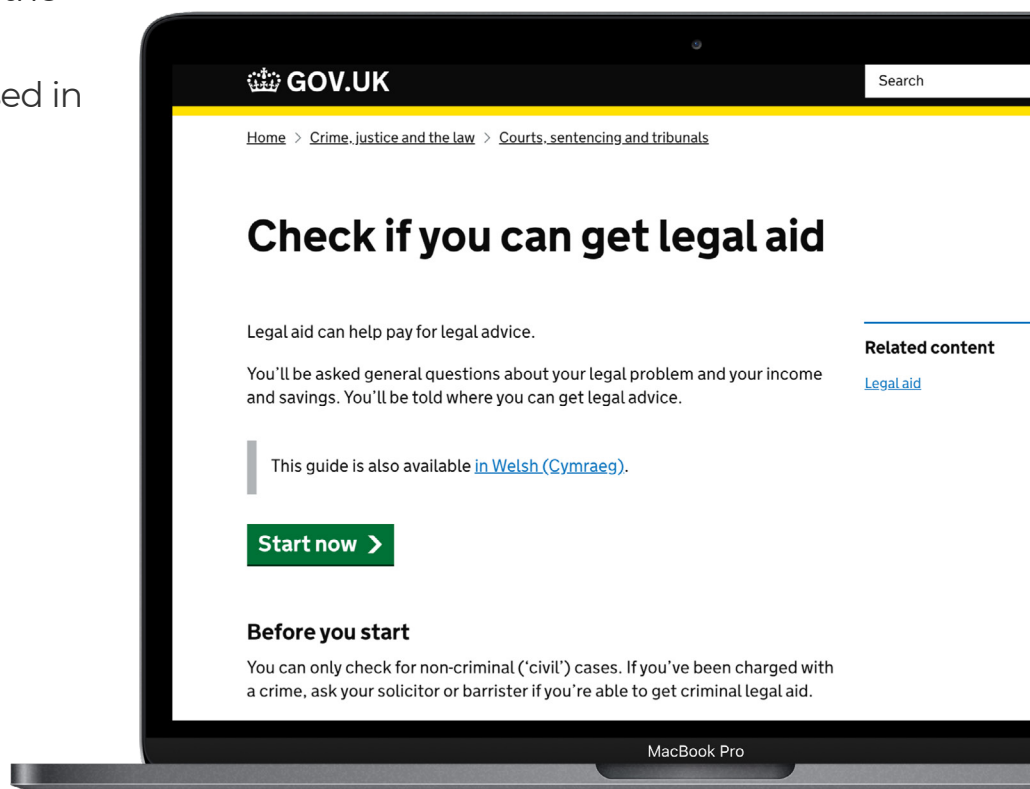
The need for cloud and development coaching

The LAA wanted us to embed our engineers in the LAA development team and coach them in modern development practices. The team had previously been responsible for maintaining large Oracle databases, old Java applications and some more modern Python and Ruby applications.

They required day-to-day support and coaching in tools and practices including git and GitHub, test driven development, continuous integration and deployment, devops and more.

