



Best Value Benefits Survey 2006/7

Full Report (April 2007)



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on behalf of Christchurch Borough Council.

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1: Executive Summary

The following summary points have been taken directly from the research findings section of the report, in which more detailed results may be found.

1.1: Best Value Performance Indicator

- BV80A: Contact with the office
 - Overall 86% satisfied (confidence interval of +/- 2.88%)
- BV80B: Service in the office
 - Overall 82% satisfied (confidence interval of +/- 4.07%)
- BV80C: Telephone Service
 - Overall 79% satisfied (confidence interval of +/- 6.59%)
- BV80D: Staff in the Office
 - Overall 83% satisfied (confidence interval of +/- 3.30%)
- BV80E: Forms
 - Overall 64% satisfied (confidence interval of +/-4.08%)
- BV80F: Speed of Service
 - Overall 74% satisfied (confidence interval of +/-3.64%)
- BV80G: Overall satisfaction
 - Overall 77% satisfied (confidence interval of +/-3.50%)

1.2: Contacting the Office

- Respondents were generally positive about all aspects of getting in touch with the benefits office.
- They mostly agreed they were satisfied overall and that the benefits office is easy for them to get to.
- These were closely followed by being given the name of the contact in the office, the staff tried to sort out the claim over the phone and the opening hours were inconvenient.

1.3: Visiting the Office

- Around three quarters of respondents (74%) had to go to the Council's benefits office when they made their most recent claim.
- Those respondents visiting the office were generally positive about all aspects of visiting the benefits office.
- They mostly agreed that the benefits office was clean and tidy, they were satisfied overall with the experience of visiting the office and they could talk to the necessary person in a private place.
- Encouragingly respondents applied more neutral ratings to negative statements; if they had to wait a long time before they could see the person they needed to and more seats are needed in the Council's benefit's office.

1.4: Telephoning the Office

- Around a third (32%) telephoned the Council's benefits office when they made their most recent claim.
- Those respondents telephoning the office were generally positive about all aspects of telephoning the benefits office.
- They mostly agreed that they were satisfied overall with the telephone service provided, that the query was dealt with swiftly and that the call was answered quickly.
- Encouragingly respondents applied more neutral agreement ratings to negative statements; when they called the benefits office they were transferred between several different people and if it was difficult to speak to the right member of staff.

1.5: Benefits Office Staff

- Respondents were generally positive about all aspects of the staff in the benefits office.
- They mostly agreed that staff were friendly, overall they were satisfied with the service provided, staff treated them with respect and enquiries were explained in a way they could understand.
- Encouragingly respondents applied more neutral agreement ratings to the negative statements; that they weren't always confident what the staff said was correct, if they felt unable to ask the questions they wanted and staff were in a rush.

1.6: Benefits Claim Forms

- Respondents were generally neutral about aspects of the forms used in the benefits office.
- They mostly agreed that overall they were satisfied overall with the Housing/Council tax benefits claim forms and the information that came with the form was helpful.
- These were closely followed by if the Housing/Council Tax claim form was difficult to fill in, could quickly fill in the form and if the letters sent about their claim were difficult to understand.

1.7: Claim Decision

- The vast majority of claims (89%) were successful.
- Nearly three quarters (74%) were satisfied to some extent with the time taken to make a decision on their claim, with under half being very satisfied (43%). Under a fifth (17%) reported dissatisfaction to some extent whilst the remaining tenth (10%) were neutral.

1.8: Overall Satisfaction

- Over three quarters (77%) were satisfied to some extent with the service provided by the benefits office, with less than half being very satisfied (45%). Under a fifth reported being dissatisfied to some extent (16%) and less than a tenth were ambivalent (8%).

1.9: Service Improvements

- Less than a fifth think that the areas of the service most in need of improvement are the time taken to make a decision on a claim for Housing/Council tax benefit and the Housing/Council Tax benefits claim form (19% each).
- Relatively few thought that the other areas of the service needed improving and over a quarter (28%) thought none of these needed improvement.

1.10 Nature of Claimants

- Under half (43%) have lived in the area for 21+ years, a fifth (20%) for 11-20 years and just over a tenth (12% and 11% respectively) for 6-10 years and under 3-5 years. Small proportions have lived in the area for 1-2 years and under 1 year (7% each).
- Over two thirds (69%) of respondents were female.
- The average age of applicants was 55 years.
- A small number considered themselves part of an ethnic minority group (1%).
- Over a third reported being wholly retired from work (37%) whilst under a fifth reported being an employee in a part time job or permanently sick/disabled (16% and 11% respectively). Most of the remaining were doing something else, looking after the home or in a full-time job (10%, 10% and 7% respectively).
- Under half of the respondents (46%) reported having a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity.

2: Introduction

2.1: Christchurch Borough Council

Christchurch Borough Council is the local authority for the area and provides services and facilities to all local residents. As such the Council has a duty to provide the best quality services to the public in the most efficient and effective manner.

Consultation is a route by which Councils can monitor the quality and cost of services, and investigate issues of importance to stakeholders. Assessing the views of residents and service users is key to this process, so the Council has embarked on a full and sustained public consultation programme to ensure that decisions are made in line with public opinion and so that communities are more involved in the decision making process.

2.2: Best Value Benefits Survey

This report details the results of the Best Value Benefits Survey 2006/7, addressing the Council's service provision to benefits claimants, an exercise that must be repeated at least every three years under the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) guidelines.

Best Value consultation is a nation-wide mechanism by which Councils can monitor the quality and cost of services they provide for the public by using standard Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI) to assess service usage and satisfaction levels. These performance indicators are fed back to the DCLG for national comparison.

The results of this survey will be compared (where available) to those collected in 2003 and a peer Unitary Authority where appropriate to identify trends in behaviour and opinion. They can also be used as a baseline for future consultation.

2.3: The Market Research Group (MRG)

The Council commissioned the Market Research Group (MRG), based at Bournemouth University, to undertake this research. MRG aims to be a key independent resource for the provision and interpretation of market intelligence for its clients.

