

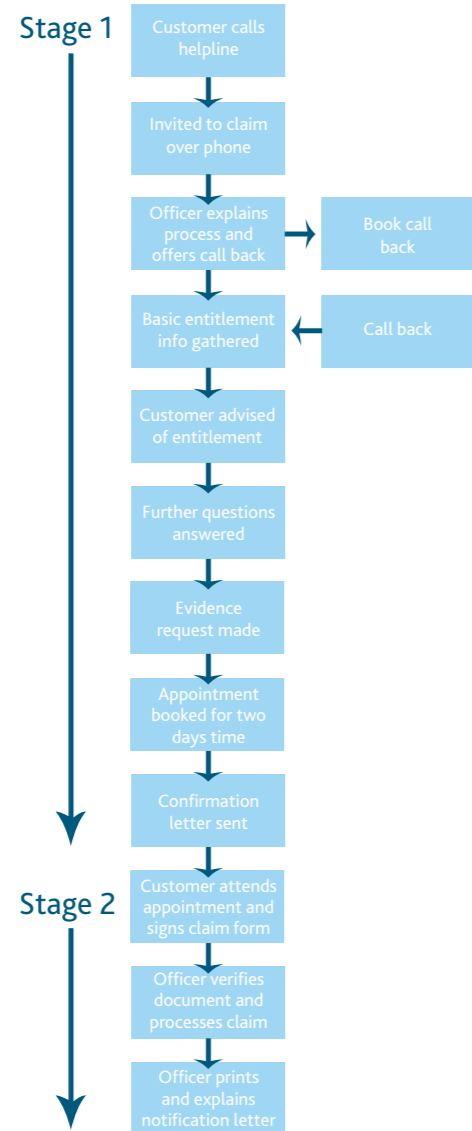
The results

Assessors immediately found eBenefits easier to use and the contact centre finds the new solution cuts down on errors and is quicker to process. The statistics just go to show how successful the eBenefits project has been in improving efficiencies within the Council. With eBenefits the Council is saving approximately 30 minutes per claim, mainly on pre-assessment information gathering and post assessment enquiries.

"Our average processing time for new claims processed through eBenefits has been three days – against the DWP target of 30 days. 95% of claims were complete with all evidence and could be processed during the first interview, compared with 30% prior to this project," said Gary.

Since its inception, the new process has not only improved the Council's performance indicators, it has improved its relationship with its customers too. Both Council staff and citizens are seeing the benefit. "I think the process is brilliant - the customer doesn't have to wait weeks for forms to be sent back and forth," said Laurelle Nichols from the Council's contact centre.

Basic assert process by phone



Looking ahead

The Council is by no means complacent and recognises there is always room for improvement. Some of the areas they are looking at include the implementation of Change of Circumstances within eBenefits, electronic communications, the creation of a joint visiting team with the Pension Service and partnership working with neighbouring local authorities.

Key results

- The average processing time for new claims processed through eBenefits has been three days - against the DWP target of 30 days
- Customer surveys show a 98% satisfaction rating both with the new system and the quality of staff support
- The average time from telephone call to interview (and Benefit decision) has been three days
- 95% of claims were complete with all evidence and could be processed during the first interview, compared with 30% prior to this project.

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CAPITA

What the citizens have to say;

"I have normally found this whole process very exhausting but today it was a breeze."

Ms H, local resident, Staplehurst

"I found it a lot easier doing everything over the phone rather than filling in forms. And the people were friendly and helpful!"

Mrs H, local resident, Maidstone

"With all the help I was given it has made a difficult situation very easy."

