



ASCENTI

# Quality Account 2020/21

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# Part one

## Statement from our Executive Team

Over the last year, Ascenti has navigated the coronavirus pandemic and various lockdowns that posed significant challenges across the healthcare industry. During this period, we turned our physiotherapy delivery to a fully online model, allowing us to continue seeing patients virtually, and then introduced new safety measures to ensure our clinics were COVID-secure when they reopened. We remain a trusted partner to over 20 NHS organisations and 400 private businesses and help thousands of people to elevate their health and live active lives every day.

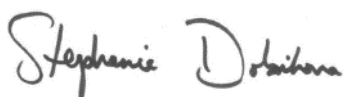
This Quality Account meets the requirements set out by the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). It reports on the quality of our services during 2020/21 and key areas of accountability, including: safety, effectiveness of treatment, clinical quality, safeguarding and patient experience.

Despite the disruption of the global pandemic, Ascenti made progress with our quality improvement priorities set last year, which this report will recap. Working towards enhancing our Quality and Assurance Framework by defining standards and expectations across our organisation, and taking steps to increase staff engagement around equality, diversity and inclusion. We continued to build on our work to promote health as a work outcome and have embedded our core values throughout our business.

Over the next year our goals are to....

The past year has been like no other and everyone in the Ascenti team has played an instrumental part in our response. Whether it be adjusting to homeworking, delivering care online or getting used to new safety measures and PPE in clinic, everybody can be proud of their commitment to providing excellent patient care in the most challenging of circumstances. Over the next year our goals are to develop our First Contact Practitioner programmes, further develop our digital healthcare services, build upon the great work being done in equality, diversity and inclusion, and complete earlier objectives that we were delayed in achieving during the last reporting period.

This Quality Account has been endorsed by our Executive Team and we confirm that the content reflects a balanced view of the quality of our services. We believe, to the best of our knowledge, that the information contained in this document is accurate and informative.



**Stephanie Dobrikova**  
CEO

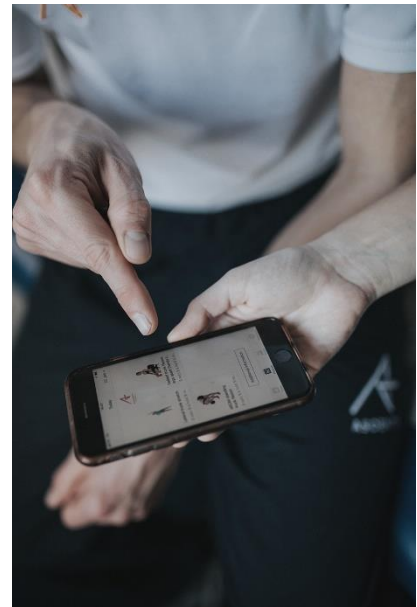


# We are Ascenti

Ascenti is the leading provider of physiotherapy, mental health services and selected clinical outsourcing in the UK. We are a dynamic and progressive company with more than 20 years' experience serving both the public and private sectors.

We take our responsibilities as a healthcare provider seriously and boast one of the strongest clinical governance frameworks in the industry. This is one of the reasons we are a trusted partner to more than 20 NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and 400 private businesses.

Our dedicated in-house Governance and Quality Team is made up of qualified clinicians, specialist medical advisors and subject matter experts. They work across our business to uphold the highest industry standards and the best possible patient and customer experience, and we pride ourselves on consistently achieving exceptional service levels.



## Executive Team



**Stephanie Dobrikova**  
Chief Executive Officer



**Kevin Doyle**  
Chief Commercial Officer  
(Physiotherapist)



**Adam Jarvis**  
Chief Operating Officer  
(Physiotherapist)



**Joel Booth**  
Chief Governance & Quality  
Officer (Physiotherapist)



**Sophie Harper**  
Chief People &  
Communications Officer



**Jacinta Magee**  
Chief Financial Officer



**Dan Pemberton**  
Chief Customer Officer

## Clinical Development



Our Clinical Development Team is led by our Head of Clinical Excellence, Alison Day, who has overseen the creation and development of our national clinical development programme for the last three years.

Alison has acquired a deep understanding of teaching and curriculum design in both a virtual and digital learning environment, working for five years as a Lecturer at the top ranked Physiotherapy Schools within Cardiff University.

She is a qualified Physiotherapist and holds an MSc in Manual Therapy, fellowship of the Higher Education Academy and has 16 years of NHS experience as an Advanced Physiotherapy Practitioner.

Alison is supported by a nationwide team of Service Leads, Regional Development Leads and Clinical Mentors who support our network of physiotherapists and deliver our clinical development programme.

## Our values

Our core values shape the way we work and behave.



### Pioneering

We're a passionate bunch of people, who aren't afraid to innovate and try new ideas to raise the bar.



### United

We believe that unity lifts us above the competition, so we work together with partners, teams and communities.



### Caring

We care about what we do and want to achieve the highest standards for everyone we work with.



### Dependable

We deliver on our promises and provide accessible, reliable and effective treatments that are a cut above.



## COVID-19 Statement

During 2020 and 2021, Ascenti continued to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, which involved reacting quickly to local lockdowns and the government tier system to maintain service delivery across the nation. Our ability to deliver excellent patient care virtually, ensured our patients continued to receive the treatment and support they needed during the pandemic and achieve positive clinical outcomes.

### Continuity of care

Ascenti demonstrated agility and resilience when the first lockdown was imposed in March 2020 by moving all in-person appointments online when our 300 clinics were closed. Since then, our well-established virtual physiotherapy service has allowed us to operate a blended model of in-person and online care, depending on the unique needs and circumstances of our patients.

Not only did this provide continuity of care for our patients who depended on us to support them through the pandemic, it also meant our partners could rely on us to maintain a normal service for their patients. We have proved Ascenti to be an adaptable and agile business and have strengthened key existing relationships and secured new contracts because of this.

Our patients sit at the heart of everything we do, and throughout the last year we are proud to have maintained strong patient satisfaction.

### Paradigm Shift

The operational and clinical success of our virtual physiotherapy service has led to the increasing acceptance of digital solutions within the physiotherapy sector, after we published the data of over 27,000 patients that proved online therapy was an effective method of care that delivered strong treatment outcomes. We have consolidated our position as the market leaders in digitally-enabled MSK care within the UK. Ascenti has also proven to be a company that takes its social responsibility seriously, by running campaigns and implementing strategies that reflect this.

In 2020 we were acutely aware of the lack of large-scale research to validate virtual physiotherapy as an effective treatment option. Because of this, and the wealth of patient data we had accumulated, we conducted a comparative observational study of 27,000+ patients between June 2019 and June 2020, and published our findings in a [whitepaper](#). This study compared patients who had received virtual treatment only, in-person treatment only, or a mix of virtual and face-to-face care.

We submitted our study to the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy who published our service evaluation in the [Innovations in Physiotherapy Database](#), highlighting the significance of our work and the lasting impact we believe it will have within the physiotherapy sector.

### Supporting our staff

Ascenti also demonstrated its commitment to supporting staff during this challenging period. Our employee health and wellbeing strategy has been shortlisted in the CIPR Excellence Awards, in the category 'Best COVID Response'. This recognises our dedication to providing staff with the support

they needed during the pandemic, including an internal wellness campaign, company-wide wellbeing survey, regularly sharing and signposting to useful resources and a series of online wellbeing talks covering sleep, anxiety and depression.