The group offers expertise, experience and advice in the field of market research, tailored to suit the needs of individual organisations. MRG has specialised in consultation of this sort, and has numerous Best Value consultations to its name.

2.4: Project Aims & Objectives

2.4.1: Project Aims

The project's research aim was to provide the Council, and the DCLG, with reliable information about the nature and views of Benefits applicants on various topics of interest. The results of the research will help the Council to make informed decisions about the future of the services provided for applicants in light of comparisons with other authorities and can be used as a basis for further in-depth research.

2.4.2: Project Objectives

More specifically, the project sought to achieve the following objectives:

- To fulfil the requirement placed upon the Council to report back its BVPIs to the DCLG.
- To identify the behaviour of benefits applicants when claiming benefits.
- To investigate claimant views of contacting the Council.
- To investigate claimant views of visiting the Benefits Office.
- To investigate claimant views of telephoning the Benefits Office.
- To investigate claimant views of Benefits Office staff.
- To investigate claimant views of claim forms and materials.
- To assess satisfaction with the time taken to process claim decisions.
- To assess overall satisfaction with the service provided.
- To determine the level of successful and unsuccessful benefits claims.
- To investigate the nature of benefits applicants.
- To collect any additional comments and suggestions of relevance.
- To identify any significant differences between respondent groups, and benchmarked data from a similar survey conducted by the Council in 2003 and peer organisation results.

3: Methodology

This section outlines the methodology used to undertake the Best Value Benefits Survey 2006/7, as outlined in the DCLG guidance documents.

3.1: Research Design

3.1.1: Target Population

Under the Best Value guidance the target population, those of interest to the project, was defined as all benefits claimants who received a decision on their claim between 1st June 2006 and 28th July 2006 or 1st November 2006 and 29th December 2006 (two sampling windows).

3.1.2: Sample Frame

DCLG specified that the Benefits Department's claimant database be used as the sample frame in this instance. This provided a complete list of claimants who had received a decision letter within the specified timeframe, and included their address details. This database totalled 1,227 contacts, 453 responded in the first sampling window and 134 responded in the second sampling window.

DCLG indicated that a maximum confidence interval of +/-4% (at the 95% confidence level) be achieved for each performance indicator. This simply means that we can be 95% confident in the results within this specified margin of error, although it should be noted that breakdowns by demographic data will have larger confidence intervals.

3.1.3: Sample Size

In order to achieve this confidence interval a sample of 625 completed interviews was required in total. In the event 587 complete and valid responses were achieved (response rate of 48%) within the fieldwork period, meaning that a confidence interval of +/-4.0% was achieved (at the 95% confidence interval).

3.1.4: Sampling Technique

If the response was to provide representative results it was essential that the respondents reflect the demographic profile of the local population, reducing the need to apply data weighting. As the sample frame was large enough it was decided to contact a random sample of residents, rather than a census sample (where all are contacted).

3.1.5: Data Collection

The DCLG specified a single methodology (postal survey), the means by which respondents were contacted and interviews administered.

DCLG specified two standard fieldwork windows for this project, beginning with an initial mailing to claimants in the first sampling window in early August 2006 and ending in late August 2006. Those appearing in the second sampling window were contacted between early January 2007 and late January 2007.

They also required that two questionnaire reminder mailings be sent to non-respondents, which MRG distributed at three weekly intervals following the initial mailing.

3.1.6: Survey Materials

MRG designed and produced a questionnaire and introductory covering letter for respondents, both of which were based on the standard templates produced by DCLG for this survey.

The questionnaire included all the standard service, opinion and demographic questions required to report performance indicators applicable to the Council, and no additional questions were added. MRG added a unique ID number to each questionnaire sent out to reduce the possibility of duplicate responses and so that non-respondents could be identified and targeted with reminder mailings.

The covering letter introduced the project, its purpose, MRG contacts and Data Protection information. A slightly amended letter was included with repeat mailings of reminder questionnaires.

Provision was also made for those with sensory impairment and those speaking other languages in the form of large print versions, translated versions or telephone interviews. In addition, to encourage a good response each respondent received a freepost return envelope in which to return their completed questionnaire.

3.1.7: Data Processing & Analysis

Upon receipt of the questionnaires, each unique ID number was used to update responses on the sample frame database. This was then used to update the Council of response rates and key demographic breakdowns, and was used as a basis for reminder mailings.

All questionnaires were scanned and checked by MRG, and back-checking exercises conducted if warranted. All open-ended responses were coded with standard numerical tags for ease of analysis and finally all responses were entered into a specialist computer package and combined with the sample frame database.

MRG then produced the tabulated results and data weighting information required.

3.2: Reporting

3.2.1: Council Reporting

The Council received regular fieldwork updates from MRG upon commencement of the project, including the number of responses and key demographic breakdowns. This allowed swift corrective action should any problems be encountered.

MRG also provided the Council with advanced copies of all data and document submissions intended for the Audit Commissions approval. This included a brief methodology, the raw data file and research materials.

Upon completion of these basic requirements, MRG conducted further detailed analysis of the results to satisfy the information requirements of the Council, including cross-tabulations, statistical calculations and benchmarking with historical data and peer organisations.

3.2.2: Central Government Reporting

MRG endeavoured to fulfil all data submissions to the Audit Commission as specified in the Best Value guidance on behalf of the Council.

4: Research Findings

This section of the report discusses the findings of the survey. Specifically, it deals with the results of the Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI) and questions asked about; contact with the office, visiting and telephoning the office, Benefits Office staff, the claim forms, claim decisions, overall satisfaction with the service and the nature of claimants.

4.1: Best Value Performance Indicators

This section of the findings details the Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) results, which in this case relates to overall satisfaction with the service area, and six key elements of the service. The results of these questions are displayed in the following table (*Fig. 1*), with the figure being the proportion of respondents satisfied with each factor.

