

June/July 2011 Benefits Survey Headline Report

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

During June and July 2011 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. 309 service users took this opportunity to tell us about their experiences of using our services and discuss how we could improve them further.

2.0 BENEFITS CUSTOMER SURVEY RESULTS

Q 1. Have you had any reason to contact the Benefits Service within the past 12 months?

This was a multiple choice question.

Reason	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
No	178	57.6%
To make a new claim	33	10.7%
To tell us about a change in your circumstances or address	80	25.9%
To query a benefit overpayment	13	4.2%
To make a complaint or comment	0	0%

Six other reasons for contacting the service were given:

- Called with a rent enquiry x3
- Organise a repair
- Query a Council Tax Bill
- To query a Community Care Grant

Q 2. If you contacted us, did you?

This was a multiple choice question.

Method of Contact	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Telephone	46	14.9%
Call into the Revenues Hall	75	24.3%
Write a letter	15	4.9%
Send an e-mail	2	0.6%

Two other reasons for contacting the service were given:

- Got in touch with Job Centre Plus x2

Q 3. Was your query resolved without you having to contact us again?

128 respondents answered this question.

80.4% of respondents (103) indicated that their query was resolved without having to contact us again. 19.6% (25) did have to contact us again.

Q 4. About your last phone call, please state if you agree or disagree with the following statements?

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

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
The call was answered quickly	9.4% (26)	9.4% (26)	0.4% (1)	0.7% (3)	0% (0)	80.2% (223)
It was easy to get to the right person to deal with my enquiry	9.4% (26)	9% (25)	0.4% (1)	1.4% (4)	0.4% (0)	79.5% (221)
My query was dealt with quickly	8.3% (23)	9.4% (26)	1.4% (4)	0.7% (2)	0.7% (2)	79.5% (221)
The person I spoke to knew what they were doing	9.7% (27)	9.4% (26)	0.4% (1)	0.7% (2)	0% (0)	79.9% (222)
The person I spoke to was polite and helpful	11.5% (32)	8.3% (23)	0.4% (1)	0.4% (1)	0% (0)	79.5% (221)

Q 5. About your last visit to the Revenues Hall, please state if you agree or disagree with the following statements?

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

Statement	Strongly	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly	Don't
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	Agree				Disagree	know
I didn't wait long to be seen	27% (81)	20% (60)	1.3% (4)	1.7% (5)	0.7% (2)	49.3% (148)
I could talk in a private place if I wanted	31.8% (95)	15.1% (45)	2% (6)	1.3% (4)	0% (0)	49.8% (149)
Things were explained in a way I could understand	33.1% (95)	14.4% (43)	2.3% (7)	0% (0)	0% (0)	50.2% (150)
Staff were friendly and polite	36.8% (110)	13.4% (40)	0.3% (1)	0.3% (1)	0% (0)	49.2% (147)
The office was clean and tidy	36.5% (109)	13.7% (41)	0.7% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	49.2% (147)

Q 6. About your last letter or e-mail, please state if you agree or disagree with the following statements?

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

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
I received a quick response	6% (18)	7% (21)	2% (6)	1% (3)	0.7% (2)	83.3% (250)
My query was resolved fully	5.7% (17)	8.7% (26)	1.7% (5)	0.7% (2)	0.3% (1)	82.9% (248)
Things were explained in a way I could understand	5.4% (16)	9% (27)	1% (3)	1% (3)	0.3% (1)	83.3% (249)

Q 7. How easy or difficult is it to understand the following?

Respondents were asked about three documents and the website and asked whether or not they found them very easy, easy, neither easy nor difficult, difficult or very difficult to understand. There was also a have not seen option.

Document/Website	Very Easy	Easy	Neither	Difficult	Very Difficult	Have not seen
Our Benefits leaflets	8.2% (25)	44.6% (136)	12.1% (37%)	8.9% (27)	2% (6)	24.3% (74)
Our Benefits claim form	5.9% (18)	44.7% (136)	13.2% (40)	13.8% (42)	3.9% (12)	18.4% (56)
Our letters	9.55 (29)	60.9% (185)	13.5% (41)	5.9% (18)	1.6% (5)	8.6% (26)
Our website	3% (9)	5.9% (18)	1.3% (4)	1% (3)	0% (0)	88.9% (271)

Q 8. Have you visited our website for Benefits in the last 12 months?

3.9% (12) of respondents had visited the website, 96.1% (293) had not.

