

James Reith

Content Designer

C.V. & Portfolio

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About me

I've worked on major government projects.

I was part of an award-winning UX team at The Co-operative Bank.

I've written articles for The New Yorker, The Guardian, The Economist, The Atlantic and The Globe and Mail.

My work has been translated into Japanese and Arabic.

I've spoken at conferences, and once had the bizarre experience of lecturing Paul Muldoon on his own poetry.

For more about my methods, see [UserZoom's interview with me](#).

Key skills

- Content design
- UX writing
- GDS service standards
- HTML & CSS
- Web accessibility
- Navigation
- Information Architecture
- Ideation
- User testing
- Agile working
- Rapid Prototyping
- Content strategy

Experience

NHS Digital (Contract) Content Designer (Sep 2018 - Present)

The sole content designer for the NHS App. Took the app into private beta and public rollout. Helped design, investigate, prototype, optimise and integrate both new and existing NHS services into a native app

Department for Work & Pensions (Contract) Content Designer (Feb 2018 - Sep 2018)

I was DWP Sheffield's first - and only - service Content Designer.

I worked on the Third Party Authentication Service: a secure login to protect the £0.5 billion that DWP pay to third parties.

I co-facilitated usability testing, hosted internal workshops, organised a hackathon and helped set up design as a discipline at DWP Sheffield.

HM Revenues & Customs (Contract) Content Designer (Sep 2017 - Feb 2018)

I worked on Making Tax Digital, one of the UK government's flagship projects. I was content lead for the Income Tax & VAT business tax account services.

I have participated in internal assessments and took both services through to live Beta.

The Co-operative Bank Digital Content Writer (2016 - 2017)

I was one of the bank's three in-house content writers - eventually becoming their most senior writer - and worked as part of an award-winning UX team.

Various

Freelance writer (2010 - present)

I am a contributing culture writer for several major publications, including:

- *The New Yorker*
- *The Guardian*
- *The Economist*
- *The Atlantic*

My work has been translated into Japanese. I also scripted a mobile game that has been downloaded over 1,000,000 times.

[Read a selection of my articles.](#)

R-ISC Investigation & Surveillance

Technical Writer (2014 - 2016)

I wrote reports and legal documents for this private investigation company.

The Fresh

Copywriter (2011 - 2014)

I wrote blogs and commercial copy for this dental marketing agency.

Gamingbolt.com

Night editor (2010 - 2011)

I was an editor for this popular video games website.

Education

University of Manchester

Post-1900 Literatures, Cultures and Theories M.A. (with distinction)

University of Liverpool

English Literature and Philosophy B.A. (2:1)

Awards

The UK Financial Experience Awards 2016

'Loving your Customer,' award

UX/Content Design

NHS Digital - NHS App

The NHS App unites multiple, disparate NHS services in one app. It is a complex project, requiring collaboration with multiple service design teams across the entire NHS.

The services I designed or optimised include:

- Register your organ donation decision
- Biometric login
- Online consultations
- Video appointments
- Prescription tracking
- GP feature lookup

Department for Work and Pensions - DWP Authenticate

Third party providers for DWP were using Government Gateway to log in to the DWP payments system. Government Gateway is being decommissioned and third parties needed another way to log in. This provided an opportunity to overcome some of the issues users encountered with Government Gateway.

