

2015 Benefits Customer Survey Headline Report

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1. Introduction

During December 2015, Council Tax Benefit and Housing Benefit claimants were contacted by telephone and invited to take part in a short customer satisfaction survey to help us to continue to improve our services. 211 service users took this opportunity to tell us about their experiences of using our services and discuss how we could improve them further.

2. Benefits Customer Survey Results

Q1. Have you had any reason to contact the Benefits Service within the past 12 months? (*please indicate all that apply*)

This was a multiple choice, multiple answer question.

Have you had any reason to contact the Benefits Service within the past 12 months?		
	No.	%
Base	210	100.0%
No	83	39.5%
To make a new claim	38	18.1%
To tell us about a change in your circumstances or address	94	44.8%
To query a benefit payment	2	1.0%
To query a benefit overpayment	3	1.4%
To make a complaint or comment	3	1.4%

The following other reasons were given by respondents:

- *To make a claim and report to COA*
- *To bring in proofs*
- *To hand in wage slips*
- *New job*
- *Change in hours*
- *Children leaving home*
- *To change details*

- *To correct overpayments*
- *To have benefit award explained*
- *Change in circumstances*
- *Gone to the ESA*

Q2. How did you contact us? (please indicate all that apply)

This was a multiple choice, multiple answer question.

How did you contact us? (please indicate all that apply)		
	No.	%
Base	127	100.0%
Telephone	47	37.0%
Visit the Customer Service Centre	81	63.8%
Write a letter	11	8.7%
Send an e-mail	4	3.1%

Q3. Was your query solved without you having to contact us again?

Was your query solved without you having to contact us again?		
	No.	%
Base	128	100.0%
Yes	104	81.3%
No	24	18.8%

Q4. About your last phone call to us - please state if you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Respondents were given five statements and asked whether they strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree with the statements. There was also a 'don't know' option.

Q4: About your last phone call to us - please state if you agree or disagree with the following statements?								
		Base	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
The call was answered quickly	No.	179	27	36	20	3	1	92
	%	16.8%	15.1%	20.1%	11.2%	1.7%	0.6%	51.4%
It was easy to get to the right person to deal with my enquiry	No.	177	30	38	19	4	1	85
	%	16.7%	16.9%	21.5%	10.7%	2.3%	0.6%	48.0%
My query was dealt with quickly	No.	176	35	34	18	4	0	85
	%	16.6%	19.9%	19.3%	10.2%	2.3%	0.0%	48.3%
The person I spoke to knew what they were doing	No.	176	36	38	16	1	1	84
	%	16.6%	20.5%	21.6%	9.1%	0.6%	0.6%	47.7%
The person I spoke to was polite and helpful	No.	178	45	31	17	1	0	84
	%	16.7%	25.3%	17.4%	9.6%	0.6%	0.0%	47.2%
I was treated fairly	No.	177	46	27	18	1	0	85
	%	16.7%	26.0%	15.3%	10.2%	0.6%	0.0%	48.0%

Q5. About your last visit to the Customer Service Centre - please state if you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Respondents were given five statements and asked whether they strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree with the statements. There was also a 'don't know' option.

Q5: About your last visit to the Customer Service Centre - please state if you agree or disagree with the following statements?								
		Base	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
I didn't wait long to be seen	No.	189	68	42	12	7	2	58
	%	16.7%	36.0%	22.2%	6.3%	3.7%	1.1%	30.7%
I could talk in a private place if I wanted	No.	189	45	31	24	12	0	77
	%	16.7%	23.8%	16.4%	12.7%	6.3%	0.0%	40.7%
Things were explained in a way I could understand	No.	189	81	39	10	0	0	59
	%	16.7%	42.9%	20.6%	5.3%	0.0%	0.0%	31.2%
Staff were friendly and polite	No.	189	85	37	10	0	0	57
	%	16.7%	45.0%	19.6%	5.3%	0.0%	0.0%	30.2%
The office was clean and tidy	No.	189	88	35	7	0	0	59
	%	16.7%	46.6%	18.5%	3.7%	0.0%	0.0%	31.2%
I was treated fairly	No.	189	84	38	8	1	1	57
	%	16.7%	44.4%	20.1%	4.2%	0.5%	0.5%	30.2%

Q6. About your last letter or email - please state if you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Respondents were given three statements and asked whether they strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree with the statements. There was also a 'don't know' option.