This year over three quarters (77%) were satisfied to some extent with the overall service provided. Similar proportions were also satisfied with contact with the office (86%), the staff in the office (83%), service in the office (82%) and the telephone service (79%). Less than three quarters were satisfied with the speed of service and the claims form (74% and 64% respectively).

Fig. 1: Summary Of Overall Satisfaction

Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peers (%)
BV80A: Contact With Office	86		
BV80B: Service In The Office	82		
BV80C: Telephone Service	79		
BV80D: Staff In The Office	83		
BV80E: Forms	64		
BV80F: Speed Of Service	74		
BV80G: Overall Satisfaction*	77		

All of these results are on a par or slightly higher than the figures reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year, and although not significant in some cases, there are indications of a general decrease in satisfaction since the 2003 survey.

4.2: Contacting the Office

This section of the findings relates to the general questions asked about claimant contact with the benefits office, including its location, opening hours, contact nature and satisfaction with this aspect of the service.

Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with various statements about contact with the benefits office.

4.2.1: Office Location

It can be seen that respondents were generally positive about all aspects of getting in touch with the benefit's office.

The majority of the respondents agree to some extent* (87%) that the benefits office is easy to get to. Less than a tenth are ambivalent** (7%) or disagree to some extent*** (6%).

Table 1: The Office Is Easy To Get To (Q1a)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	22.0	21.5	17.3
(2) Agree	61.4	56.0	52.0
(3) Neither	8.9	11.7	16.1
(4) Disagree	6.1	8.6	11.3
(5) Strongly Disagree	1.7	2.2	3.2
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The level of agreement was higher than the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (69%), and is on par with the 2003 survey result (87%).

* The term *agree to some extent* refers to the total number of respondents who strongly agree and agree with the proposed statement.

** In order to reduce wording within the report the term *neither agree nor disagree* is substituted with the word ambivalent.

*** The term *disagree to some extent* refers to the total number of respondents who strongly disagree and disagree with the proposed statement.

4.2.2: Opening Hours

A third of respondents agree to some extent (33%) that the benefits office's opening hours are inconvenient. Just over a tenth are ambivalent (14%) whilst over half disagree to some extent (53%).

Table 2: The Office's Opening Hours Are Inconvenient (Q1b)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	6.7	5.3	8.4
(2) Agree	31.2	19.4	28.7
(3) Neither	13.4	17.6	17.9
(4) Disagree	42.7	49.8	37.9
(5) Strongly Disagree	5.9	7.8	7.1
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The level of agreement is on par with the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed in 2006 (38%). The result is less positive than the agreement level reported for 2003 (22%).

4.2.3: Claim sorted by Telephone

Over a third of the respondents agree to some extent (38%) that the staff tried to sort out their claim on the phone so they didn't have to come into the office. Over a fifth are ambivalent (24%) and over a third disagree to some extent with this statement (38%).

Table 3: The Staff Tried To Sort Out My Claim Over The Phone (Q1c)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	10.4	9.9	14.2
(2) Agree	35.7	35.0	36.9
(3) Neither	18.9	23.2	15.9
(4) Disagree	25.8	25.8	19.5
(5) Strongly Disagree	9.2	6.1	13.5
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The level of agreement was lower in 2006 (38%) compared to the 2003 survey result (44%) and is lower than the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (51%).

4.2.4: Name of Contact Person

Under half of respondents agree to some extent (46%) that they were given the name of a person at Christchurch Borough Council's benefits office to contact about their claim. Under half of the respondents also disagree to some extent with this statement (42%).

Table 4: Given The Name Of A Person To Contact About Claim (Q1d)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	9.5	8.9	8.7
(2) Agree	41.4	38.0	26.6
(3) Neither	11.8	16.1	16.0
(4) Disagree	27.8	29.2	32.2
(5) Strongly Disagree	9.5	8.0	16.5
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The level of agreement is on par with the 2003 survey result (44%) and is higher than the score reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (35%).

4.2.5: Satisfaction with ways to Contact Benefits Office

The majority of the respondents agree to some extent (86%) that they are satisfied with the ways they can contact the benefits office. A tenth or less are ambivalent or disagree to some extent (9% and 5% respectively).

Table 5: Overall Satisfaction With Contacting The Office (Q1e)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	19.7	20.1	20.5
(2) Agree	64.3	63.7	55.6
(3) Neither	10.1	11.2	9.2
(4) Disagree	2.7	4.2	9.6
(5) Strongly Disagree	3.2	0.9	5.1
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The level of agreement is on par with the 2003 survey result (87%) but it is slightly higher than the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (76%).

4.3: Visiting the Office

This section of the findings relates to the questions asked about experiences of visiting the benefits office, including the proportion of claimants doing so, and opinions of waiting times, privacy, cleanliness, seating and satisfaction with these elements of the service.

4.3.1: Level of Visits

Around three quarters of the respondents (74%) had to go to the Council's benefits office when they made their most recent claim. Around a quarter (26%) were able to sort out their benefit claim through other means, such as the telephone.

Those respondents visiting the office were asked to rate their agreement with various statements about their visit.

4.3.2: Time taken to see Relevant Person

Around a tenth of the respondents agree to some extent (9%) that they had to wait a long time before they saw the person they needed to. Under a fifth are ambivalent (14%) whilst around three quarters disagree to some extent (77%).

Table 7: I Had To Wait A Long Time Before Seeing Person Needed To (Q3a)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (300)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	3.3	7.3	12.1
(2) Agree	10.1	17.3	26.7
(3) Neither	14.2	15.9	21.4
(4) Disagree	58.8	50.8	31.7
(5) Strongly Disagree	13.6	8.7	8.2
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

Respondents are less likely to agree that they had to wait a long time before they saw the person they needed to in 2006 (9%) compared to the respondents surveyed in 2003 (14%). **The peer organisation reported a higher level of agreement with the statement (39%).**

4.3.3: Private Communication

Just under two thirds of the respondents agree to some extent (64%) that they could talk to the person they needed to in a private place if they wanted to. A fifth or less are ambivalent or disagree to some extent (20% and 16% respectively).

