worked closely with HMT to develop the scheme, we continued to work with HMT on the implementation and delivery of the scheme.

131. I believe that the initial timeframe for designing and implementing the scheme was appropriate given the uncertainty at the outset of the pandemic. As noted in the advice provided to the Secretary of State on economic recovery on 7 April 2020 [KT9/23-[ INQ000653771 ] implementing an economic recovery programme was expected to require several months. However, as part of the development of the Plan for Jobs published on 8 July 2020, the Secretary of State and Chancellor agreed to get the Kickstart scheme up and running quickly, so that the first Kickstart placements could start before the furlough scheme ended. This was in order to have an offer for young people to protect them from unemployment and a negative impact on their future employment prospects. The urgent need to provide economic support in a rapidly evolving crisis justified the swift rollout of the scheme, enabling a quicker response to immediate economic challenges.

Minimum Viable Product Approach

132. When the scheme was designed, we adopted a minimum viable product ('**MVP**') approach, prioritising the design and implementation of essential components required for the scheme's initial launch, with plans to develop additional features subsequently. During this time, we were expecting the lockdown and the furlough scheme both to end in November 2020. We did not know that the furlough scheme would be extended and that there would be successive waves of lockdown affecting the labour market. Had we known in advance that the furlough scheme was going to be extended in November 2020 and that there would be further lockdowns in October 2020 and January 2021 which would disrupt the labour market, we might have recommended to Ministers to take longer in designing the scheme and to introduce it later.

133. However, the imminent launch of the scheme on 2 September 2020 meant that the Department had little choice but to adopt a 'MVP' approach to keep the design as simple as possible for the launch with a view to adding further elements over time. In my view, this was the most effective option. The only alternative would have been to take more time, which was not available.

134. The Inquiry has asked about the challenges DWP faced as a result of the 'MVP' approach. At a practical and operational level, it meant we had to make changes to the