

Service Performance, Quality and Standards – Update

This update provides further details on:

- Progress on test and learn
- Flexibility of the sampling submissions approach
- Calibration
- Sampling Methodology for the test and learn

Progress since commencement of test and learn

Firstly, thank you for all your support and engagement during this test and learn process. So far, we have had over 250 assessments put through the MaPS Standards form which is great to see. We have been listening to the individual queries and feedback from our delivery partners and are reviewing how we can address these. We outlined at the start of the test and learn that we will be completely transparent about how we are working across the sector, and we aim to be open about how we are responding to your concerns. As with any new initiative being tested, we will not be able to resolve everything that arises throughout the testing period until completion, however we will be modifying the approach wherever possible, at the end of each bi-monthly phase, with the aim of creating efficiencies for organisations managing the delivery of services. This update brings further clarification to the aim of test and learn, defining the responsibilities, more flexibility in the approach to sampling submissions, details about calibration and the sampling methodology.

Clarification on the aim of test and learn

The test and learn process aims to bring us to a conclusion over whether the tested approach can achieve an adequate assessment process for assessing compliance with the MaPS Standards and any impact to customers of non-compliance. In doing this, we are trying to ascertain whether the process is fit for purpose, and whether the assessments completed by Technical Supervisors and Quality Teams, when interpreting whether a standard has been met or otherwise, align with the assessments completed by third-party Technical Assessors. Calibration and consistency need to remain a key part of this activity.

Defining Responsibilities

Following the removal of Debt Advice Peer Assessment (DAPA,) MaPS has made changes to its approach to monitoring the controls in place to assure the quality-of-service delivery. These changes have included: alignment to the FCA approved MaPS Standards, the implementation of a new Service Performance, Quality and Standards team that cover all of MaPS Services (not solely focused on debt,) and a change in approach to the delivery of quality assurance.

As a result of these changes MaPS role from a quality perspective has changed to be focused on monitoring and enforcing compliance with the MaPS Standards and providing adequate support and guidance to do so.

This means that where organisations that we fund are independently regulated, they will need to ensure that they have adequate systems and processes in place to ensure debt advice meets FCA requirements. The removal of Debt Advice Peer Assessment (DAPA) should not affect how organisations review:

- the technical requirements of Debt Advice
- how identified areas of development for individual advisers will be addressed
- how the training and development needs of advisers/supervisors will be managed
- how delivery teams will be supported and managed to achieve FCA and Grant requirements
- that the minimum requirements as outlined by CONC are met

The change in the way MaPS will measure the effectiveness of the services it funds, focuses on ensuring that organisations (and their Supply Chain if relevant) have controls in place to ensure compliance with the MaPS Standards and where non-compliance is identified that the impact to customers is not detrimental.

Initially this will be done through:

1. A process of test and learn using the MS Forms which evaluates whether standards have been met
2. Where assessment does or does not align through calibration
3. How standards have been interpreted
4. How we reach a mutual understanding
5. How we confirm sufficiency of evidence that assures MaPS, delivery organisations, and third-party assessors, that standards have been met

Flexibility of the submissions approach

Early feedback has indicated that for some organisations the MS forms process is creating an additional layer of monitoring, or it is creating challenges in maintaining their internal quality check process. We appreciate this may be the case and are actively working through a longer-term solution. Some organisations have provided feedback that this is causing challenges in applying their normal approach to moderation and feeding the outcome of the local assessments into the test and learn MS Forms.

As we do require a reasonable volume of samples during the test and learn period, we wanted to confirm that we are happy to take samples from across your internal testing framework and this could include:

1. Cases that haven't been assessed against your internal framework and solely assessed using the MS form
2. Cases that have been assessed in technical supervision or first line checks i.e. team leaders
3. Cases that have been moderated by a quality assessor or assessed at second line by designated quality teams
4. A combination of both 1,2 and 3.

Please be assured that this is a joint process to determining the best approach to ensuring that MaPs organisations are delivering high quality services to clients and meeting the client facing MaPS Standards. Any emerging issues which warrant discussion to ensure that they are being effectively addressed, will be conducted collaboratively. We intend to establish a process which avoids the perception of 'fault finding' and focuses on continuous improvement. We are assessing the effectiveness of your own organisations ability to meet the standards through effective controls and not assessing advisers.

Calibration

The test and learn calibration will focus on the areas where assessment does not align. For example, where one standard is scored as met and the independent QA views it as not met, this will help us to determine how the standard has been interpreted and come to a mutual understanding. The calibration, which will involve MaPS, third party assessors and delivery organisations, will be a starting point to consider variances in assessments and how these will be aligned.

Whilst this is test and learn, we are hopeful that the outcomes will assist organisations in exploring emerging trends and addressing concerns across their organisation (and supply chain if relevant).

Test and learn Calibration should not stifle the opportunity to:

- Identify issues which need to be addressed
- Identify good practice around which there is merit in sharing
- drawing conclusions which need to be factored into future developments

As we begin to understand what test and learn is telling us, we will be better able to assess the effectiveness of the process, and whether it is fit for purpose. The expectation is that whatever the process looks like following test and learn, it will support local quality systems and become the end line of checking to assure MaPS that organisations have the right controls in place for ensuring reviews of quality are consistent across their organisation (and supply chain if applicable).

Consequently, this means that during the test and learn phase, this process can stand alone and operate in parallel with existing quality systems.

We will be holding a calibration engagement session on Tuesday 31st May at 1pm via Teams where we will share guidance on the calibration activity, timeframes, how data will be shared and reported. Invites will be circulated shortly.

Sampling Methodology

We have assessed multiple options for our sampling methodology and want to ensure that we align to our key principles of being proportionate and relevant. As a result, we have aligned our new sampling methodology for the remainder of the test and learn period to technical supervision resource. Sampling will be conducted at grant level rather than organisation level to ensure all grants have adequate assessment against the MaPS Standards.

The methodology takes account of organisation size and their technical supervision resource, availability of third-party assessor resource and minimum volumes required to validate the test and learn approach.

Guidance will be provided at the end of May 2022, on the submission arrangements to the end of test and learn. This will include timelines for submissions, calibration, and reporting.

Where submitted records cannot be assessed due to a lack of relevance to debt, or missing information, replacement files will be submitted in their place to maintain the validity of test and learn. Details will be included in the guidance around timelines.

We will also continue to gather your feedback throughout the process to inform developments.

Queries

Please continue to send queries to the MaPS Quality email address: mapsquality@maps.org.uk or speak to your MaPS Quality Manager.

Thank you for your continued support.

The Service Performance, Quality and Standards Team