Table 8: I Could Talk To The Person In Private (Q3b)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (300)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	14.7	20.7	12.1
(2) Agree	62.0	61.6	50.4
(3) Neither	9.2	10.2	14.7
(4) Disagree	10.6	6.4	15.9
(5) Strongly Disagree	3.4	1.2	6.9
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The level of agreement with this statement is on par with the 2003 survey result (65%), but is higher than the agreement result reported by the peer organisation (63%).

4.3.4: Clean and Tidy Office

The vast majority of respondents agree to some extent (93%) that the benefits office was clean and tidy. Very few respondents are ambivalent or disagree to some extent (6% and 1% respectively).

Table 9: The Office Was Clean & Tidy (Q3c)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (300)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	19.8	23.8	24.7
(2) Agree	71.7	67.2	65.4
(3) Neither	5.3	6.7	5.3
(4) Disagree	2.7	2.1	3.2
(5) Strongly Disagree	0.6	0.2	1.4
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The level of agreement is on par with the 2003 and peer organisation survey results (96% and 90% respectively).

4.3.5: Number of Seats

Under half of the respondents agree to some extent (41%) that more seats are needed in their benefits office. Around a quarter disagree to some extent (28%).

Table 10: More Seats Are Needed In The Office (Q3d)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (300)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	2.2	4.2	24.7
(2) Agree	9.9	10.7	65.4
(3) Neither	28.9	31.1	5.3
(4) Disagree	50.6	48.9	3.2
(5) Strongly Disagree	8.4	5.1	1.4
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

Fewer respondents surveyed this year agree that more seats are needed (41%) compared to the 2003 survey result (65%).

4.3.6: Satisfaction with Visiting the Benefits Office

Over three quarters of the respondents agree to some extent (82%) that they are satisfied with the experience of visiting the benefits office. Less than a tenth disagree to some extent (7%).

Table 11: Satisfied Overall With Visiting The Office (Q3e)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (300)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	19.2	23.5	18.5
(2) Agree	63.7	60.5	57.8
(3) Neither	10.6	11.0	11.1
(4) Disagree	4.1	3.8	9.1
(5) Strongly Disagree	2.4	1.2	3.5
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The level of agreement is on par with the 2003 survey result (85%) but is higher than the peer organisation (76%) survey result.

4.4: Telephoning the office

This section of the findings relates to the questions asked about experiences of telephoning the benefits office, including the proportion of claimants doing so, opinions of answering times, transfers, their ability to contact the correct member of staff, dealing with their query and satisfaction with these elements of the service.

4.4.1: Level of Calls

Around a third of the respondents (32%) telephoned the Council's benefits office when they made their most recent claim compared to just under two thirds (64%) who did not.

4.4.2: Answering of Telephone Call

The majority of the respondents agree to some extent (89%) that the telephone call they made to the benefits office was answered quickly whilst very few disagree to some extent (5%).

Table 13: The Call Was Answered Quickly (Q5a)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (235)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	15.6	16.7	9.0
(2) Agree	65.8	62.5	44.4
(3) Neither	10.6	6.5	5.4
(4) Disagree	6.0	11.3	16.6
(5) Strongly Disagree	2.0	3.0	24.7
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The level of agreement is on par with the 2003 survey (86%) but is higher than the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (53%).

4.4.3: Transfer of Telephone Call

Under a fifth of the respondents agree to some extent (18%) that when they made a call to the benefits office they were transferred between several different people. Just over two thirds disagree to some extent with this statement (69%).

Table 14: The Call Was Transferred Between Several People (Q5b)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (235)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	4.2	6.6	8.9
(2) Agree	28.9	34.5	23.6
(3) Neither	13.2	9.3	14.8
(4) Disagree	50.0	42.9	45.8
(5) Strongly Disagree	3.7	6.8	6.9
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents being transferred has decreased since 2003 (26%) and is on par with the survey result reported by the peer organisation (33%),

4.4.4: Dealing with Query

Over three quarters of the respondents agree to some extent (77%) that once their call had been answered their query was dealt with quickly. Under a fifth disagree to some extent (16%).

Table 15: My Query Was Dealt With Quickly (Q5c)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (235)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	14.6	14.3	11.1
(2) Agree	59.1	58.9	53.7
(3) Neither	9.6	9.4	12.5
(4) Disagree	11.6	14.4	11.6
(5) Strongly Disagree	5.1	3.0	11.1
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree that their query was dealt with quickly is on par with the 2003 survey result (75%). Respondents from the peer organisation surveyed were less likely to agree that their query was dealt with quickly (65%).

4.4.5: Contact with Member of Staff

Under a fifth of the respondents agree to some extent (16%) that when they called the benefits office it was difficult to speak to the right member of staff. Just over two thirds disagree to some extent (68%).

Table 16: It Was Difficult To Speak To The Right Person (Q5d)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (235)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	6.4	6.0	8.9
(2) Agree	12.8	19.4	18.3
(3) Neither	17.6	17.1	16.8
(4) Disagree	55.1	48.0	47.0
(5) Strongly Disagree	8.0	9.6	8.9
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree that it was difficult to speak with the right member of staff is on par with the 2003 survey result (16%).

4.4.6: Satisfaction with Telephone Service

Over three quarters of the respondents agree to some extent (79%) that they are satisfied with the telephone service provided by the benefits office. A tenth are ambivalent or disagree to some extent (10% and 11% respectively).

Table 17: Satisfied Overall With Telephoning The Office (Q5e)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (235)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	20.8	19.8	15.8
(2) Agree	56.4	56.2	43.7
(3) Neither	11.4	11.1	9.9
(4) Disagree	6.4	9.7	14.9
(5) Strongly Disagree	5.0	3.2	15.8
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree to some extent that they are satisfied with the telephone service is on par with the 2003 survey result (80%) and is higher than the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (60%).