Q 9. 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 or not they strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree with the statements. There was also a don't know option.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
It was easy to find my way around	1.7% (5)	2.3% (7)	0.3% (1)	0.7% (2)	0 (0%)	95.3% (284)
I was able to find the information I wanted	1.7% (5)	2% (6)	0.7% (2)	0.3% (1)	0% (0)	95.3% (282)
The benefits calculator is easy to use and understand	1.3% (4)	1% (3)	1% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	96.6% (287)

Q 10. Taking everything into account how satisfied are you with the Benefits Service overall?

62.7% (190) of respondents chose very satisfied, 32.3% (98) fairly satisfied, 0.7% (2) neither, 1.3% (4) fairly dissatisfied and 1.3% (4) very dissatisfied. 1.7% (5) chose the don't know option.

Q 11. What would you change about the Benefits Service to make it better?

This was a multiple choice question.

Improvement	Number of respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Our letters	28	9.1%
The Housing and Council Tax Benefits claim form	34	11%
The time we take to deal with claims and changes of circumstances	23	7.4%
The quality of our phone service	6	1.9%
The quality of our face to face service	3	1%
The availability of information on the Council's website	4	1.3%

A number of other areas for improvement were raised:

- Nothing x193
- Make all forms etc easier to understand x31
- Wouldn't change a thing x9
- Improve benefit fraud process x2
- Departments to work together better x2
- Makes forms shorter x2
- Start a home visiting service for exceptional circumstances x2
- Reduce waiting times in Revenues Hall x2
- Accessibility to the Revenues Hall

- Answer telephone calls quicker
- Do not like the automated system
- Double check claims to make sure payments are correct to avoid overpayments
- Extra help required due to language barrier
- Forms made shorter and straight forward
- Staff to be a bit more polite and helpful
- Improve response to e-mails
- More information leaflets to be aware of benefits entitled to
- Reduce waiting times for claims to be settled
- Scrap means testing, everyone should be treated the same
- Simplify the calculations to make them easier to understand
- Takes too long to get through the process
- Systems should be linked so that increases should be automatically updated so that it would reduce waiting times in the Revenues Hall
- Would like confirmation that you have received information I have sent in
- Nothing, very satisfied

Q 12. It is becoming commonplace to receive important documents by e-mail and this is something we plan to introduce for Benefits communications. Would you like to receive your Benefits letters by e-mail in the future?

10.7% (32) respondents said that they would like to receive their letters by e-mail and 89.3% (268) said no.

Q 13. We plan to offer more options for claiming benefits. Which of the following options would you prefer?

Options	Number of respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Make your claim online through our website	22	7.1%
Make your claim online at a Council office or Housing Association office	4	1.3%
Make your claim on a paper form through the post	108	35.6%
Make your claim by phone	44	14.5%
Make your claim with an advisor by appointment at a Council office	125	41.2%

Q 14. Are you aware that you have to notify us of changes in circumstances?

98.7% (300) stated that they were aware of the need to notify and 1.3% (3) said no.

Q 15. How would you like to tell us that something has changed?

This was a multiple choice question.

Notification method	Number of respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Telephone	156	50.5%
Call into the Revenues Hall	158	51.1%
Write a letter	21	6.85

Send an e-mail	0	0%
Online via the Council's website	1	0.3%
Other: Would like a ring back service	1	0.3%

3.0 EQUALITIES MONITORING

3.1 Participants in this research were asked if they would be willing to answer some questions about themselves to help us to ensure we are providing a fair service to all customers. It was clearly stated that all questions after this point were optional. 295 respondents agreed to answer some or all of these questions.

3.2 Demographic Profile of Respondents

	Number of respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Gender:		
Male	131	45.3%
Female	158	54.7%
Age Group:		
18 - 24	9	3.1%
25 – 34	19	6.45
35 – 44	39	13.2%
45 – 54	48	16.3%
55 – 64	54	18.3%
65 – 74	73	24.7%
75 years and over	50	16.9%
Prefer not to say	3	1%
Disability: Multiple choice		
No	127	43%
Yes – affecting mobility	142	48.1%
Yes – affecting hearing	12	4%
Yes – affecting vision	12	4%
Yes – a learning disability	0	0%
Yes – Other	21	7.1%
Prefer not to say	10	3.4%
Ethnic Group:		
White British	282	95.9%
White Irish	1	0.3%
Any other White background: English Irish Scottish	3	1%
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	1%
Black Caribbean	1	0.3%
Indian	1	0.3%
Other Asian background: Afghanistan	1	0.3%

Chinese	1	0.3%
Other Ethnic background: Egyptian	1	0.3%
Religion:		
None	80	32%
Christian	154	61.6%
Muslim	1	0.4%
Sikh	2	0.8%
Other: Pagan Atheist Spiritualist Vegan Spiritualist	6	2.4%
Prefer not to say	7	2.8%
Sexual Orientation:		
Heterosexual	266	100%