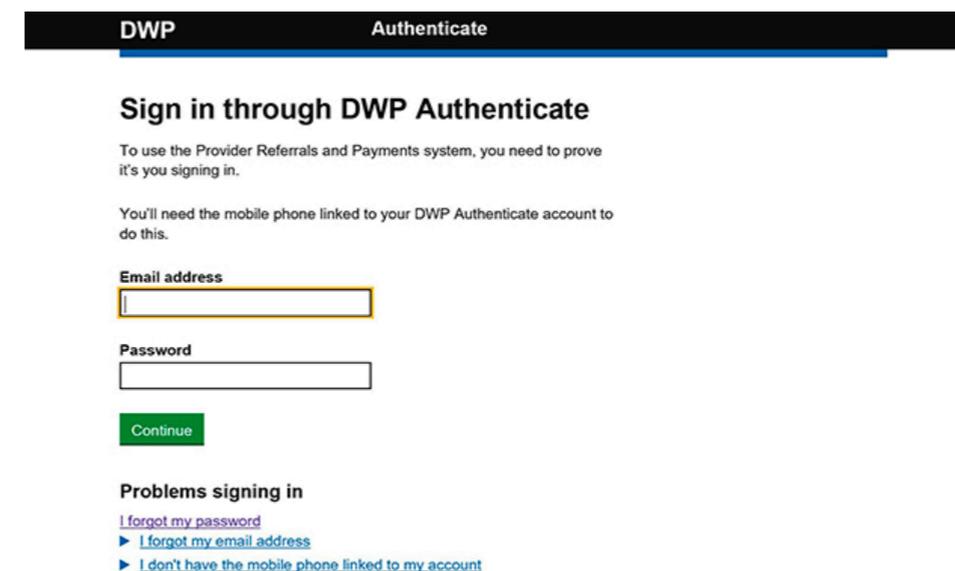
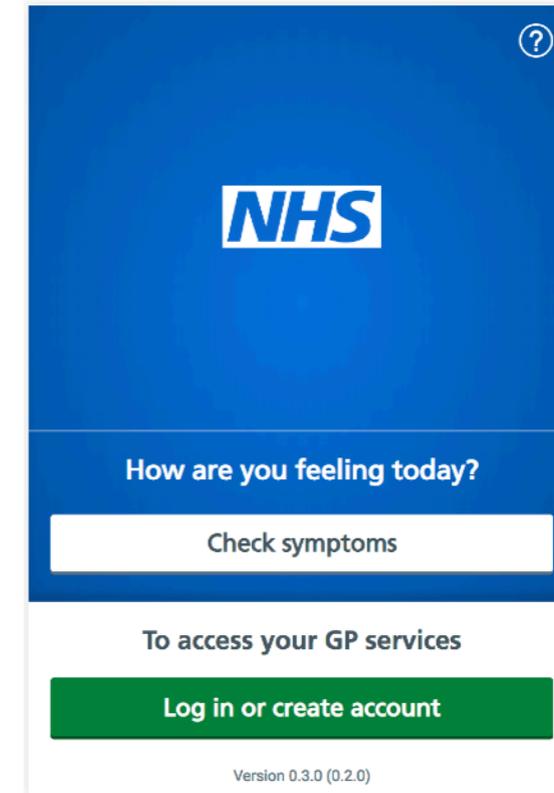
Problems

- If users forget their password they can be locked out for weeks
- 2FA with Government Gateway is just a second password
- Not all offices have good mobile reception, meaning SMS 2FA didn't always work

Solutions

- Implement automated password reset for users
- Provide alternative 2FA methods (including authenticator app) to cover multiple scenarios
- Improve content to increase self-service and take pressure off support team

For more information [read this gov.uk blog about DWP Authenticate](#)



UX/Content Design

HM Revenues & Customs - Income Tax View & Change

Problems

Income tax users:

- Don't understand that they pay Income Tax
- Are scared to go from one big report to four smaller reports
- Don't understand what accounting software is
- Get lost when navigating their HMRC account

Solutions

My dynamic partial on the service homepage helps to guide users through the new process by showing them their next obligation and where to complete it. Prior to the introduction of the partial, no users understood the end-to-end journey. After the introduction of the partial, 80% of users tested could complete a mock year of obligations.

We conducted extensive navigation and taxonomy testing. In the latest prototype iteration, 100% of users tested could find everything they needed to complete their tasks.

HM Revenues & Customs - VAT View & Change

Problems

Existing VAT users:

- Are worried about changes to how they submit their returns
- Deal with lots of dates, which are confusing when displayed together

New VAT users:

- Are confused by the existing VAT returns process

Solutions

I found a way of keeping the structure of the old VAT return, but visually broke it up and reworded the descriptions of it. This allowed old and new users to understand it.