4.5: Benefits Office Staff

This section of the findings relates to the questions asked about experiences of staff in the benefits office, including friendliness, confidence in the information given, their explanations, ability to ask questions, their perceived workload, their treatment of claimants and satisfaction with these aspects of the service.

All respondents were asked to rate their agreement with various statements about staff in the Council's benefits office.

4.5.1: Friendly Staff

A large proportion of the respondents agree to some extent (85%) that staff in the benefits office were friendly. Less than a tenth are ambivalent or disagree to some extent (6% and 9% each).

Table 18: The Staff In The Office Are Friendly (Q6a)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	23.3	26.6	23.2
(2) Agree	62.8	61.6	59.0
(3) Neither	9.2	9.1	8.7
(4) Disagree	4.2	2.3	7.2
(5) Strongly Disagree	0.6	0.4	1.8
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree that the staff in the benefits office are friendly is slightly lower than the 2003 survey result (92%) and is slightly higher than the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (82%).

4.5.2: Confidence in Staff

Around a fifth of respondents agree to some extent (22%) that they were not always confident that what the staff told them was correct. Around two thirds disagree to some extent with the statement (65%).

Table 19: I Wasn't Confident That What Staff Said Was Correct (Q6b)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	6.1	7.5	6.8
(2) Agree	18.7	20.6	22.6
(3) Neither	20.8	22.0	18.8
(4) Disagree	44.0	44.0	39.8
(5) Strongly Disagree	10.5	5.9	12.0
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree that they were not always confident that what the staff told them was correct is on par with the 2003 survey result (22%) and with the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (30%).

4.5.3: Understanding of Staff Explanations

Over three quarters of the respondents agree to some extent (80%) that things were explained in a way that they could understand whilst around a tenth are ambivalent or disagree to some extent (11% and 10% respectively).

Table 20: Things Were Explained In An Understandable Way (Q6c)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	15.7	17.2	16.6
(2) Agree	64.6	62.5	58.5
(3) Neither	11.1	12.4	12.7
(4) Disagree	6.7	7.1	8.7
(5) Strongly Disagree	1.9	0.7	3.5
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree with the statement is on par with the 2003 survey result (83%) and by those responding to the peer organisation survey for 2006 (75%).

4.5.4: Asking Questions

Under a fifth of respondents agree to some extent (15%) that they felt unable to ask the questions they wanted to whilst nearly three quarters disagree to some extent (70%).

Table 21: I Felt Able To Ask Questions (Q6d)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	3.7	2.6	6.0
(2) Agree	11.4	9.4	17.3
(3) Neither	11.7	16.9	16.9
(4) Disagree	61.3	60.6	48.7
(5) Strongly Disagree	11.9	10.5	11.1
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree to some extent with the statement has increased since 2003 (10%) and is lower than the figure reported by the peer organisation (23%).

4.5.5: Staff in a Rush

A tenth of the respondents agree to some extent that staff were in a rush (10%). Over three quarters disagree to some extent (76%).

Table 22: The Staff Were In A Rush (Q6e)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	2.3	2.1	3.5
(2) Agree	7.2	10.5	10.7
(3) Neither	13.9	17.0	16.0
(4) Disagree	61.8	58.7	57.0
(5) Strongly Disagree	14.7	11.7	12.9
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree to some extent that staff were in a rush is on par with the 2003 survey result (10%), and is lower than the figure reported by the peer organisation (14%).

4.5.6: Respect of Staff

A large proportion of respondents agree to some extent that staff treated them with respect (85%). Very few disagree to any extent with the statement (7%).

Table 23: The Staff Treated People With Respect (Q6f)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	22.2	22.7	23.3
(2) Agree	62.0	60.2	59.0
(3) Neither	10.6	12.5	11.4
(4) Disagree	4.2	3.6	4.0
(5) Strongly Disagree	1.0	0.9	2.3
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree with the statement is on par with the 2003 survey result (85%), and the figure provided by the peer organisation surveyed this year (82%).

4.5.7: Satisfaction with Service Provided

A large proportion of respondents agree to some extent (83%) that they are satisfied with the service provided by staff in the benefits office. Less than a tenth were dissatisfied to some extent (6%).

Table 24: Satisfied Overall With The Staff Service (Q6g)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	23.6	24.8	23.5
(2) Agree	59.8	60.3	57.5
(3) Neither	10.9	9.8	10.6
(4) Disagree	4.2	4.0	4.9
(5) Strongly Disagree	1.5	1.2	3.5
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree to some extent that they are satisfied with the service provided by staff has decreased since 2003 (88%) and peer organisation figure (83% and 81% respectively).

4.6: Benefits Claim Forms

This section of the findings relates to the questions asked about experiences of completing forms to claim benefits, including the claimant's opinions of filling in the form, accompanying information, letters and satisfaction with these elements of the service.

Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with various statements about the forms used to claim benefits.

4.6.1: Filling in the Claim Form

Around a quarter of respondents agree to some extent (29%) that the Housing/Council Tax benefits form was difficult to fill in. Just over a fifth are ambivalent (23%) and under half disagree to some extent (48%).

Table 25: The Claim Form Was Difficult To Fill In (Q7a)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	8.5	9.9	11.0
(2) Agree	25.0	25.2	23.9
(3) Neither	22.3	23.0	26.1
(4) Disagree	40.7	38.5	35.4
(5) Strongly Disagree	3.4	3.3	3.7
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

Fewer respondents agree with the statement compared to the 2003 survey result (35%) and peer organisation figure for this year (35% and 34% respectively).

4.6.2: Time Taken to Fill in the Claim Form

Under half of the respondents agree to some extent (46%) that they could fill in the form quickly. Around a fifth are ambivalent (22%) and around a third disagree to some extent (32%).

Table 26: I Could Fill The Form In Quickly (Q7b)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	4.7	5.3	4.5
(2) Agree	36.9	34.2	31.9
(3) Neither	18.8	22.1	26.7
(4) Disagree	32.2	32.4	29.2
(5) Strongly Disagree	7.4	6.0	7.6
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree to some extent with the statement is higher than the figure reported in 2003 (42%) and is higher than the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (37%).