### **A company that cares**

Following the first lockdown announcement, Ascenti launched an external campaign offering [free online appointments to the over-65s and NHS workers](#), to help keep those isolating and fighting coronavirus healthy during the pandemic. We shared the campaign across our social media channels and promoted it with social advertisements, gaining over 1.1m impressions, 5,000+ click-throughs and over 100 enquiries. Our campaign was featured by the Guardian in their article: '[Superhero firms helping out in the coronavirus crisis](#)'.

We also published several self-help articles on our website aimed at supporting people through the lockdown:

- [Physio tips for home workers](#)
- [Five physio tips for pregnancy during self-isolation](#)
- [Five stretches for home workers](#)
- [Protecting yourself and others from injury when isolating](#)
- [How to set up an ergonomic home office](#)
- [Working from home ruining your posture? Here's how to sit properly](#)
- [Recovery following respiratory illness](#)

Between March 2020 and March 2021 our advice articles have received over 100,000 page views.

### **Building back better**

We have also developed and implemented a [social and sustainability strategy](#) which aims to make Ascenti a better company for our people, planet and society, by committing to sustainable practices, enhancing livelihoods of both our staff and patients, and improving health and wellbeing for all.

While in its infancy, we look forward to seeing this strategy develop and have several projects planned for 2021/22 including increasing recycling within our clinics, changing our approach to staff travel by reducing mileage and promoting sustainable travel options instead, and creating a more inclusive and diverse environment at every level within Ascenti.

### **COVID and our Quality Account Objectives**

During the pandemic resource was directed to ensuring continuity of care for our patients, the re-opening of in-clinic care and ensuring safe systems of care for our staff and patients. We have been unable to progress all our quality improvement objectives during this period and we remain committed to ensuring we deliver upon these in 2021/22.



98%

of patients were satisfied with our  
response to COVID-19

"I felt very safe in your clinics and my therapist followed all health  
and safety rules, the staff in the clinic were friendly too.

"The online virtual physio sessions were fantastic and followed my  
progress and supported me when the pandemic was at its worse,  
then when the clinics opened it was nice to have a review and  
recap. Thank you again for all your support."

NHS Patient



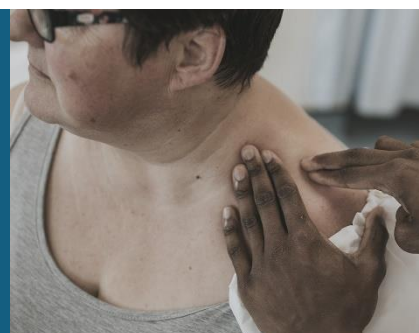
## Some statistics from 2020/21

94%

of our NHS patients were  
satisfied or very satisfied  
with our service

36k+

NHS referrals



20+

the number of Clinical  
Commissioning Groups we  
worked with in 2020/21

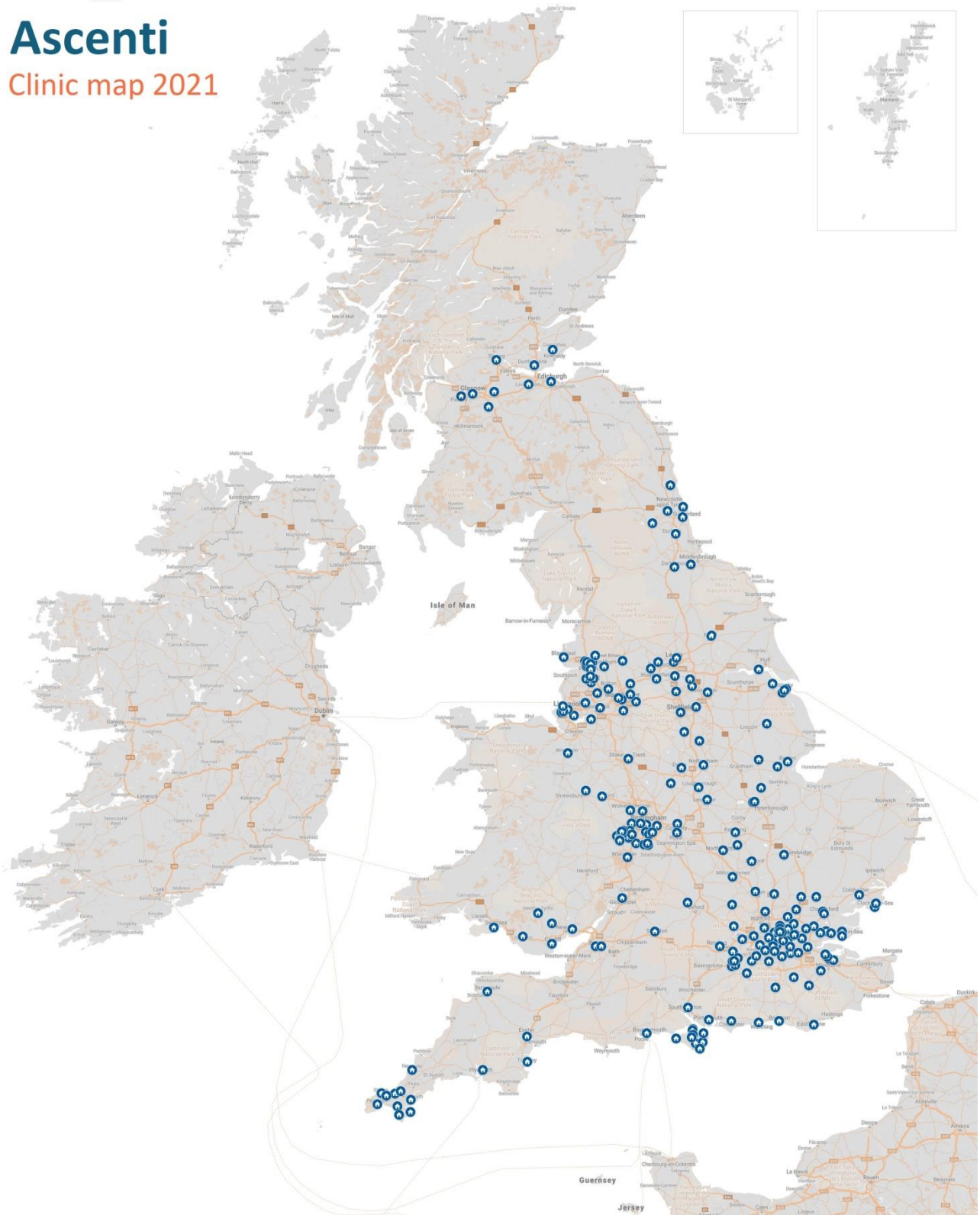


114k+

Completed NHS  
appointments

## Ascenti clinic locations

### Ascenti Clinic map 2021



# Part two

## Quality improvement priorities 2021 / 22

Throughout the year, progress against our quality priorities will be monitored by Ascenti's Executive Team.

### Priority 1

#### Develop pathways aligned to Health Education England Roadmaps for Advanced Practice

To create and implement a pathway of career progression for aspiring and existing FCPs/ACPs which is aligned to the HEE Roadmaps of Advanced Practice, which ensures staff are developed and supported to gain accreditation as FCPs/ACPs on completion.