Following extensive interviews with stakeholders, we found a common way HMRC refer to user's VAT returns periods. Implementing this helped 80% of users find the correct return they needed.

My content received a 3/3 rating (excellent) during an internal, HMRC review.

BETA This is a new service – your [feedback](#) will help us to improve it.

 HM Revenue & Customs

Betty Jones, you last signed in 12:34pm, Monday 5 June 2017

[English](#) [Cymraeg](#)

[Business tax home](#) > Income Tax

Your Income Tax

Ref: HD39828023480

Next payment due

31 January 2020 - £16,119.86

[View payment details](#)

Next report due

31 July 2019

▶ [Report through software](#)

Your account

[Read messages](#)

[Check account details](#)

[Get help](#)

Your taxes

[Income tax](#)

[VAT](#)

[All business taxes](#)

VAT return

1 August to 31 October 2017

This bill needs to be paid before 31 December 2017.

You owe: £1,224

Return due date: 30 November 2017

Date submitted: 27 November 2017

Betty Jones

VAT details

Box 1	VAT on United Kingdom sales and other outputs	£1,901
Box 2	VAT on European Community sales and related costs	£5,289
Box 3	Total VAT you owe HMRC	£7,190
Box 4	Total VAT reclaimed from anywhere	-£5,966
Box 5	Total you owe	£1,224

VAT account

VAT registration number (VRN): 999984111

[Account details](#)

[Get help](#)

All your taxes

[Read messages](#)

UX/Content Design

co-operativebank.co.uk - general redesign

I was one of three content writers who completely re-wrote this banking website.

The results of the redesign were:

- 90% increase in credit card applications
- 325% increase in current account page visits
- NPS increase of +5.9 (21 points above expectation)

smile.co.uk - redesign

The original design was so outdated, customers thought the authentic website was a fake.

The results of the redesign were:

- 52% increase in current account applications
- 382% increase in visits to the homepage
- a near total reduction in reports of being redirected to a fraudulent website

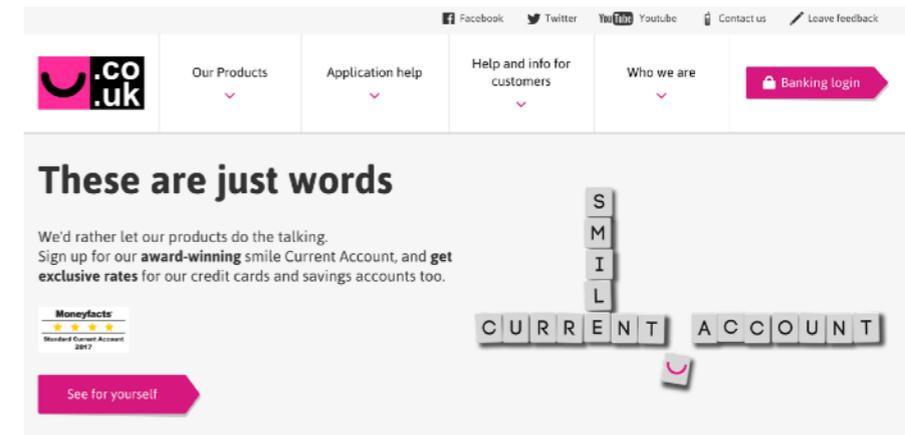
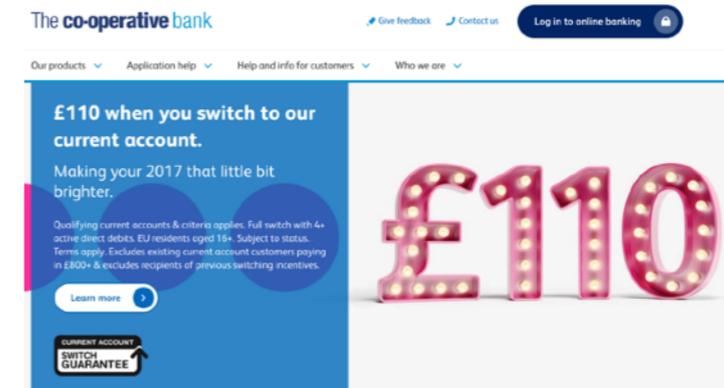
co-operativebank.co.uk - [bereavement page](#)

An online page built to coincide with an improved bereavement procedure at the bank.