4.6.3: Information with Form

Over two thirds of the respondents agree to some extent (69%) that the information supplied with the form was helpful. Just over a fifth are ambivalent (22%) and around a tenth disagree to some extent (9%).

Table 27: The Information That Came With The Form Was Helpful (Q7c)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	6.1	9.0	7.0
(2) Agree	60.1	53.3	60.6
(3) Neither	21.1	26.8	21.5
(4) Disagree	10.0	9.6	8.7
(5) Strongly Disagree	2.8	1.3	2.3
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree with the statement is on par with the 2003 survey result (68%) and is on par with the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (68%).

4.6.4: Claim Letter

Over a third of the respondents agree to some extent (35%) that the letters sent about their claim were difficult to understand. Under half (46%) disagree to some extent with this statement.

Table 28: The Letters Sent Were Difficult To Understand (Q7d)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	9.8	8.7	10.8
(2) Agree	21.5	22.0	26.1
(3) Neither	18.1	21.6	19.0
(4) Disagree	44.3	42.4	39.2
(5) Strongly Disagree	6.3	5.3	4.9
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree with the statement is on par with the figure reported for 2003 (32%) and is lower than the figure reported by the peer organisation (37%).

4.6.5: Satisfaction with Housing/Council Tax Claim Form

Around two thirds of the respondents agree to some extent (65%) that they are satisfied with the Housing/Council Tax benefits claim form. Around a fifth or less are ambivalent or disagree to some extent (21% and 15% respectively).

Table 29: Satisfied Overall With The Claim Form (Q7e)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	12.6	14.3	9.6
(2) Agree	53.0	54.6	52.5
(3) Neither	20.0	18.2	20.9
(4) Disagree	10.9	9.9	12.1
(5) Strongly Disagree	3.5	3.0	4.9
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree to some extent that they are satisfied with the Housing/Council Tax benefits claim form is on par with the figure reported for 2003 (67%) but is on par with the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (62%).

4.7: Claim Decision

This section of the findings relates to the questions asked about the claim decision, including the outcome of their last claim and satisfaction with the length of time it took to inform them of this decision.

4.7.1: Outcome of Claim

The vast majority (89%) of claims was successful and around a tenth (11%) were unsuccessful. The number of successful and unsuccessful claims is similar to the 2003 survey results and the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year.

Table 30: Outcome Of Most Recent Claim (Q10)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Successful	93.2	95.1	96.1
(2) Unsuccessful	6.8	4.9	3.9
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

4.7.2: Speed of Claim Decision

Around three quarters (74%) were satisfied to some extent with the time taken to make a decision on their claim. Just under a fifth (17%) reported dissatisfaction to some extent, whilst the remaining tenth (10%) are ambivalent.

Table 31: Satisfaction With The Time Taken Make A Decision On Your Claim (Q8)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Very Satisfied	33.7	35.7	35.7
(2) Fairly Satisfied	39.6	39.1	38.3
(3) Neither	9.5	10.2	8.7
(4) Fairly Dissatisfied	11.0	8.4	9.9
(5) Very Dissatisfied	6.2	6.7	7.5
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The overall level of satisfaction is on par with the figure reported in 2003 (76%) and the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (74%).

4.8: Overall Satisfaction

This section of the findings relates to overall satisfaction amongst claimants with the service provided by the benefits office.

Over three quarters (77%) were satisfied to some extent with the service provided by the benefits office. Over a tenth (16%) reported dissatisfaction to some extent, whilst the remaining tenth (8%) are ambivalent.

Table 32: Satisfaction With The Overall Service Received From The Office (Q9)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Very Satisfied	41.2	41.3	39.3
(2) Fairly Satisfied	38.2	42.3	40.5
(3) Neither	10.0	8.6	10.1
(4) Fairly Dissatisfied	6.1	5.1	6.3
(5) Very Dissatisfied	4.5	2.6	3.9
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The overall level of satisfaction has decreased slightly since 2003 (84%) but is on par with the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (80%).

4.9: Service Improvements

This section of the findings relates to the question asked about the improvements required to the benefits service, encompassing those aspects of the service outlined previously.

Around a fifth of respondents think that the areas of the service most in need of improvement are the time taken to make a decision on a claim for Housing/Council Tax benefit and the Housing/Council Tax benefits claim form (19% respectively). Relatively few thought that other areas of the service needed improving and around a quarter (28%) thought none of these needed improvement.

Table 33: Aspect Of Service In Most Need Of Improvement (Q11)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Ways Can Contact Office	2.8	2.5	4.8
(2) Experience Of Visiting Office	1.9	5.9	4.0
(3) Telephone Service	5.1	6.4	13.2
(4) Staff Service In The Office	3.0	4.0	2.3
(5) Benefits Claim Form	20.0	31.2	14.5
(6) Time It Take To Know Outcome	27.2	26.8	20.4
(7) Other (Please Specify)	26.1	9.9	8.0
(8) None Of These	14.0	13.2	32.7
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

4.10: Other Comments & Suggestions

This section of the findings deals with the other relevant comments and suggestions submitted by respondents. In the event 93 of the respondents chose to do so.

These comments were varied; the most common theme related to satisfaction with the service and staff of the benefits office (41%), improved communication/Information/Form (16%) and not being satisfied with staff (11%).

A full table of responses and the verbatim comments from which the table is derived can be found in the appendices.

4.11: Nature of Claimants

This section of the findings briefly outlines the profile of benefits claimants so that the Council may better understand their nature. More specifically, it details their gender, ages, length of residence, employment status, disabilities and ethnic background.

Over two thirds (69%) of respondents were female and just under a third (31%) were male. The average age of applicants was 55 years. Small numbers considered themselves part of an ethnic minority group (1%).