Domain(s)	How we will achieve this	How we will measure this
Learning and Development	Assign appropriate clinicians as FCP supervisors and undertake accredited supervisor training.	Accepted on HEE register of verified FCP supervisors
	Consultant Physiotherapist and Head of Clinical Excellence to work in collaboration to create a development pathway which identifies key activities, competencies, time allocation, a dedicated supervisor and an appropriate clinic to work in.	Portfolio submission for each clinician, and clinicians being accepted onto the Centre for Advanced Practice register
	Job plans for advanced roles mapped out which facilitate the hours of support and supervision needed to fulfil the HEE requirements.	Feedback from staff and monitoring progress along pathway closely to ensure appropriate hours are allocated which allow progression and completion within 12 months

### Priority 2

#### Provide innovative, effective app-based physiotherapy care for self-management

Ascenti will be enhancing the ability of our patients to engage in self-management of their condition and have wider options to access care and support via digital technologies. This objective is consistent with the NHS agenda to transform health and care through technology. In 2021/22 Ascenti will launch our Ascenti Reach App, providing digital assessment, automated exercise prescriptions, online self-management programmes, reminders, progress tracking and direct chat interaction with a physiotherapist.

Domain(s)	How we will achieve this	How we will measure this
Learning and development	Development of a training manual for those physios using the dashboard	Physiotherapist competency assessment. Review of their app-based patient management.
Product development	Clinical review of digital assessment and rehabilitation against up-to-date evidence	Peer review
Service evaluation	Audit and evaluation of app based care	Review of management information/data relating to patient, clinician and referrer outcomes and feedback

### Priority 3

#### **Integrate equality, diversity and inclusion with our social and sustainability strategy (SASS) to develop one effective system**

Through this quality priority Ascenti will further enhance our work and systems in these areas and build upon the work already undertaken. We aim to develop a system and implement and integrate this into the business to deliver meaningful progress that can be quantified in future reporting periods.

Domain(s)	How we will achieve this	How we will measure this
Patient experience	Deliver against our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Delivery System (EDIDS) Project Plan	Project milestones Completed outcome measure evaluation forms Stakeholder engagement
Staff experience	Embed EDI and SASS topics into our frameworks, policies and contract reviews.  Seek out accreditation and standards in EDI, delivering a best practice or innovative initiative that truly delivers for our patients and staff  Cover EDI and equal opportunities as part of talent management at Ascenti and create a programme to coach and mentor rising talent	Cover EDI and SASS reporting in new dashboards and data  Plan cyclical employee events and feedback mechanisms covering EDI and SASS

The following priorities are carried forward from 2020/21 due to COVID-19

## Priority 4

### Develop an enhanced Quality and Assurance Framework

We care about what we do and want to achieve the highest standards for everyone we work with. Quality sits at the heart of Ascenti and runs throughout every part of our organisation and everything we do – from every patient encounter through to the decisions we make for our business. We live by our values, caring, dependable, united and pioneering, shaping how we behave and how we work with everyone from our patients including their carer's and family, our staff and our customers, working to deliver the very best services for all.

For this priority we will be enhancing our existing Quality and Assurance Framework, defining the diverse set of standards and expectations we set ourselves across our organisation. Our new framework will also define how we measure and gain assurance that we are meeting our own high expectations and also those of our patients, customers and other stakeholders.

This will epitomise how we strive to continually improve and hold ourselves to account, seeking assurance that we are delivering the very best care and understand how we can continually push the boundaries of what we do.

Domain(s)	How we will achieve this	How we will measure this
Quality	Define quality domains, map quality across our business, define a series of quality statements and link with our company values	Implementation of a new documented Quality and Assurance Framework
Effectiveness		
Culture		Development of a reporting data suite and Quality and Assurance reporting database and dashboard
Integrated Governance		

## Priority 5

### Vocational rehabilitation

The '[Improving lives: the future of work, health and disability](#)' policy paper sets out clear ambitions to reduce the disability and employment gap. The downward spiral of declining health and absence from work is identified as a major injustice in our society. In this priority we will continue to build upon the work we have undertaken in 19/20 and 20/21 in promoting health as a work outcome, ensuring consistent integration of vocational rehabilitation within the rehabilitation programmes and care we provide.

Domain(s)	How we will achieve this	How we will measure this
Patient experience	Training and education	Statistical analysis of outcomes
Clinical effectiveness	Workshops	Staff feedback
Quality	Embed vocational rehabilitation into clinical practice	Patient feedback Training statistics

## Achievements against 2020 / 21 quality improvement objectives

### Priority 1

#### Develop an enhanced Quality and Assurance Framework



Following an extensive period of consultation, planning and implementation, we successfully launched our new system of clinical note recording in January 2021. This project was a considerable undertaking, involving a wide number of stakeholders across the organisation, working together and focused on the successful implementation.

Our new 'treatment notes application' was designed by clinicians, clinical governance, learning and development, and Ascenti Digital (our in-house software development team). Whilst it is designed to meet all required standards for electronic record keeping, it was developed from the ground-up to provide rich quality data for evidencing the effectiveness of the care and clinical outcomes our physiotherapists provide our patients.

Our ability to progress the second stage of this project, to revamp our quality and assurance framework and develop reporting suites, has been delayed due to resource being directed to ensuring continuity of care and safe governance systems for operating during COVID-19. Initial work has been undertaken defining an overarching framework and establishing:

- Quality Domains
- Quality Measures
- Quality Statements

We are committed to ensuring we deliver on this quality priority and will continue this work by carrying this forward as a 2021/22 priority.



*"We continually challenge ourselves to enhance the experience and outcomes of our patients. Our new treatment notes application is a significant step toward capturing greater levels of healthcare data and enhancing our analytical capabilities to see where we are doing well and where we can target quality improvements."*

**Joel Booth**  
Chief Governance & Quality Officer



Develop an enhanced Quality and Assurance Framework			
Domain(s)	Success measures	2020 / 21 progress	Status
Quality Effectiveness	Implement a new clinical recording system with enhanced metrics	New clinical notes system was implemented and rolled out across the organisation	Completed
Culture Integrated Governance	Define quality domains, map quality across our business, define a series of quality statements and link with our company values	Work commenced to develop and document the Quality and Assurance Framework which will in turn inform the development of the reporting database and dashboard	On-going – priority to continue forward for 2021/22 period

## Priority 2



### Equality, diversity and inclusion

Due to the effects of Covid we have not progressed our EDIDS (Equality Diversity Inclusion Delivery System) past the gathering evidence stage of the first cycle. Instead we have opted to focus on implementing some immediate steps to better equality, diversity and inclusion. Some of these steps include:

1. The Equality, Diversity and inclusion committee has further evolved into a wider Social and Sustainability Strategy (SASS) to better suit our remote setting. This now covers EDI and employee livelihood matters and takes a more holistic approach aiming to make Ascenti a better company for our planet, people and society.
2. We launched an internal education series called 'Voices for Change' using the topics raised by staff as opportunities to keep conversations about EDI going and to explore specific issues. This series involved inviting external speakers to join our staff virtually in Teams meetings, with topics including the history of colonialism and racism within healthcare, white privilege, mental health, demystifying disabilities among others.
3. An important step in 2021 was the implementation of a new HR system HRIS – Natural HR / myLaunchpad. This allows us to better understand the demographics of our workforce, and will enable us to spot trends and set targets. Ascenti is also trialling the use of diversity focused recruitment platforms to appeal to a more diverse audience. Other areas of focus include reducing staff mileage, greening our tech and reducing paper usage.
4. We established partnerships / joint working with three EDI focused recruitment agencies – Daisy Chain, Astriid and the Diversity Job Board.



## Voices for Change

During the 2020/21 period, we implemented our 'Voices for Change' programme. Our companywide programme took the lid-off, and fully examined, a range of different interesting subjects. This provided a forum for open discussion and debate, to explore how we can action meaningful, long-term change that will help us create a better future. These sessions keep the equality, diversity and inclusion conversation going and exploring how we continue to breakdown barriers and challenge our thinking.

