# HMRC RAPIDLY DEVELOPS DIGITAL SERVICE TO SUPPORT EMPLOYERS

When COVID-19 strained businesses across the country, Capgemini worked with HMRC to develop and deliver a solution to enable employers to apply for government funding for employees placed on furlough

## Supporting UK employees on furlough

The COVID-19 pandemic has had widespread impact across the world. As the crisis ramped up, the potential health and financial risks faced by UK workers rapidly increased, with the possibility of large-scale job loss across the country. Preventing this required fast and effective action to provide employers with the tools needed to support their employees through a furlough scheme rather than making them redundant. As a result, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) was launched to enable the rapid payment of grants to employers.

The potential positive impact this scheme could have as well as the consequences of failure were immense, and due to UK Government restrictions announced on 20th March 2020, the solution required an extremely accelerated timeline. With an existing partnership in place, HMRC worked with Capgemini to create a viable, digital solution with demanding technical requirements.

## A new service built in just four weeks

This type of digital service normally requires up to a year to produce but in these circumstances needed to be delivered within four weeks. The requirements and architecture were rapidly iterated over three days and a target date was set for a private beta within two weeks.

**Client:** HMRC

**Region:** UK

**Sector:** Public Sector

**Client Challenges:**

As the COVID-19 pandemic began to take its toll on the lives of UK citizens and the economy, the Chancellor of the Exchequer asked Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC) to rapidly implement a solution to enable employers across the country to furlough rather than release employees

**Solution:**

Working with HMRC and a small number of its IT partners, Capgemini rapidly delivered a digital service to support the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), completing a process that would typically require up to a year within a month

**Benefits:**

By 13th December 2020, the CJRS had:

- Supported over 1.2 million employers and 9.9 million jobs
- Paid over £46.4 billion worth of claims
- Processed over 4.5 million claims by employers

The solution would deploy a new digital service based on a microservice architecture onto HMRC's digital platform, hosted in the cloud. The system would collect information from employers and pass this into a risk and compliance process to ensure the accuracy and legitimacy of the claims. It would then make valid electronic payments through HMRC's finance and accounting platform within six working days.

Following the first private beta, a second iteration was delivered one week later to cater for employers with over 100 employees. Finally, at the public beta launch the following week, customer service and compliance capabilities were deployed to enable HMRC to support customer queries and prevent the payment of fraudulent claims.

A fundamental challenge was the huge volume that would need to be processed in order to avoid significant delays to this essential support. Up to 2.4 million employers could be eligible for the grant and HMRC's Knowledge Analysis & Intelligence team provided business volumetrics that suggested the CJRS would operate a transaction rate 100% above HMRC's current highest volume service.

In response to these challenges, Capgemini worked closely with HMRC as a single, collaborative team to manage the overall delivery risk. Using agile methodology, DevOps and continuous integration and continuous deployment principles, features were rigorously managed through a prioritised backlog visible to all stakeholders in order to deliver the solution in a smooth, incremental manner. At the same time the team had to ensure the service met key nonfunctional requirements, including government accessibility and security standards.