Over a third of respondents reported being wholly retired from work (37%) whilst under a fifth reported being an employee in a part-time job or permanently sick/disabled (16% and 11% respectively). Most of the remaining were doing something else, Looking after the home or an employee in a full-time job (10%, 10% and 7% respectively).

Under half of the respondents (46%) reported having a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity compared to over half (54%) who said that they did not.

Under half (43%) said that they have lived in the area for 21+ years, a fifth (20%) for 11-20 years and just over a tenth (12% and 11% respectively) for 6-10 years or 3-5 years. A small proportion said that they had lived in the area for 1-2 years and under 1 year (7% each).

5: Conclusions & Recommendations

The following conclusions and recommendations have been drawn from the research findings section of this report.

5.1: Best Value Performance Indicator

- There are indications that the performance score has decreased slightly since 2003. It is also par with the peer organisation surveyed this year.
- This information will be submitted to DCLG for consideration and national comparison.

5.2: The Benefits Service

- A vast majority of the claimants were successful in their application.
- However, the council could look at improving the letter and form so that it is easier and quicker for claimants to fill in.
- A large proportion of the claimants reported being wholly retired from work or permanently sick or disabled. The council should look into ways of reducing the waiting time. One way would be to deal with more claims through other means, such as the telephone.

5.3: Information & Communications

- Whilst claimants were generally satisfied with the service, there are a number of areas where respondents believe further improvements are possible.
- Communication is an area that was rated less positively in some cases. The council may wish to investigate its current methods of helping and keeping applicants informed about their claim and improving areas of the telephone service.

5.4: Further Research

- Further qualitative or internal consultation would help to identify the information required to improve the areas of the Councils benefits office which claimants are less satisfied with.

6: Appendices

6.1: Survey Questionnaire & Letter



August 2006

Dear { claimant }

BENEFITS SURVEY 2006

You have been chosen to receive this questionnaire at random from a list of all residents who have made a claim for Housing and/or Council Tax Benefits or who have notified Christchurch Borough Council's Benefits Office of a change in circumstances in the last few months.

To ensure the objectivity of the results of this survey, and the confidentiality of your personal views, the Council has asked the Market Research Group (MRG) to undertake this survey on their behalf. They adhere to the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Market Research

The Council would like you to help them to improve their services by participating in this survey by completing the enclosed questionnaire which should take no more than 15 minutes of your time.

As a thank you, MRG will enter you in a prize draw – you could be one of eight lucky winners walking off with a £25.00 cash prize. I will be picking the prize winners at random and will be contacting them direct. In doing so the winners will retain their confidentiality in accordance with the aim of the questionnaire.

Completion of this survey is voluntary, but I very much hope you will be able to take part as your views are very important to the Council. A return envelope is enclosed, and I would like to thank you very much for your help in advance.

Yours sincerely,

M. A. Turvey,
Chief Executive.

If you require a large print or foreign language version please call Eva Makris on (01202) 963885 or email emakris@bournemouth.ac.uk

Confidential

ID:

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CHRISTCHURCH BOROUGH COUNCIL BENEFITS SURVEY 2006

Listening to your views.

We are writing to you to ask for your help in improving the service you receive from Christchurch Borough Council's benefits office (where you make claims for Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit).

We'd like to hear your views about various aspects of the service you receive from your local authority benefits office so that we can monitor those services and take steps to improve the services we provide.

You have been chosen to receive this questionnaire at random from a list of all residents who have made a claim or who have notified the Benefits Office of a change in circumstances in the last few months. We'd like to hear about your experience of claiming that benefit. It does not matter whether you are still receiving benefit or not because it is important that we hear the views of all who have recently had contact with the local authority benefits service.

All of your answers will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be used to monitor the local authority's services. The answers you give **will have no relevance to any claims you make for benefits and will not be linked in any way to you as an individual**. Anonymised responses may be passed on to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) so that national patterns of service satisfaction can be studied.

If you have any questions or concerns about this survey please do not hesitate to contact Eva Makris at the Market Research Group on **01202 963885** who will be very happy to help you.

We very much hope you will be able to take part as your views are very important to the local authority. Thank you very much for your help in advance.

Helpful hints for completing questionnaire

- The questionnaire should be completed by the resident to whom it is addressed.
- Please read each question carefully and tick a box to indicate your answer.
- In most cases you will only have to tick one box but please read the questions carefully as sometimes you will need to tick more than one box.
- Answer the next question unless asked otherwise.
- Once you have finished please check you have answered all the questions that you should have answered.
- The survey consists of 8 pages and should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete.
- Once you have completed the questionnaire please return in the pre-addressed envelope supplied. You do not need to add a stamp.
- If you cannot find or did not receive the pre-addressed envelope please send this form to the address at the end of the questionnaire.



Section 1: Getting in touch with the benefits office

Q1 Thinking about your last housing/council tax benefit claim, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements
Please tick ✓one box per row

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	It does not apply/ Don't know
A) The local authority benefits office is somewhere that is easy for me to get to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B) The local authority benefits office's opening hours are inconvenient for me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C) Staff tried to sort out my claim on the phone so I didn't have to go into the office.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D) I was given the name of a person at the local authority benefits office to contact about my claim.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E) Overall, I am satisfied with the ways in which I can contact the local authority benefits office.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 2: Visiting your local benefits office

Q2 Did you go to your local authority benefits office when you made your most recent claim?
Please tick ✓one box only

Yes..... **Go to Q3** No..... **Go to Q4**

IF YOU WENT TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY BENEFITS OFFICE WHEN YOU MADE YOUR MOST RECENT CLAIM, PLEASE CONTINUE TO QUESTION 3, OTHERWISE GO TO QUESTION 4

Q3 Thinking about your last Housing/Council Tax benefit claim, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the visit(s) you made to the local authority benefits office
Please tick ✓one box per row

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	It does not apply/ Don't know
A) I had to wait a long time before I saw the person I needed to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B) I could talk with this person in a private place if I wanted to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C) The local authority benefits office was "clean and tidy".	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D) More seats are needed in my local authority benefits office.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E) Overall, I am satisfied with the experience of visiting the local authority benefits office.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 3: Telephoning your local benefits office

Q4 Did you telephone your local authority benefits office when you made your most recent claim?