Our Voices for Change programme:

- History, Colonialism and Healthcare
- The Privilege Café
- Disability & Ableism
- What you need to know about disability
- Race, sexuality and gender identity
- Fitness and eating disorders
- How we can all improve the way we communicate with people who may be different to us
- Daisy Chain
- Sleep: how to get it and what to do if you can't
- Mental Health Monday's

Equality, diversity and inclusion			
Domain(s)	Success measures	2020 / 21 progress	Status
Patient experience	New stakeholders identified	Methods of gathering evidence established	Ongoing - 21/22 Priority 3
Staff experience	Well attended voices for change sessions	Voices for change sessions set up and positive feedback received	Completed
		New HR system implemented	Completed

## Priority 3



### Promoting work as a health outcome (vocational rehabilitation)

Since setting this as a quality priority, we developed multiple areas to support the promotion of work as a health outcome, these have included:

## System Development

The redevelopment of our treatment notes application (priority 1) is a facilitator of this objective by underpinning the learning, providing prompts for the integration of vocational rehabilitation into a person's care and allow for data collation to measure the effectiveness of our vocational rehabilitation programme.

## Special Interest Groups

We have setup dedicated intranet page and special interest groups to foster the development and experience of our staff within this area of clinical speciality

## Training

We have continued our in-house training covering health behaviour and change which includes subject areas such as: psychology of health and illness, psychological concepts of behavioural change and psychosocial flag framework (including work beliefs). During the next reporting period we aim to deliver additional targeted vocational rehabilitation training.

Vocational rehabilitation			
Domain(s)	Success measures	2020 / 21 progress	Status
Patient experience	Training and education	Training programmes prepared – second stage of training continuing into next reporting period	Partially achieved and ongoing as part of 2021/22 priority
Clinical effectiveness	Workshops		
Quality	Embedding vocational rehabilitation into clinical practice	System development completed  Dedicated intranet page and special interest groups established	

## Priority 4



### Promoting values

In 2020 we set out to further embed our core values throughout our business, ensuring they shape the way we promote and celebrate excellence within our workforce and define our delivery of patient care. Our four core values are pioneering, caring, united, dependable, and our three key areas of focus were our company culture, staff development and recruitment. We have successfully delivered across each of these areas.

Our four core values were selected in 2017 when we first launched the Ascenti brand, and they are now central to all areas of our business. Throughout the pandemic our staff have lived and breathed our values, displaying commitment and working together and supporting each other to ensure our patients continued to receive an excellent service.



### Employee recognition

In 2020 we launched an employee recognition programme called the VIP (Values In Practice) Awards. We created two awards for each value with descriptions of what the awards stood for and what the criteria were.

Via our weekly e-newsletter InSight, all staff were invited to nominate colleagues who they felt deserved one of the awards. Nominations involved writing a detailed entry about the staff member and how they had performed against the award criteria.

#### Caring



Going the Extra Mile  
Customer Hero

#### United



Best Collaborative  
Working  
Inspiring Leader

#### Pioneering



Champion of Change  
Digital Adopter

#### Dependable



Employee of the Year  
(one for each workstream)  
Unsung Hero

Due to coronavirus, in November 2020 we took the decision to reimagine the VIP Awards to recognise the exceptional circumstances that our staff had contended with that year. We therefore came up with six new award categories, still influenced by our four values, that reflected the specific challenges posed by COVID-19.

<b>The Morale Booster</b>	Someone who has remained positive through change and challenging times. They have actively tried to help keep spirits high and clearly care about the morale of their peers.
<b>Virtual Victor</b>	Someone who has taken new ways of working in their stride and continued to deliver great standards of work through a virtual platform (includes video call or phone call).

<b>Customer Champion</b>	Someone with exceptional customer service skills who strives to do everything they can to provide a great experience for their patients or customers.
<b>The Chameleon</b>	Someone who proved to shift and flex in their role in response to the changing environment around them. In short, they are a chameleon who has shown confident adaption to suit the situation they were faced with.
<b>The People's Leader</b>	Someone who has demonstrated exceptional leadership skills through a time that your team needed a leader the most! They truly care about their team and this is shown by the strong relationships they build with others.
<b>Back With A Bang</b>	Someone who has returned to work and got straight back into delivering great work. They did not let their time away from the business dispel their work ethic and came back with a bang!

Managers were invited to nominate employees within their team and around the business who had demonstrated the above qualities. Our staff newsletter featured a 'wall of excellence' that named every employee who had been nominated, with over 130 nominations in total, and each employee received a certificate of excellence.



The Executive Team then voted on a winner for each category from each business area. These were announced during a company-wide virtual Christmas party that took place on Microsoft Teams, which was an important way to bring our business together and celebrate the hard work and dedication of our staff.

### Staff development

As well as employee recognition, we also wanted to involve our values in staff development. A new business-wide appraisal process was launched, including a performance review where staff and managers are encouraged to assess their performance and achievements against the four company values. As shown in the table below, staff are encouraged to discuss examples of what they have done that demonstrates their performance within each value, and identify areas for improvement. Employees then work with their managers to decide on a score out of five for each section.

<b>Pioneering</b> Adding to the growth of Ascent	<i>Examples</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proactively making suggestions to improve processes and increase efficiencies.</li> <li>Being involved in changes and projects that affect the company.</li> <li>Involvement in company-wide communications such as the newsletter, social media etc.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation in charity fundraising activities.</li> </ul>
<b>United</b> Making a meaningful team contribution	<i>Examples</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seeking opportunities to support colleagues.</li> <li>Being a referral point for less experienced team members.</li> <li>Sharing your knowledge and skills with colleagues</li> <li>Helping other teams with their workload.</li> <li>Seeking and giving constructive feedback.</li> </ul>
<b>Caring</b> Demonstrating excellent customer-focused service delivery	<i>Examples</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building strong working relationships with customers (internal and external as appropriate).</li> <li>Receiving positive customer feedback.</li> <li>Maintaining customer focus in your work, taking time to understand client needs.</li> <li>Going the extra mile for customers.</li> <li>Keeping customers up-to-date on progress.</li> <li>Developing a trusted advisor relationship with customers.</li> </ul>
<b>Dependable</b> Expertly performing your job role	<i>Examples</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistently meeting and achieving the essential targets and objectives of your role.</li> <li>Achieving strong levels of role knowledge and (if applicable) project management skills.</li> <li>Taking ownership of your development, expanding your knowledge.</li> <li>Maintaining accuracy and keeping errors to a minimum.</li> <li>Managing your time and workload effectively</li> <li>Being able to prioritise in the face of competing priorities.</li> <li>Understanding your strengths and weaknesses and learning from mistakes.</li> </ul>

## Recruitment

Our third area of focus was recruitment. We live by our values and these drive us to continually improve, challenge ourselves to be the best and achieve the best outcomes. By embedding values into our recruitment process, it means we not only work with staff that have the right skills, but also the right individual values and behaviours that are aligned to our own. Through our values-based recruitment programme we have made significant strides to continually promote our values in everything thing we do and delivering exceptional patient care.