Further complicating the project was the fact that throughout the process, the project teams had to work remotely in accordance with the latest COVID-19 guidelines.
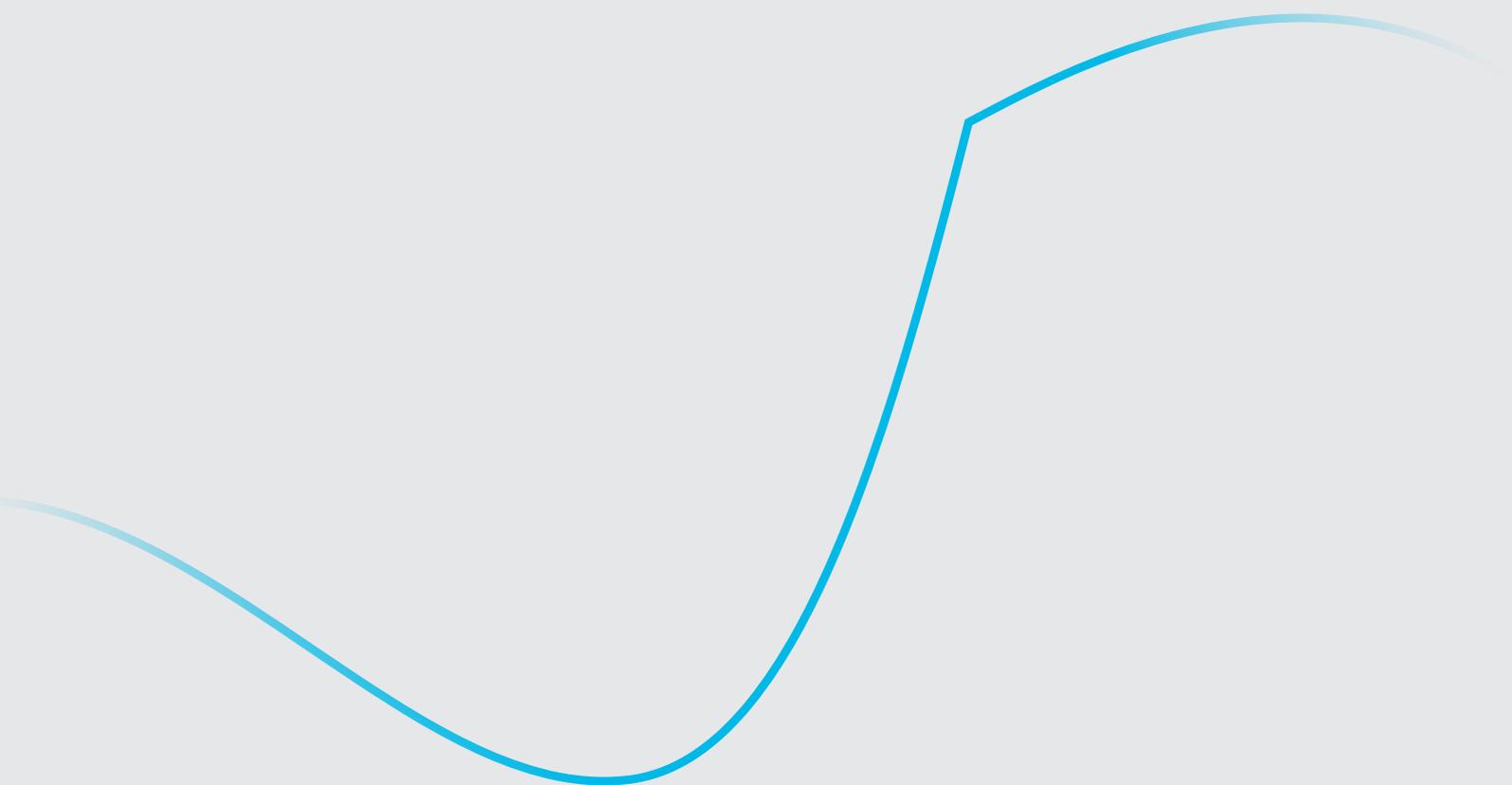
This meant a change to development ways of working and the reliance on digital collaboration techniques to ensure smooth communication and rapid progress towards the project goals. In spite of the extreme challenges, all the key milestones were met, and the service was launched into public beta four weeks after the project was announced.

Following the initial releases, the service was iterated over the next six months to improve the user experience based on feedback from those using the service. In addition, as the UK Government relaxed social distancing measures and reopened the economy, the service was changed to support employers who could bring employees back into work on a part-time basis.

## Providing relief on an accelerated timeline

Following the public beta launch, the service processed over £1.5 billion on the first day alone. Over the following week, it processed 600,000 claims valued at £5 billion. Since then,nthe system has been running 24/7, issuing over £41 billion in payments and achieving a customer satisfaction score of over 90%. This has demonstrated the effectiveness of the solution in meeting the needs of business owners and supporting UK workers during a time of unprecedented disruption.

In total, around 9.9 million jobs have received support as a result of this project. HMRC has enabled citizens and businesses to weather the initial storm and prepared the country for a far more rapid future recovery than would otherwise be possible. In light of the achievement, Rishi Sunak, Chancellor of the Exchequer, commended the team for its substantial contribution to a monumental moment in UK history. Together, HMRC and Capgemini have delivered a robust solution in an agile manner under exceptional and demanding circumstances to support the UK economy.

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