Q6: About your last letter or email - please state if you agree or disagree with the following statements?								
		Base	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
I received a quick response	No.	171	25	19	18	4	1	104
	%	33.7%	14.6%	11.1%	10.5%	2.3%	0.6%	60.8%
My query was resolved fully	No.	168	28	14	19	4	1	102
	%	33.1%	16.7%	8.3%	11.3%	2.4%	0.6%	60.7%
Things were explained in a way I could understand	No.	169	25	16	19	2	3	104
	%	33.3%	14.8%	9.5%	11.2%	1.2%	1.8%	61.5%

Q7. How easy or difficult is it to understand the following?

Respondents were given three examples and asked how easy or difficult it is to understand each. There was also a 'have not seen' option.

Q7: How easy or difficult is it to understand the following?								
		Base	Very easy	Easy	Neither	Difficult	Very difficult	Have not seen
Our benefits leaflets	No.	211	36	90	14	12	9	50
	%	33.3%	17.1%	42.7%	6.6%	5.7%	4.3%	23.7%
Our benefits claim form	No.	211	38	95	17	19	11	31
	%	33.3%	18.0%	45.0%	8.1%	9.0%	5.2%	14.7%
Our letters	No.	211	32	75	11	30	32	31
	%	33.3%	15.2%	35.5%	5.2%	14.2%	15.2%	14.7%
Our website	No.	211	36	90	14	12	9	50
	%	33.3%	17.1%	42.7%	6.6%	5.7%	4.3%	23.7%

Q8. Have you visited our website for benefits in the last 12 months?

Was your query solved without you having to contact us again?		
	No.	%
Base	210	100.0%
Yes	32	15.2%
No	178	84.8%

Q9. If you have visited our website for benefits, please state if you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Respondents were given three statements and asked whether they strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree with the statements. There was also a 'don't know' option.

Q9: If you have visited our website for benefits, please state if you agree or disagree with the following statements?								
		Base	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
It was easy to find my way around	No.	32	19	9	0	0	2	2
	%	33.3%	59.4%	28.1%	0.0%	0.0%	6.3%	6.3%
I was able to find the information I wanted	No.	32	17	11	0	0	2	2
	%	33.3%	53.1%	34.4%	0.0%	0.0%	6.3%	6.3%
The benefits calculator is easy to use and understand	No.	32	3	7	2	0	1	19
	%	33.3%	9.4%	21.9%	6.3%	0.0%	3.1%	59.4%

Q10. Taking everything into account, how satisfied are you with the Benefits Service overall?

Q10: Taking everything into account, how satisfied are you with the Benefits Service overall?		
	No.	Percentage of respondents
Very satisfied	134	63.8%
Fairly satisfied	60	28.6%
Neither	7	3.3%
Fairly dissatisfied	5	2.4%
Very dissatisfied	0	0.0%
Don't know	4	1.9%

Q11. What would you change about the Benefits Service to make it better (please indicate all that apply)

Respondents were given a list of six areas, and an 'other please specify' option, and asked to indicate all that apply.

Q11: What would you change about the Benefits Service to make it better		
	No.	% of respondents
Our letters	53	70.7%
The Housing and Council Tax Support claim form	16	21.3%
The time we take to deal with claims and changes of circumstances	14	18.7%
The quality of our phone service	4	5.3%
The quality of our face-to-face service	3	4.0%
The availability of information on the Council's website	1	1.3%

The following other comments were given by respondents:

Compliments

- *None/nothing (x11)*
- *Wouldn't change a thing (x13)*
- *Very happy (x12)*
- *Phone service brilliant!*

Contact with employees

- *Difficulties in paying at payment machines in the CSC. like the friendly, human touch of a cashier - and the "banter" that come along with it.*
- *One lady was quite sharp when I was changing bank account and she thought I had more bank accounts than I had.*
- *Member of staff who gave me the wrong information. More training needed.*
- *Simplify procedures not as many options when ringing call centre and somebody to speak more positive at call centre on automated system.*

Other

- *Disabled toilet should have radar lock*

Other comments

- *Issues with money had to pay back, never resolved properly, even though judge said no need to pay. Original letter lost by us. More rent recovery.*
- *Disabled toilet should have radar lock*
- *More services could be available via the telephone rather than having to come into CSC in person*
- *automated questions and answers more human*
- *Has asked if can provide a text messaging service when claims are processed so claimant knows been sorted out as ad an occasion not received our letter, has asked if council tax bill could have a payment card issued with bar code rather than a bill.*
- *The calculation pages*
- *Maybe triage could take and copy wage-slips*
- *Soundproof booths in customer service when discussing private business Everyone can hear you*