Domain(s)	Success measures	2020 / 21 progress	Status
Culture	Implementation of a recognition and rewards programme linked to our values	Ascenti VIP (Values In Practice) Awards Christmas 2020	Completed
Personal / professional development	Values based recruitment	Values based recruitment and appraisal processes implemented	
Recruitment	Values based appraisal processes		

## Statement of assurance from our Executive Team

During 2020/21 Ascenti provided NHS Community Physiotherapy and Advanced Physiotherapy MSK assessment and treatment services to over 20 NHS organisations. Ascenti has reviewed all available data regarding the quality of the NHS services we have delivered.



### Participation in clinical audits and confidential enquiries

During the reporting period 2020/21, no national clinical audits and no confidential enquiries covered the NHS services that Ascenti provides.



### Participation in clinical research

Participation in clinical research demonstrates Ascenti's commitment to improving the quality of care we offer and to making our contribution to wider health improvement.

Ascenti published a whitepaper on the effectiveness of virtual physiotherapy. This drew on the data we have captured from treating over 27,000 patients virtually between June 2019 – June 2020, including pre-COVID-19 data.



### Care Quality Commission

Ascenti is required to register with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) for the regulated activity of 'treatment of disease, disorder or injury'. Ascenti has no conditions placed on its registration and there have been no inspections to report on. The CQC has not taken any enforcement action against Ascenti during 2020/21. Ascenti has not participated in any special reviews or investigations by the CQC during the reporting period.

During 2020/21 we worked with the Care Quality Commission as part of their Transitional Monitoring approach during the coronavirus pandemic. We provided our Inspector with comprehensive information covering how we have ensured the safety and wellbeing of our patients and staff.



### Secondary uses services

During 2020/21, Ascenti did not submit records to the 'Secondary Uses Service' for inclusion in the Hospital Episode Statistics.



### Payment by results

Ascenti was not subject to the payment by results clinical coding audit during 2020/21 by the Audit Commission.



### Commissioning for quality and innovation payment framework (CQUIN)

A proportion of Ascenti's income in 2020/21 was conditional on achieving quality improvement and innovation goals agreed between Ascenti and contracts incorporating the CQUIN framework. These schemes include:

- Friends and Family survey targets
- Staff friends and family survey targets
- Shared decision making
- GP education
- Sharing learning from practice
- Patient education



### Duty of candour

Our Duty of Candour and Whistleblowing policies are available to all staff and are aligned with CQC regulation 20. We aim for the highest ethical standards by encouraging a culture of openness, transparency and candour throughout our organisation. To support this, we have developed specific duty of candour training for our induction and mandatory training programme. We have also integrated duty of candour triggers into our risk based complaint and incident pathways within our Datix Cloud IQ system and established dashboard reporting to have greater oversight of compliance.



### Freedom to speak up

Freedom to Speak Up Guardians support workers to speak up when they feel that they are unable to do so by other routes. They ensure that people who speak up are thanked, that the issues they raise are responded to, and make sure that the person speaking up receives feedback on the actions taken. Guardians also work proactively to support their organisation to tackle barriers to speaking up. Ascenti have an appointed Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, however the principles of Freedom to Speak Up are actively promoted by our Compliance Team and throughout our organisation through the creation of an open, just and learning culture.





## Data quality

Ascenti operates management systems that ensure the quality and integrity of our data. Good quality information is essential for effective patient care and quality, through being able to measure, monitor and report upon our data.

We have a dedicated Management Information team and all members are employed for their attention to detail and analytical skills. Quality is assured via a number of procedures and ensuring all SQL queries and codes used for data retrieval from our bespoke database are peer reviewed.



## Data Security and Protection Toolkit

For 2020/21, Ascenti completed our Data Security and Protection Toolkit submission and are compliant with the National Data Guardian's Data Security Standards, meeting statutory obligations on data protection and data security.

We continue our commitment to maintain both an effective ISO 27001 management system and our regular meetings that focus on ensuring the quality, integrity and security of our data.



## Safeguarding

Safeguarding is fundamental within Ascenti and our Executive Team continue to have ultimate responsibility for safeguarding. This ensures people are protected against any risk of abuse or avoidable harm, their welfare is promoted and their human rights are respected. During 2020/21, Ascenti enhanced our Safeguarding Frameworks.

### Safeguarding System

Our revamped system enhances our commitment to Safeguarding, promoting that safeguarding is a shared responsibility, with the need for effective joint working between agencies and professionals that have different roles and expertise to protect vulnerable groups in society from abuse and avoidable harm. In order to achieve effective joint working there must be constructive relationships at all levels, promoted and supported by the following objectives of our system:

- Detail the structure, framework and systems for safeguarding in Ascenti;
- Detail how Ascenti seek assurance for the compliance and effectiveness of our systems;
- Achieve legal, regulatory and statutory compliance;
- Raise awareness of the key process that underpins safeguarding;
- Ensure we take quick and coordinated action to:
  - identify and stop abuse or neglect wherever possible;
  - prevent harm and reduce the risk of abuse or neglect to children and adults at risk;
  - safeguard in a way that supports them in making choices and having control about how they want to live;

- Set out roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for safeguarding;
- Remove barriers to sharing information to facilitate safety, responsiveness and multi-agency working; and
- Be open and transparent about the Company safeguarding systems.

### **Safeguarding training**

To enable us to discharge our safeguarding responsibility to an even higher standard, we have enhanced our training provision and made it available to all our clinical staff via our e-learning platform. Our mandatory safeguarding training covers:

- Mental capacity act
- Safeguarding children and young people
- Safeguarding adults at risk and vulnerable people
- PREVENT
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Domestic violence and abuse
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Forced marriage
- Modern slavery
- Trafficking

## CQC Registered Manager statement of assurance

Ascenti continues to be a registered provider with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) under the Health and Social Care Act 2008. Ascenti Physio is registered as a location for the regulated activity 'treatment of disease, disorder or injury (TDDI)'. Ascenti does not have any conditions placed on its services and the Care Quality Commission has not taken enforcement action against us during the reporting period to year ending 31/03/2021.

Ascenti has not been subject to any special reviews or investigations by the CQC during the reporting period. During Covid we have worked with the CQC to provide full assurances as to the safety of our services to patients and staff under the CQC Transitional Monitoring Approach. We are awaiting a formal CQC inspection which will provide validation of the quality and safety of care that we deliver.

The last year has seen a lot of changes within Ascenti, these include:

- Our comprehensive Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response programme to the COVID-19 pandemic that commenced in February 2020, ensuring the planned, controlled and coordinated progression through our 5-stage response programme that culminated in the rapid transition to virtual services in March 2020.
- Returning to clinic involving extensive risk assessments informing our COVID-19 safety programme that ensured the right patients, are seen by the right practitioners, in the right clinics.
- Introduction of new standard operating procedures for delivering steroid injections during COVID.
- Providing COVID-19 training, dedicated resources, systems for PPE, COVID secure clinics and implementing a series of COVID reporting and data visualisation tools within Datix, providing extensive oversight of safety, risk, trends and tools for recognising possible outbreaks.
- Ensuring the health, well-being, and engagement of our staff through our communication programmes, staff support systems, and health and staff well-being checks that also covered ergonomic assessments, connectivity, security, safety at home, and overall physical and emotional well-being.

In 2020/21, we look forward to further enhancing our services and systems, some of these initiatives include:

- A new medicines management framework across the business;
- New suite of medicines management training videos and intranet resources;
- New and innovative central electronic medicines register; and
- New weekly clinical support sessions as a forum for all our Advanced Physiotherapy Practitioners and First Contact Practitioners, providing peer support and clinical support from subject matter experts in Clinical Pharmacy and Orthopaedics.