Bereavement processes are complex and vary across the UK. To make dealing a late customer's account as straightforward as possible, I designed an interactive form.

It shows the documents required to confirm a customer's death and deal with their account, based on their individual circumstances. It also provides an estimated time for the account to be processed.

The page received a 92% usability score during user testing.



The documents you'll need

Please answer these questions about the deceased. We'll then use that information to generate the list of documents we'll need from you.

Where did they live?

England or Wales

Scotland

Northern Ireland

Did they leave a will?

Yes No

UX/Content Design

co-operativebank.co.uk business banking - redesign

I was the copy lead for this project.

The Co-operative Bank cater for a diverse range of businesses. The re-design provides dynamic content on the homepage. This allows for niche business the Co-operative Bank cater for, such as co-operatives, to locate specialised information quickly.

co-operativebank.co.uk - [ethics hub](#)

I was the sole copywriter for this project.

The Co-operative Bank's ethics are its USP. However, as their ethics pages do not directly drive click-throughs, their ethical content was designed with little foresight. The journey through it was nonsensical and near labyrinthine.

One key promotional document, the bank's annual ethical report, had been viewed a total of 4 times in March 2017. At least 2 of those views were me and a UX designer.

I proposed designing a simple ethics hub, with a timeline documenting past campaigns. As a result of this project, the Co-operative Bank now ranks in the top 3 google results for 'ethical bank' and 'ethical banking.'

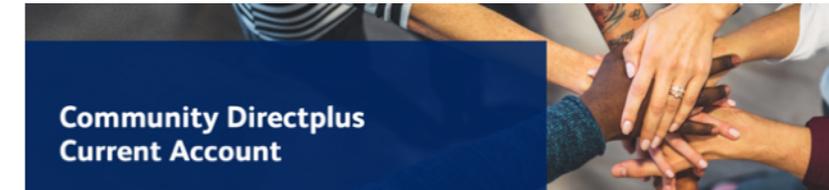
co-operativebank.co.uk - Select Access Saver 7

This product was experiencing unexpected drop-out during its sales journey.

Following initial user research, only 1/7 users could understand the product from the live product page. And it took them an average of 4 mins to do so.

My re-designed page was understood by 7/7 people in an average of 1.5 mins.

It is a myth that people do not scroll. They will, if the content is useful. Placing the regulatory 'summary box' next to a highly condensed product card increased interaction with the summary box. Rewriting the content in plain English meant those that started reading it actually finished.

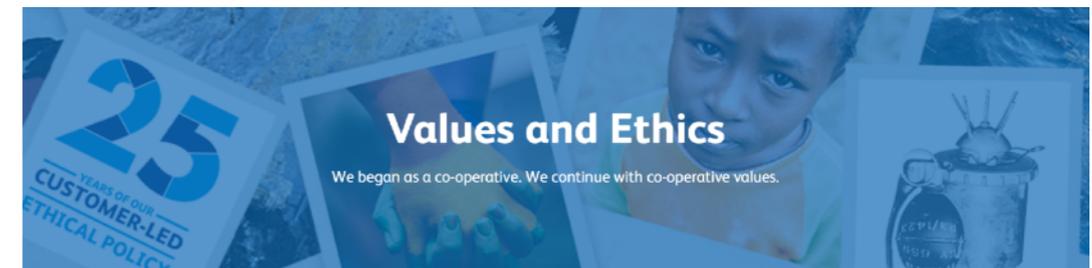


Community Directplus Current Account

We support social enterprises. This account will only charge them for two standard services: cashing a cheque at a post office or exchanging cash. Account holders can also apply for a donation of up to £1000 from us.