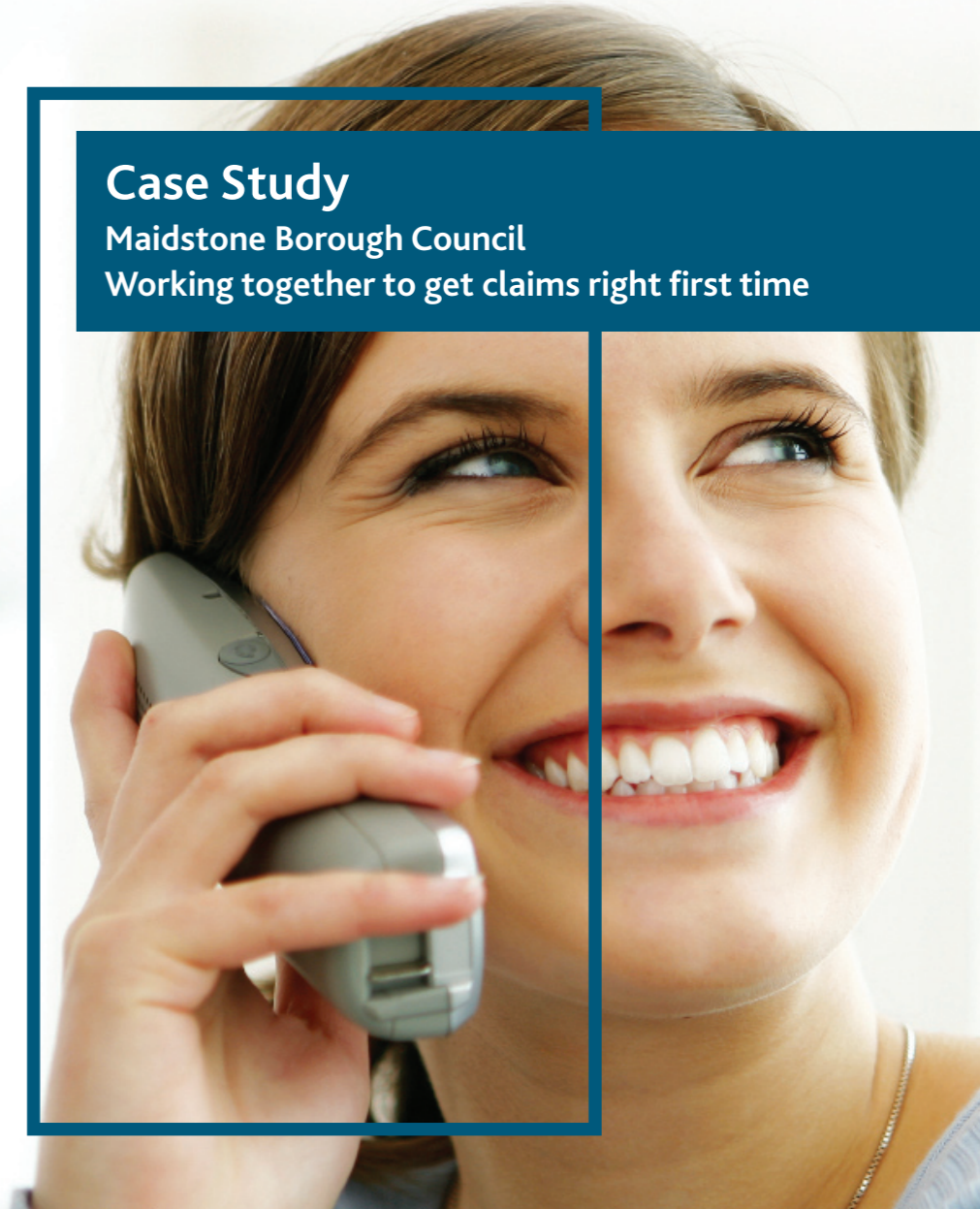
Mr L, local resident, Maidstone

CAPITA

Case Study

Maidstone Borough Council

Working together to get claims right first time



northgate
INFORMATION SOLUTIONS

The project

A close-up photograph of a young woman with long brown hair smiling warmly, with a young child's face partially visible in the foreground, also smiling.

Maidstone Borough Council is an ambitious authority which is continually exploring new ways of working to improve the speed and quality of its benefit service. The eBenefits product, which was developed for Maidstone through a partnership agreement between Capita Software Services and Northgate Information Solutions to deliver a user-friendly benefits assessment tool, has helped the Council transform the process of determining new benefit claims. The result is a more customer-friendly and efficient service, which has helped to improve the Council's already excellent processing targets.

The background

Situated in the heart of Kent, Maidstone occupies a strategic position between London and continental Europe. With a population of around 140,000, Maidstone is a major centre for business, financial, consultancy and professional services. The high quality of the services the Council provides is reflected in external accreditation and quality awards including nine Charter Marks, Investor in People, an LGC Award for Excellence and a SOCITM/SPIN award for the website.

Maidstone Borough Council has been a customer of Capita Software Services since converting from ICL Mainframe systems in the late nineties. As part of a successful ongoing partnership with Capita, the Council has invested in new technology and implemented many additional modules including Capita's Internet Payments solution, Revenues and Benefits Citizen Access and Housing Management.

The challenge

Figures released by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) show that housing and council tax benefit helps one in six households to meet their housing costs – yet as many as one in ten eligible people are still under-claiming and missing out on their rights.

Gary Hunter, Benefits Manager at Maidstone Borough Council, took advantage of an innovative DWP funded eBenefits system to increase benefit take-up and speed up the claims process for the citizens of Maidstone.

"The customer should be at the heart of everything that local authorities aspire to do and one of the key business issues for Councils is how to improve customer care. Our vision was to make claiming benefits a simple process – taking the hassle out of claiming for our customers," explained Gary.

The Council was taking an average of 18 days to process a benefits claim as measured by the BVPIs but the Council is only too aware that the reality for the customer could still be as much as 25 days when you allow for

the initial enquiry, postal service etc. Typically a telephone enquiry would come into the call centre then a form would be posted out to the citizen who would complete and return it with the evidence required for the claim. The form was then checked for any missing evidence or errors and was returned to the claimant. With 24 pages in the form and just a simple guidance leaflet, the claimant had little assistance in completing this vast form.

The solution

As part of the DWP funded National eBenefits Project, Capita Software Services welcomed the opportunity to partner with Northgate in developing a fully interfaced solution with Academy Benefits. The project involved both companies working closely to comply with the technical standards of the Project

The resulting eBenefits system uses Northgate's eBenefits - a rules-based decision engine that takes users through the benefits application process. eBenefits is designed to be intuitive - it prompts the next question based on the previous answer and it skips unnecessary questions. Because the tool helps advisors through the process, they need minimal training to use it. It delivers an assessment of benefit payable, a printed application form and a list of evidence required in support of the claim.

The eBenefits solution also involves seamless integration to the Academy Benefits System through the use of Capita's Academy Business Connect (ABC) framework. This means that assessment staff do not have to re-key all the data collected within the eBenefits product as Academy Benefits is updated automatically thus speeding up the assessment process and minimising keying errors.

Once input into the Council's Academy back office systems, direct access to the claim enables the claimant and the welfare advisor to keep track of its progress and the schedule of payments once assessed. eBenefits supports the capture of all the data necessary for a customer to make a new application for benefit and in the future it is likely to be able to support change of circumstances.

The successful implementation of eBenefits at Maidstone was achieved over a surprisingly short time through effective partnership working between Northgate, Capita and Maidstone Borough Council.

"Thorough testing of the solution prior to release meant that we encountered very few problems once it was installed in the test environment. Any issues we reported to Capita were analysed in partnership with Northgate and appropriate fixes applied. Most of these were simple mapping issues and validation errors," explained Gary.