These changes will ensure our regulated services are continually challenged and benchmarked for quality improvement and together with our wider governance systems, ensure we deliver services that are safe, caring, effective, responsive and well-led.

Tara Tolan

**CQC Registered Manager**

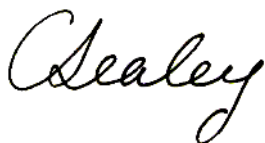
## Infection Prevention Control statement of assurance

Ascenti is committed to complying with the requirements of the Code of Practice for health and adult social care for the prevention and control of infections and related guidance.

We have an infection prevention and control framework which includes: an Infection control lead, risk assessments, policies and procedures based on current best practice, resources available at the point of care, education and training, an annual report, incident reporting process and audits. This strategy has enabled us to continually improve our service.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic our Governance and Quality Team have followed this framework, continuously reviewing and basing decisions on guidance from the government, local authorities and regulatory bodies. Prior to reopening our clinics in June 2020, we conducted a comprehensive programme of risk assessments and developed: standard operating procedures, COVID-19 safety training for all staff, fully equipped clinics with PPE and sanitising products, patients and staff screening processes, a dedicated COVID-19 education resource hub and incident reporting process for COVID-19 and PPE issues. We continue to review and monitor guidance and adapt our practices accordingly to keep our patients and staff safe.

Throughout the forthcoming year we will also raise awareness of other infection prevention and control topics which will include; World hand hygiene day, World sepsis day, National Flu campaign, International infection control week and the “keep antibiotics working” campaign.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Sealey' in a cursive script.

Carole Sealey RGN

**Senior Clinical Governance & IPC Lead**

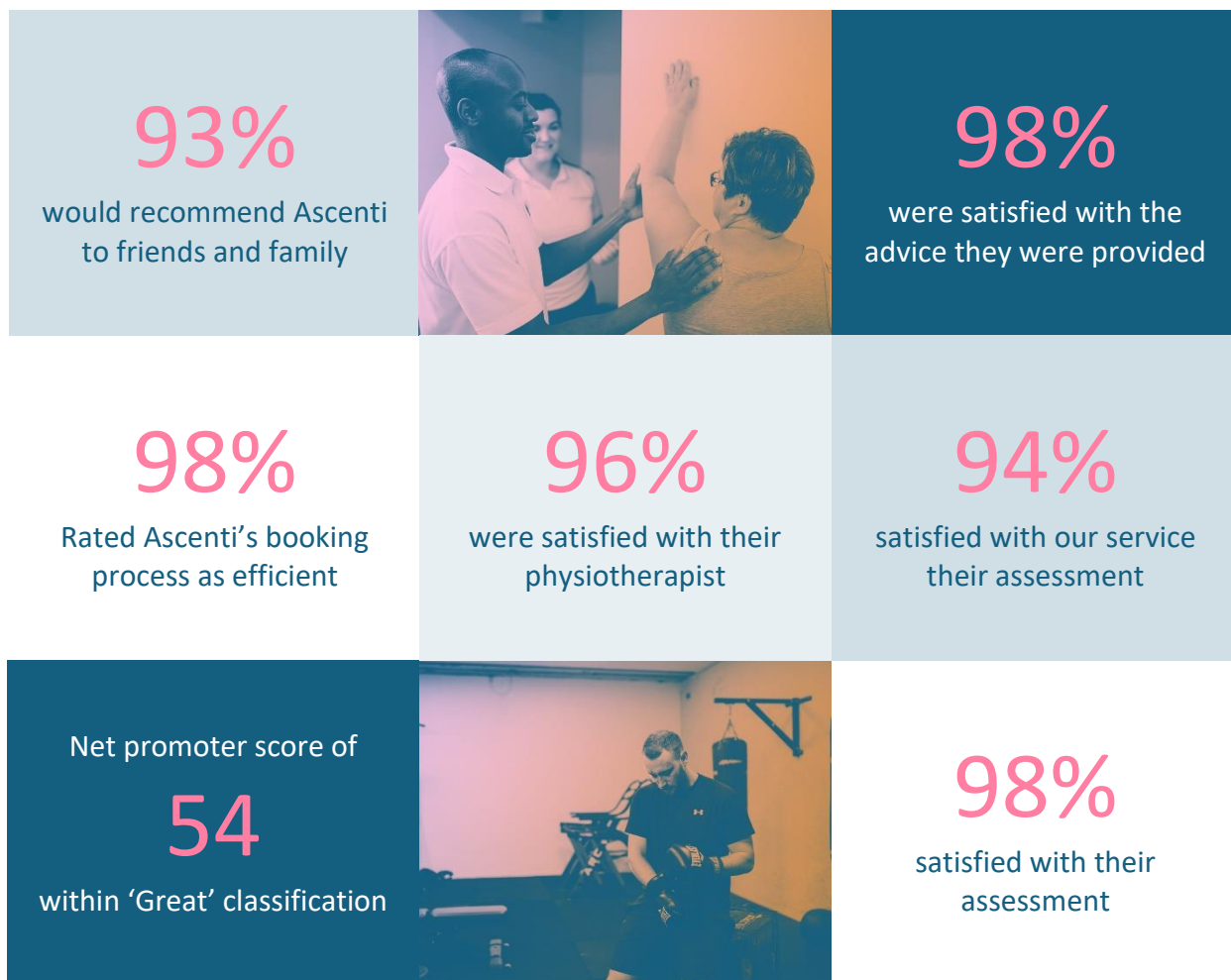
## Part three

### Positive patient experience

At Ascenti we aspire to achieve high standards in all we do. Understanding the experience of our patients is essential to ensure we continually meet the standards of excellent care we strive to achieve.

#### Survey feedback

Survey data collected from 6,701 patients during the COVID-19 pandemic who received a combination of in-clinic and virtual care.



#### Complaints



## Compliments

82

compliments formally  
received from patients

4.3/5

Trustpilot Score

*"I've been hugely impressed by this experience from first contact, the App and particularly my virtual sessions with Adriel. He has diagnosed and understood my problems perfectly and offered excellent suggestions and prescribed and adjusted useful exercises. I have had conventional physio appointments on a previous occasion, some years ago, but not found those as convenient or effective. This is a really good way to deliver this essential service, and Adriel not only knows his specialism but uses the technology brilliantly well."*

**Patient, Surrey Heath**

*"Given the restriction imposed by the need to control the current pandemic it's not been possible to meet with Zayd in person. However, Zayd has helped considerably, he's been flexible in his demands and allowed me the freedom to select exercises that appear beneficial. We've had 3 online consultations and as a result, though I'm not fully recovered, we both agree that I am now at a stage where I can continue the program without any further meetings. He has left me fully confident that should I need to contact him in the next 12 months, he will be there to assist".*

**Patient, Central Lancashire Moving Well Service**

*"I wish to pass on my thanks to you all at Ascenti for your efficient and professional service you have given me. I am most grateful for how swiftly you have dealt with me as one of your patients. Remarkably, my issue with my shoulder and arm has now fixed itself with a combination of gentle exercises and rest. Once again thank you."*

**Patient, Isle of Wight**

*"I would just like to say a big thank you in relation to the online therapy I received in relation to problems with my shoulder. My therapist was Despoina. I found the online exercises really helpful and still do them. I found Despoina professional and very down to earth and easy to talk to. It wasn't too far into the program that I started seeing positive results and I would say that now I no longer have any issues or pain. I am really pleased with the results and wouldn't hesitate recommending this service."*

**Patient, Central Lancashire Moving Well Service**

*"Ihsan has been a brilliant physiotherapist during my whole consultation period. He was able to understand what my issues were and suggested appropriate exercises. Ihsan's advice and recommended exercises have massively helped my left knee pain disappeared and I'm really thankful for that. Ihsan is a great asset to the business who is very professional with great customer service skills. Thank you once again Ihsan!"*

**Patient, Central Lancashire Moving Well Service**

## Enhancing patient safety



### Incidents

We actively promote the reporting of incidents and underpin this by creating a positive safety culture. Achieving a high level of reporting is essential for ensuring we actively identify opportunities to learn and improve our services, improving safety and satisfaction.

