

maximus

Transforming delivery of health and disability assessments





Foreword by James Farren

Every year more than one million citizens rely on health and disability assessments to access vital financial support. They rightly expect a service that is sensitive, timely and accurate.

For many years, the effective delivery of these assessments proved an operational and reputational challenge for both government and their contractors. The logistics of delivering year-on-year increases in assessment numbers, while simultaneously improving quality and satisfaction levels within the service, requires expertise in both large-scale transformation and a person-centred user experience. It also requires an understanding of the media, political and stakeholder landscape in what is a high-profile policy area.

Since taking over the service in 2015, improving the customer experience and delivering value for money for government and the taxpayer has been at the core of our transformation approach. Through collaborative working with both our commissioner and external partners, we have identified and addressed systemic issues, increasing quality scores and achieving record satisfaction among customers. We've also adapted at pace, responding to the Covid pandemic and the changing preferences of customers.

As we continue to deliver the current service and prepare to begin delivery of its successor in 2024, we remain committed to continuous improvement in assessment delivery. We are proud of what we have achieved so far. This document sets out how far we've come.

James Farren
Programme Director, Assessments

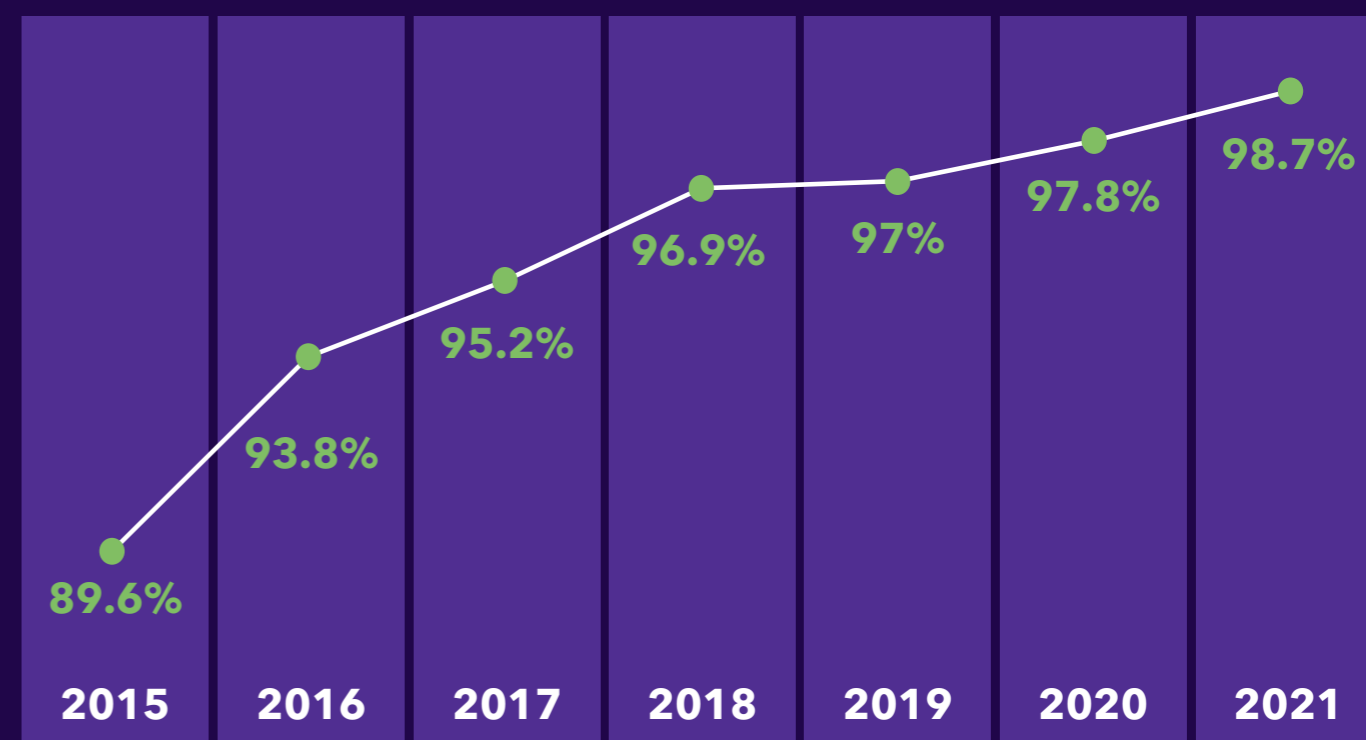
Reflecting on 8 years of delivery

Maximus has delivered the Health Assessment Advisory Service on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) since 2015. This includes delivery of Work Capability Assessments for Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit and assessments for specialist benefits including Industrial Injuries across England, Scotland and Wales.

Healthcare professionals employed by Maximus, typically a doctor, nurse or physiotherapist, conduct functional assessments on the impact of an individual's health conditions or disability on their day-to-day life. DWP then uses the assessment report and any accompanying information submitted by a customer or their GP or other medical professional to determine a person's benefit entitlement.

To date, our healthcare professionals have completed more than 6 million assessments while improving customer satisfaction, assessment quality and waiting times.

Customer satisfaction



Transforming at scale

In 2015, Maximus inherited an underperforming service that was failing to meet quality standards, providing low levels of customer satisfaction and generating significant criticism from the media, politicians and disability groups. At this time, waiting times were at a record high, with over 500,000 people waiting to be assessed.