That's why 55% of the UK's credit unions use this account. And why we were voted 'Best Charity Banking Provider' 2017 by Moneyfacts.



Values and Ethics

We began as a co-operative. We continue with co-operative values.

Select Access Saver

Always have access to your cash. Get a better interest rate if you don't.

- ✓ **Good if you:**
 - Are saving for **something big**, but may need funds in an emergency
 - Have **£500** or more for an initial deposit
 - Want to **apply online**
- ✗ **Not quite right if you:**
 - Plan to make **more than four** withdrawals in a calendar year
 - Need **online access**

Rate	1.10% gross AER
Access	Phone, post and branch
Minimum deposit	£500

Up to **£85,000** of your money will be protected by the FSCS too.

Summary of key features

1 Please read this before applying. For full details, please also read the account's [terms and conditions](#).

What is the interest rate?

If you make **four withdrawals or fewer** in a calendar year, it is **1.10%** Gross AER. But if you make **five withdrawals or more** in a calendar year, it is **0.10%** Gross AER.

If I make more than four withdrawals, when will I get the higher interest rate again?

You'll get the higher rate again on 1 January in the new calendar year.

1 Your interest will be calculated daily. It will be paid into your account on the first working day after 1 January.

Can Britannia change the interest rate?

Yes, the interest rate is variable which means it can go up or down. We may change your interest rate for various reasons, such as a change in the Bank of England base rate.

When we increase our interest rates - we'll tell you about the change within 30 days after it's happened.

When we decrease our interest rates - we'll inform you by personal notice at least two months before we make the change.

Editorial



THE NEW YORKER

The New Yorker

When Robert Pinsky Wrote a Video Game

Feature about three-time Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky's video game. This article was shared as a news item by many prominent literary publications, including The Paris Review and Poetry Foundation.



The Guardian

The Icelandic publisher that only prints books during a full moon – then burns them

Shared over 4,200 by major news outlets and in a multitude countries, this article discusses a niche Icelandic publisher who release books on the night of a full moon, then incinerates them.

Pride and Prejudice and Progress: the best second novels of all time

Article discussing some of the greatest sophomore novels ever written. It was shared 1,134 times.

Turkish Delight: can the sexually explicit Dutch classic still shock?

Feature about a new translation of Jan Wolkers' classic Dutch novel. The publication of my article was itself covered by the Dutch media.

Simon Hanselmann: 'I hate twee art. Life is not nice'

Feature published in the Guardian's G2 supplement. It has been shared over 829 times and was covered as a news item by The Paris Review.



The Atlantic

Why It Took So Long to Translate a Dutch Classic

Feature about Gerard Reve's classic novel *The Evenings*. This article has been read over 40,000 times.

The Fictional Country You Build When Your Home No Longer Exists

Feature about the Bohemian writer Johannes Urzidil and how Bohemia was destroyed by World War 2.

Editorial cont.



The Economist

George Saunders' comic, supernatural, moral novel

Print review of George Saunders' novel *Lincoln in the Bardo*.



The Globe and Mail

Author Stephen Vizinczey on why his current novel, *If Only*, has been stuck in limbo

Feature about bestselling author Stephen Vizinczey's novel *If Only*. This was the first article published about the book.



Ploughshares

Review: Marcel Proust's *IN SEARCH OF LOST TIME: SWANN'S WAY* – A Graphic Novel by Stéphane Heuet

My review of this graphic adaptation of Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. This is the first graphic novel to have been reviewed in this prestigious literary journal.



The Metropolist

INTERVIEW: SWERY, Writer/Director of *D4*

I interviewed SWERY, cult director of the video game *Deadly Premonition*, for the PC release of *D4*. This interview was then translated into Japanese by Access Games and used to promote the game in Japan.

Whilst writing for The Metropolist, I also interviewed:

- Anders Gustafsson, co-creator of *The Dream Machine* video game
- Ice Pick Lodge, the Russian game developers behind *Pathologic*
- Olek, the internationally renowned crochet artist



The Manchester Review

George Saunders, interviewed by James Reith

My interview with prize winning fiction writer George Saunders.