In particular, they wanted to improve codebases so they were easier to maintain, manage and change. They also wanted to be able to use modern version control systems and continuous deployment pipelines, so services could be iterated quickly and safely. Finally, they wanted to introduce and maintain robust automated test suites for new and existing codebases, so they could make changes and be confident they wouldn't break anything.
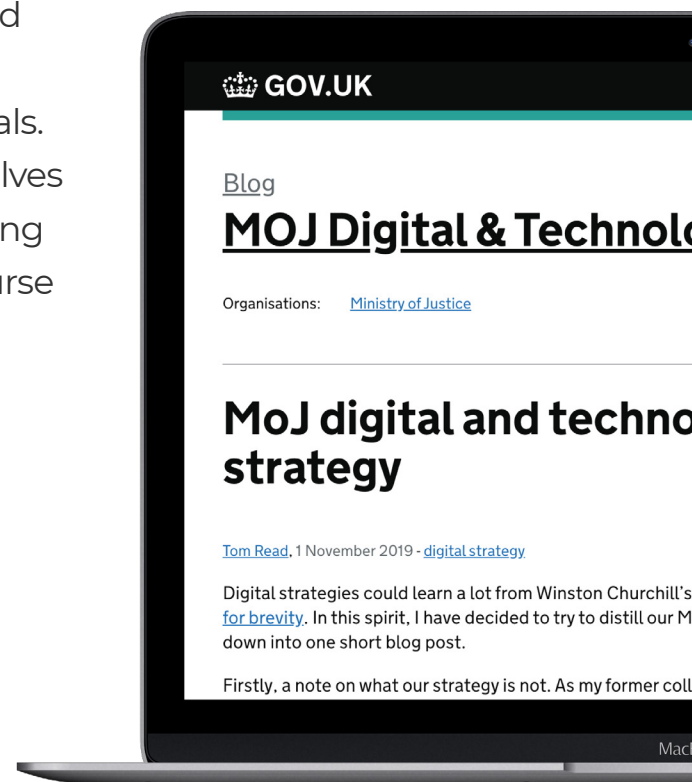
"We're saving tens of millions of pounds moving things out of retirement infrastructure and turning off things we don't need. We're also modernising our cloud infrastructure and building new things with longevity and ease of maintenance in mind from day one."

Steve Marshall, Head of Hosting for Ministry of Justice

Our approach to building technology capabilities

We knew that the MoJ Digital and Technology leadership wanted to introduce Ruby, Python and Amazon AWS, as well as cloud architecture and automation techniques. We also knew that the LAA teams had little experience of working with the public cloud.

Therefore we began the upskilling process by doing a full assessment of existing capabilities. This involved a small Made Tech team going onsite at the LAA to interview staff and observe working practices. During this time, we mapped capabilities and skills throughout the team, producing a skills matrix for every individual team member.

From here, we defined a new set of technology standards with LAA developers. We also helped restructure delivery teams so every individual was in a single team with valuable delivery goals. The Made Tech team then distributed themselves across these newly formed LAA teams, providing hands-on coaching and direction over the course of six months.

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Blog

MOJ Digital & Technolo

Organisations: Ministry of Justice

MoJ digital and techno strategy

Tom Read, 1 November 2019 - digital strategy

Digital strategies could learn a lot from Winston Churchill's for brevity. In this spirit, I have decided to try to distill our M down into one short blog post.

Firstly, a note on what our strategy is not. As my former coll

Tools, techniques and processes introduced

- **Ruby, Python, GitHub** and **AWS**

- **Pair programming, code reviews, showcases** and **retrospectives**

- **Continuous Integration** / **Continuous Delivery**

- **Test-Driven Development**

- **High speed iteration** and **fast product delivery**

"We want to build a deeply skilled digital and technology team and will achieve this by establishing strong digital professions based on the Government Digital Service (GDS) Digital, Data and Technology capability framework."

Tom Read, Chief Digital and Information Officer for Ministry of Justice

The results – modern software development capabilities

To date, we have trained 40 LAA team members in modern technology capabilities and ways of working. These include agile practices and a range of new languages, tools and processes, which have transformed how the agency delivers digital services.

Over six months, we embedded new languages and tools such as Ruby, Python, GitHub and Amazon AWS. The team is familiar with continuous integration / continuous delivery (CI/CD) and test-driven development, and has benefitted from the introduction of pair programming, code reviews, showcases and retrospectives.

Now, they are able to iterate at speed and deliver products quickly.

About Made Tech

Made Tech are public sector technology delivery experts. We provide Digital, Data and Technology services across the UK market.

We help public sector leaders to modernise legacy applications and working practices, accelerate digital service delivery, drive smarter decisions with data and enable improved technology skills within teams.

If you'd like to find out more, you may want to read about some related projects:

→ **Delivering GovWifi for the Government Digital Service (GDS)**

→ **Rapid digital service delivery at the Ministry of Justice**

→ **Building an API platform for Hackney Council**

→ **Check out what we do at madetech.com**

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