Mentions in parliament
reduced by **75%**

Maximus mobilised an extensive recruitment campaign, more than doubling the number of clinicians delivering the service and massively expanding capacity. In turn, this reduced pressure on clinicians and improved job satisfaction. Together with offering industry-competitive salaries and benefits, we were able to reduce absenteeism by half and reduce overall attrition.

Operational challenges, and the negative reputation that the service had developed, put a significant strain on the service's workforce with attrition rates of 32% and absenteeism of 11% prior to 2015.

Improving customer communications through an improved website that dispelled myths and provided clarity

about the assessment process improved attendance rates for assessments, which resulted in the number of missed appointments being reduced by more than 40%.

6m
assessments

Maximus transformed the service by more than doubling the number of healthcare professionals delivering assessments, and through continuous improvement in our processes, working closely with the commissioner and representative groups to understand barriers to the prompt processing of applications. In doing so, the average time in the assessment process fell from 32 weeks to just 9 weeks.

Average time
in assessment process
reduced by
23↓
weeks

Putting the customer at the centre of transformation

Maximus has invested heavily in improving the customer experience and driving improved satisfaction levels, led by our Customer Director and dedicated Head of Customer Experience. This has included expanding the number of Customer Champions in our Assessment Centres around the country to more than 100, who offer additional support to customers who might be anxious about their assessment, or additional information about the process to put them at ease.

We've partnered with
50 customer
representative
charities

The Customer Representative Group (CRG), established in early 2015, is our advisory group of disability charities, welfare rights organisations and local government representatives. Its mandate is to work alongside Maximus to collaboratively develop initiatives aimed at improving our service for customers.

Now in its eighth year the CRG brings together nearly 50 expert charities and welfare rights groups to ensure our approach reflects best practice for our customers. This group has driven the development of key initiatives designed

to improve communication, accessibility and quality, and condition specific training for our clinical colleagues.

Through collaborative working with the CRG, we have delivered tangible improvements to the customer experience. This has included working with stakeholders to develop new training on fluctuating conditions, working closely with charities that represent a diverse range of conditions, DWP and our own clinical team. Following the implementation of the training, 96% of customers with fluctuating conditions said they were "given time to adequately describe how their condition varies from day-to-day", a 12% rise in customer satisfaction.

We know that some of our customers need help completing forms so we established a free helpline, which customers can contact for step-by-step assistance. Since its launch in September 2015, we have received more than 250,000 calls to the helpline.

6.2
million
calls to our contact centre

Driving service improvement

We worked collaboratively with DWP and expert groups to develop improvements to the service, aligned to more than 40 quality and volume service standards.

From a starting point of 'unacceptable performance' under the previous provider, our focus on clinical quality through ongoing training and improved processes resulted in our quality standards consistently exceeding targets.

We have achieved this by investing in staff training and development to improve their ability to perform effective and efficient assessments whilst having an awareness of the often-complex range of conditions our customers will present in an assessment. Healthcare professionals have access to more than 250 online modules designed to support continuous medical training, as well as in-person training led by external experts. We have recruited more than 130 Clinical Standards Leads across our business, to support colleagues to improve the quality of their assessments and offering coaching and support where required.

From the beginning of the contract, Maximus has been committed to increasing productivity and efficiency to ensure we are able to meet the expectations of the commissioner whilst continuously improving the customer journey and waiting times.

A new booking system was also introduced to better anticipate levels of attendance by customers and maximise utilisation of clinicians within our assessment centres.

We have worked with DWP and representative bodies to improve the flow of medical evidence from GPs and other treating clinicians, to help them understand the benefit of supplying timely medical evidence. Our sector-leading work in this area was recognised by the Work and Pensions Select Committee.

This, combined with other initiatives aimed at improved efficiency, has enabled us to meet the expanding demand for assessments whilst effectively driving down backlogs and reducing the unit cost of assessments by 11%.



Innovating during crisis

The pandemic placed an unprecedented strain on the delivery of almost every aspect of the health system, including health and disability assessments. Face-to-face assessments, which accounted for around 75% of all assessments carried out prior to the pandemic, were suspended in March 2020.

Despite this, given our critical work, Maximus maintained operation of the service throughout every stage of the pandemic, with dedicated colleagues clearing hundreds of thousands of applications on paper where possible to ensure access to financial support for the most vulnerable.

We worked in collaboration with DWP to efficiently develop and introduce a telephone assessment service within six weeks. This operational approach proved so successful that we enhanced the service by introducing secure video assessment capabilities.

650,000
telephone assessments,

9,000
video assessments

20,000
face-to-face assessments

98%
customer satisfaction



Moving government, technology and people forward

As the UK's leading provider of functional health assessments, we work tirelessly to assist some of the most vulnerable members of society, ensuring they have access to the support they need to move forward with their lives.

Our track record speaks for itself. In partnership with the DWP, we successfully turned around one of the country's most high-profile and challenging public sector contracts, bringing about significant improvements and sustained change.

Our impact reaches far beyond the individuals we help - it matters for the entire nation. We recognise that the intersection of health and work is where some of the UK's biggest challenges lie, and we are dedicated to making a positive difference in this critical area.

As a trusted and expert partner to government, we welcome scrutiny and actively engage with politicians, policy makers, the third sector, media, and campaign groups. Transparency and collaboration are the cornerstones of our approach, allowing us to continually improve and innovate to enhance outcomes and customer experience.

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