Campaign/marketing

The Co-operative Bank

Online banking help videos

I scripted, and recorded the voice overs for, a series of online banking help videos. By producing these in-house, the business avoided costly agency fees.

Collectively, this series of videos has been viewed over 130,000 times.

The Co-operative Bank/Take 5

Online banking banners

A series of banners for the Co-operative Bank's online and mobile banking services. Take 5 is a national fraud awareness campaign. The Co-operative Bank will reimburse customers who have been defrauded, so promoting Take 5 was seen as both a commercial and public service exercise.

The core of the campaign was telling customers to 'take five minutes' and think. I thought telling customers to think was patronising. Instead, I wanted to provoke a reaction. To make them think. That these banners would appear in a sensitive location made this simple. I produced a series of banners, imitating 'I33t speak', that gave the impression that the customer had been hacked. Click-through rates, and engagement with our Take Five campaign page, trebled.

Coconut

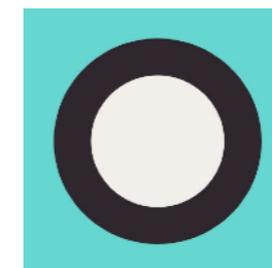
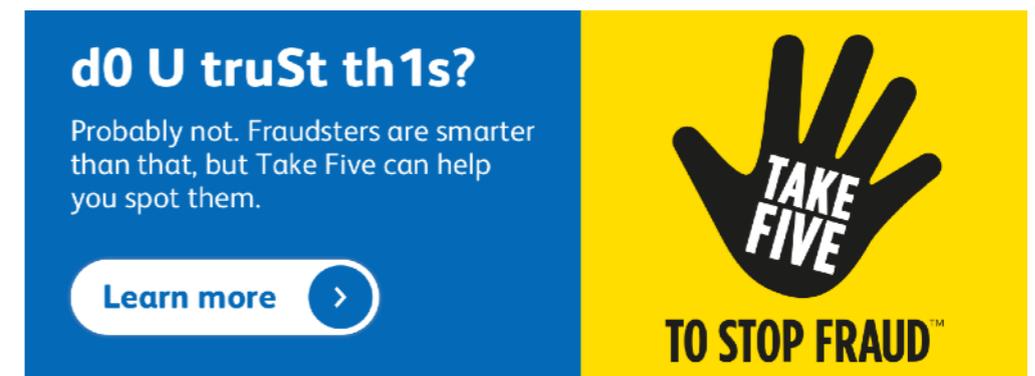
Various blogs

I've written numerous blogs on financial and freelancing issues for this fin-tech company. My blog on submitting late tax returns gained some reasonable organic traction when a freelancer used it to appeal against a late fee from HMRC.

Harley Street Dental

Various blogs

I wrote several target blogs as part of a campaign for this cosmetic dental agency. They won 'Best Marketing Strategy in London' at the 2013 Dentistry Awards for that campaign.



Creative

Adventure Escape: Framed

Video game

A mobile puzzle/mystery game I scripted. Working with an existing Haiku Games protagonist, I proposed several scenarios for their character. I then plotted and scripted their scenario of choice within two weeks.

The game has been downloaded over 1,000,000 and has a user rating of 4.6/5 on the Googleplay store.



Spin Cycle

Comic

A comic produced in collaboration with the illustrator James W Hunter. The comic was a featured entry for the 2014 Jonathan Cape prize.



Parapraxis Foundations

Video Game

A sci-fi platform scripted for Third Nerve. I helped with the plot, characterisation and in-game help text.

The game was greenlit on Steam, following an alpha release. The alpha was toured at various gaming conventions throughout the UK, including PLAY Expo Manchester, 2012 and 2013.



As one, included in *Bizarro, Bizarro*

Short story

Short story included in a Bizarro fiction anthology.

The anthology was well received by fans of the genre and currently has a 4.78 rating on Goodreads.