Waiting time

- *Has to wait a long time.*
- *Takes far too long.*

Wording/understanding of information

- *Letters can be difficult to understand. Wording could be clearer. (x6)*
- *I find the paper work very difficult*
- *letters and forms are difficult to understand as tenant is dyslexic and would like them to be done so he can understand them*
- *Letters that we send and the claim forms. Customer thinks that claim forms can be confusing and if you're a first time claimer then they are quite daunting. He said to simplify them would be better.*
- *Make it clearer what is to pay.*
- *Customer says letters are daunting at times, and the claim forms are very difficult.*
- *Doesn't give information what rent to pay on letter.*
- *easier to understand simplify the wording on the letters*
- *Award letters could be worded more clearly, and also state what is to actually be paid. Calculations seem daunting.*
- *Specific numbers for specific departments. more private booths, worried everyone can hear what is being said*
- *Letters and forms always sound like they're two-part questions (makes the customer second guess his own knowledge, as he gets confused by them.) This means that he might have to make the journey into town to see us and have everything explained, when this wouldn't be necessary if letters were easier to understand.*
- *Give customers details what they can claim on our literature*
- *Long winded still comes in as letter doesn't explain what she has to pay.*
- *make things clearer what asking for ie self employment info & maintenance info*
- *Reduce pages down and summarise to make clearer*
- *Needs explaining more in detail.*
- *Never understand how much have to pay!*
- *The letters are rather hard to understand. Two council tax forms come in a matter of weeks and both are different. WHY. Staff are helpful.*
- *The time of claims and getting behind with my payment. Told I behind but in the end the council owed me quite a bit of money.*

Q12. It is becoming commonplace to receive important documents by email and this is something we plan to introduce for benefits communications. Would you like to receive your benefits letters by email in the future?

Q12: Would you like to receive your benefits letters by email in the future?		
	No.	%
Base	210	100.0%
Yes	41	19.5%
No	169	80.5%

Q13. We plan to offer more options for claiming benefits. Which of the following ways would you prefer to make your claim?

Q13: We plan to offer more options for claiming benefits. Which of the following ways would you prefer to make your claim?		
	No.	% of respondents
Base	181	100.0%
Online through our website	33	18.2%
Online at a Council office or Housing Association office	3	1.7%
On a paper form through the post	63	34.8%
By phone	26	14.4%
With an advisor by appointment at a Council office	56	30.9%

Q14. Are you aware that you have to notify us of changes in circumstances?

Q14: Are you aware that you have to notify us of changes in circumstances?		
	No.	%
Base	204	100.0%
Yes	199	97.5%
No	5	2.5%

Q15. How would you like to tell us if something has changed? (please indicate all that apply)

Q15: How would you like to tell us if something has changed?		
	No.	% of respondents
Base	207	100.0%
Telephone	118	57.0%
Visit the Customer Service Centre	107	51.7%
Write a letter	16	7.7%
Send an email	4	1.9%
Online via the Council's website	3	1.4%

3. Equalities Monitoring

Q16. Would you be willing to answer a few questions about yourself to help us ensure we are providing a fair service to all customers? All the questions are optional but answering them will help us ensure our services meet the needs of all our communities. Happy to answer equalities questions?

Q16: Are you happy to answer equalities questions?	
Base	204
Yes	139
No	65

Q17. What is your gender?

Q17: What is your gender?	
Base	142
Male	57
Female	85
Transgender	0
Prefer not to say	0

Q18. How old are you?

Q18: How old are you?	
Base	141
Under 16 years	0
16 to 17 years	0
18 to 24 years	6
25 to 34 years	25
35 to 44 years	33
45 to 54 years	29
55 to 64 years	28
65 to 74 years	15
75 years and over	4
Prefer not to say	1

Q19. The Equality Act defines a disability as a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Q19: Do you consider yourself to have a disability?	
Base	129
No	84
Yes - affecting mobility	24
Yes - affecting hearing	3
Yes - affecting vision	2
Yes - a learning disability	2
Yes - affecting mental health	6
Prefer not to say	8

Q20. What is your ethnicity?

Q20: What is your ethnicity?	
Base	142
White British	138
White Irish	0
White and Black Caribbean	1
White and Black African	0
White and Asian	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Black Caribbean	1
Black African	0
Chinese	0
Gypsy	0
Traveller	0
Prefer not to say	1

Q21. Which of the following best describes your religion?

Q21: Which of the following best describes your religion?	
Base	
Buddhist	1
Christian	44
Hindu	0
Jewish	0
Muslim	2
Sikh	0
None	69
Prefer not to say	3

Q22. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

Q22: Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?	
Base	142
Heterosexual	118
Bisexual	0
Lesbian	1
Gay Man	0
Prefer not to say	23