Incidents do not necessarily mean harm, rather a deviation from expected delivery, and can relate to matters such as procedures, policies and systems. Underpinning our incident reporting and investigation systems with 'human factors principles' provides significant advantages to the depth of technical analysis and learning opportunities we can achieve.

We recognise high incident reporting as a positive indication that our systems of reporting are effective. During the reporting period we recorded 0.29% incidents as a percentage of appointments.

### Serious incidents

We have had no serious incidents during the period 2020/21.



### Risk Management

Ascenti has further progressed with the implementation of Datix Cloud IQ, our cloud based risk management tool. This has provided significantly enhanced capabilities in respect of managing feedback, incidents, investigations and risk, with cloud based reporting forms, workflow capability, root cause analysis tools and powerful reporting and business intelligence tools. During the reporting period significant enhancements were made to business analytical tools, enabling comprehensive reporting, business intelligence and data visualization.

In addition, Ascenti revamped its Incident Management Policy and associated processes. The purpose of the policy and system implemented is to ensure:

- Consistent recognition of Incident types
- Simple and effective systems for reporting of all types on incidents
- Reporting of incidents is not impeded (i.e. due to processes, systems or culture)
- An appropriate appraisal and recognition of risk grading is made at the outset
- Incidents are dealt with efficiently and to a high standard
- All regulatory, legislative and customer requirements are adhered to
- Incidents are investigated thoroughly
- Involved persons are treated fairly, with respect and courtesy
- Timely and coordinated action
- Transparency, openness and communication relating to the investigation and outcome
- The recurrence of incidents through learning lessons is minimised



- Action is taken if necessary in light of the outcome of an incident
- Consistent recognition of harm and severity

This new framework facilitates, via Datix, a single unified incident reporting system. Regardless of the nature of the incident; all incidents are reported in the same way using the same system. Encouraging the reporting of all incidents and near misses; and promotes steps to implement system barriers to prevent potential as well as actual errors.

## Human Factors

Human Factors is the scientific discipline concerned with the understanding of interactions among humans and other elements of a system. Ascenti applies the principles of human factors, human error models and associated methodologies, including systems-based approaches, to the management of incidents and risk. We therefore remain cognisant of the wider system, its interactions and emergent properties, when analysing incidents and deriving lesson learned. By doing so the company avoids reductionist and root-cause approaches to incidents. As well as identifying what went wrong, by utilising a human factors approach, Ascenti seeks to understand what also went right adding an important dimension to learning and improvement.

## Culture

Ascenti promotes a positive culture that is not based on blame. The company and all those involved in incident management actively promote and maintain awareness of actions to ensure we achieve a/an:

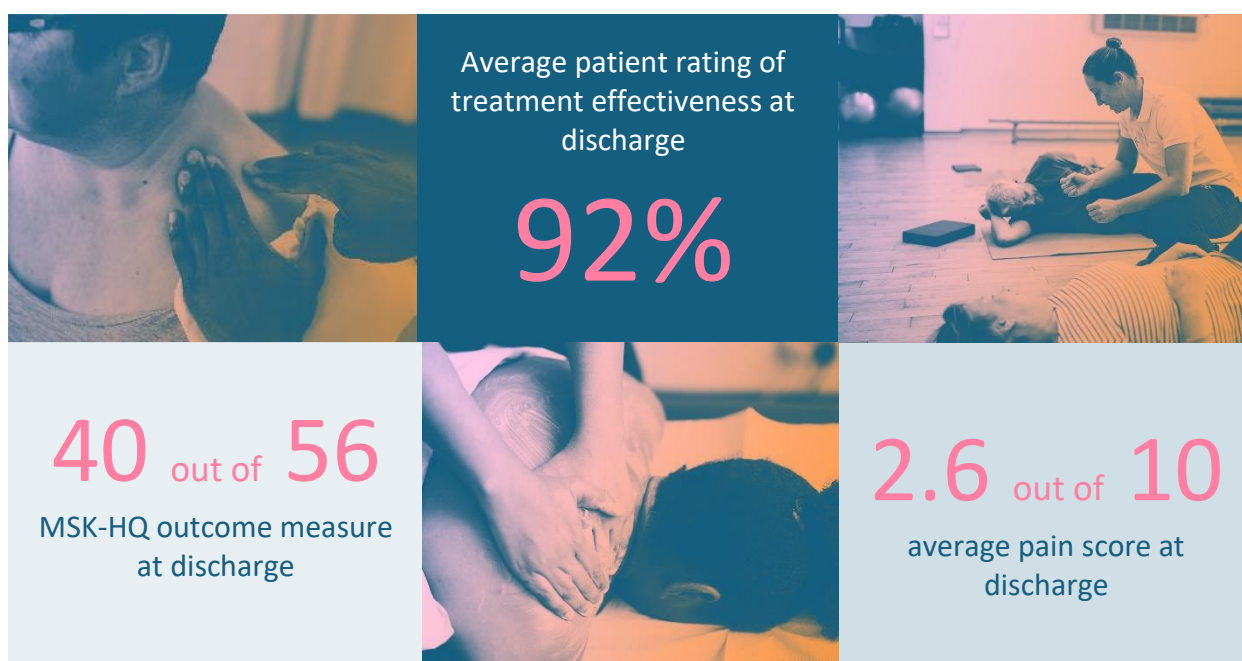
- Open Culture: Staff feel comfortable discussing incidents, raising awareness with colleagues, senior managers.
- Just Culture: Staff/patients treated fairly, with empathy and consideration when they have been involved in an incident.
- Reporting Culture: Staff have confidence in the incident reporting system and use it to notify incidents/near misses.
- Learning Culture: Ascenti is committed to learn safety lessons, communicate to colleagues and remembered over time.
- Informed Culture: Ascenti has learnt from past experience and has the ability to identify and mitigate future incidents because it learns from what has already happened.



### Safety alerts

Between April 2020 and March 2021 there were 12 safety alerts issued by the NHS Central Alerting System, relevant to our service. These predominantly covered COVID-19 related alerts, such as COVID-19 PPE guidance and risk of heat stress from PPE. All safety alerts were acted upon. The Central Alerting System (CAS) is a web-based cascading system for issuing patient safety alerts, important public health messages and other safety critical information and guidance to the NHS and others, including independent providers of health and social care.

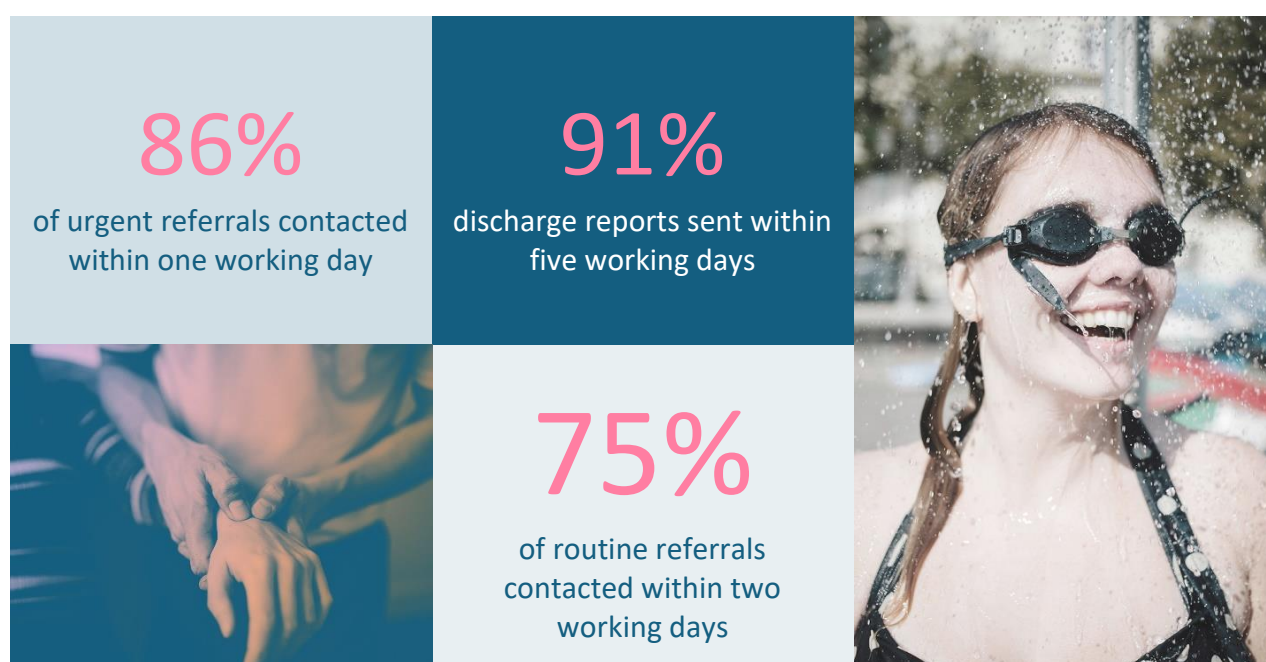
## Elevating clinical effectiveness



The above statistics represent patient recovery at the point of discharge. Our patients are discharged from our service at the point of being able to continue their onward recovery independently through self-management.

PROMs measure	Sample size	% improvement
EQ-5D-5L	548	78%
MSK-HQ	871	79%

## Service performance



## Inspiring innovation

### Digital Healthcare Services

Ascenti analysed the data of 27,000+ patients from June 2019 and June 2020 which culminated in the publication of our [whitepaper](#). This paper was the product of cross-departmental collaboration within the Ascenti Team, including our Virtual Physiotherapy Service Lead, Head of Clinical Excellence, Chief Operating Officer, Chief People and Communications Officer, and other key members of staff.

Virtual physiotherapy was a gradually developing discipline prior to 2020 and Ascenti was the first UK physiotherapy provider to launch an end-to-end digital MSK pathway. In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic and resulting lockdown meant many in-person healthcare services across the country were paused, forcing providers to deliver care remotely. Ascenti adapted our entire service delivery to a remote model to ensure continuity of patient care.

This has led to a greater acceptance of digital healthcare solutions as an alternative to in-person treatment. With our whitepaper being potentially the largest and most comprehensive study of its kind, our findings are a useful resource for other healthcare providers seeking to deliver effective remote care.

#### Results

The analysis revealed that patients are open to trying virtual physio when it is recommended to them. Upon the closure of Ascenti clinics due to Covid-19, 81% of patients agreed to have virtual sessions and continued with them beyond their first session.

Measured on a 10-point pain Numerical Rating Scale (NRS) all patient groups saw significant reductions in their levels of pain following treatment, regardless of what type of treatment they accessed and regardless of the severity of their injury or condition.

In the population-level analysis, patients that combined face-to-face treatment with virtual sessions delivered through the app saw the biggest improvements, moving from a 5.4 NRS score at initial assessment to 1.8 at discharge - an improvement of 3.6 points on average. Patients who only accessed face-to-face treatment reduced their pain by 3.4 points on average, while people who were treated virtually and didn't see a physio in-person improved by an average of 3.1 points.

Further analysis was then conducted to explore how virtual appointments compared with in-person physio when treating different pain levels. The study found that for patients whose NRS score was low or medium, the difference in results between virtual and face-to-face interaction was negligible. Patients with a low NRS score at initial assessment saw an improvement of 1.5 from virtual treatment compared to 1.6 from face-to-face, while patients with a medium NRS score improved by 3.5 with virtual physio compared to 3.6 with face-to-face.

As might be expected, the study found that the difference in outcome between virtual and in-person treatment was more pronounced for patients that scored high on the NRS scale at initial assessment. However, while those patients who only accessed face-to-face treatment did see a 5.2 point improvement, those who were treated virtually still saw a substantial 4.7 point improvement without any manual therapy. This suggests that, even for more severe injuries or conditions, digital treatment remains a viable alternative to in-person physio, while the best results for this group - and overall - were enjoyed by patients that accessed integrated support.

One additional finding from this data supports the idea that engagement in exercises improves outcomes, over-and-above any manual treatment and face-to-face interaction. Patients whose anonymised records showed they accessed exercise videos through the app as part of their virtual treatment saw the biggest improvements in every severity category (low, medium and high NRS). Overall though, integrated support still achieved the best results, perhaps because a greater proportion of patients with high NRS scores were treated with this method.

A final and important finding is that the data suggests that patients who access virtual physiotherapy services are happy with the results. Survey data showed that 92% of patients who were treated virtually were satisfied with its effectiveness and 77% would be 'extremely likely' to recommend the service to friends and family. While this is slightly lower than the results for face-to-face treatment, which were 97% and 81% respectively, it is likely that the gap will close further as trust in virtual physiotherapy increases.



*"We are so pleased that our evaluation has been selected by the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy for inclusion on their database. This validates our efforts to explore virtual physiotherapy and shows the value of our expertise in this field."*

*"This endorsement by the CSP should allow our work to have a wider impact throughout our profession and beyond and highlights the importance of recognising virtual physiotherapy as a viable treatment option for MSK patients."*

**Alison Day, Head of Clinical Excellence**

### **First Contact Practitioner Services**

A First Contact Practitioner is a registered health professional who is the first point of contact for patients, providing faster access to the right level of expertise at the right time – in turn increasing capacity the capacity for General Practitioners. We have developed excellent working relationships with GP practices and Clinical Commissioning Groups and through promoting the value and expertise of our physiotherapists, Ascenti has been delivering first-contact practitioner services. By deploying our physiotherapists to work alongside GPs in general practices and providing expert assessment and treatment for patients with musculoskeletal conditions, we are creating efficiencies and improving the patient experience.

We continue to be a trusted partner to a number of GP practices around the country with many of our services continuing and being extended and have started a number of First Contract Practitioner Services in 2020/21 with these continuing plus additional contracts going live in 2021/22. Our services provide rapid access to physiotherapy and expert clinical assessment services such as injections, ordering investigations and optimising referrals into community physiotherapy or secondary care, driving substantial savings.

We have received excellent feedback from the Clinical Directors and Practice Managers within the GP practices that we are partnering with in the North-West. We are demonstrating the value of First Contact Practitioners, benefiting patients by seeing the right professional, at the right time, and receiving the right advice and management first time. We look forward to reporting our FCP quality data within our next quality account.

**Will Osborne, Area Performance Manager**

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