Please tick ✓one box only

Yes..... Go to Q5

No..... Go to Q6

IF YOU ANSWERED 'YES' PLEASE CONTINUE TO QUESTION 5, OTHERWISE PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 6

Q5 Thinking about your last Housing/Council Tax benefit claim, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

Please tick ✓one box per row

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	It does not apply/ Don't know
A) The telephone call I made to the local authority benefits office was answered quickly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B) When I made a call to the local authority benefits office I was transferred between several different people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C) Once the call to my local authority benefits office had been answered, my query was dealt with swiftly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D) When I called the local authority benefits office it was difficult to speak to the right member of staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E) Overall, I am satisfied with the telephone service provided by my local authority benefit office.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 4: The staff in your local benefits office

Q6 Thinking about your last Housing/Council Tax benefit claim, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements

Please tick ✓one box per row

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	It does not apply/ Don't know
A) Staff in the local authority benefits office were friendly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B) I was not always confident that what the staff said was correct.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C) Things were explained in a way I could understand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D) I felt I was unable to ask the questions I wanted to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E) Staff were in a rush.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
F) Staff treated me with respect.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
G) Overall, I am satisfied with the service provided by staff in my local authority benefits office.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 5: The forms you fill in to claim benefits

Q7 Thinking about your last Housing/Council Tax benefit claim, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements
Please tick ✓one box per row

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	It does not apply/ Don't know
A) The Housing/Council Tax benefits claim form was difficult to fill in.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B) I could fill in the form quickly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C) The information that came with the form was helpful.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D) The letters sent about my claim were difficult to understand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E) Overall, I am satisfied with the Housing/Council Tax benefits claim form.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 6: Your benefits claim overall

How quickly is your claim sorted out?

Q8 Thinking about your last Housing/Council Tax benefit claim, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the amount of time it took to tell whether your claim for Housing/Council Tax benefit was successful or not?
Please tick ✓one box per row

Very Satisfied	Fairly Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Fairly Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The overall service from your local benefits office

Q9 Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service you receive from the local authority benefits office?
Please tick ✓one box per row

Very Satisfied	Fairly Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Fairly Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The success of your last benefits claim

Q10 Was your claim successful or unsuccessful?
Please tick ✓ one box only

Successful Unsuccessful Don't know
.....

What needs improving?

Q11 Thinking about the overall service you receive from the local authority benefits office, which one of the list below do you think most needs improving
Please tick ✓ one box only

- The ways in which I can contact the local authority benefits office.....
- The experience of visiting the local authority benefits office.....
- The telephone service provided by the local authority benefits office
- The staff service in the local authority benefits office
- The Housing/ Council Tax benefits claim form
- The time it takes to tell me whether my claim for Housing/ Council Tax benefit was successful
- Nothing.....
- Don't know
- Other (✓ and write in below).....

Section 7: About Yourself

ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS ARE REQUIRED. PLEASE REMEMBER THAT ALL RESPONSES ARE ANONYMOUS AND WILL NOT BE LINKED IN ANY WAY TO YOU AS AN INDIVIDUAL.

Q12 Are you male or female?
Please tick ✓one box only

Male..... Female.....

Q13 What was your age in years on your last birthday?
Please write in

| | |

Q14 How long have you/your household been living in your current accommodation?
Please tick ✓one box only

Under 1 year..... 11-20 years.....
 1-2 years..... 21+ years.....
 3-5 years..... Don't know/can't remember.....
 6-10 years.....

Q15 How long have you/your household been living in this area?
Please tick ✓one box only

Under 1 year..... 11-20 years.....
 1-2 years..... 21+ years.....
 3-5 years..... Don't know/can't remember.....
 6-10 years.....

Q16 In which of these ways does your household occupy your current accommodation?
Please tick ✓one box only

Owned outright..... Rent from Housing Association/
 Buying on mortgage..... Trust.....
 Rent from council..... Rented from private landlord.....
 Other (✓ and write in below).....

Q17 How many adults aged 18 or over are living here?
Please tick ✓one box only

One..... Five.....
 Two..... More than five (✓ and write in
 Three..... below).....
 Four.....

Q18 Which of these activities best describes what you are doing at present?
Please tick ✓one box only

- Employee in full-time job (30 hours plus per week)
- Employee in part-time job (under 30 hours per week)
- Self employed full or part-time
- On a government supported training programme (e.g. Modern Apprenticeship/
Training for Work)
- Full-time education at school, college or university
- Unemployed and available for work.....
- Permanently sick/disabled
- Wholly retired from work
- Looking after the home
- Doing something else (✓ and write in below)

Q19 Do you have any long-standing illness, disability or infirmity? (long-standing means anything that has troubled you over a period of time or that is likely to affect you over a period of time)
Please tick ✓one box only

- Yes..... [Go to Q20](#) No [Go to Q21](#)

Q20 Does this illness or disability limit your activities in any way?
Please tick ✓one box only

- Yes No

Continued over...

Q21 To which of these groups do you consider you belong? (tick ✓ one box only)

White

British

Irish

Any other white background (✓ and write in below)

Mixed

White and Black Caribbean

White and Black African

White and Asian

Any other mixed background (✓ and write in below)

Chinese

Chinese

Black or Black British

Caribbean

African

Any other black background (✓ and write in below)

Asian or Asian British

Indian

Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Any other Asian background (✓ and write in below)

Other

Other ethnic group (✓ and write in below)

Q22 Is there anything else you would like to add?
Please write in below

Thank you for taking part in the survey.

Please return your questionnaire in the pre-paid envelope provided or to:
The Market Research Group Freepost (BH1 826) PO BOX 3471 Poole BH12 5ZZ

Please return your questionnaire by the 18th August 2006

6.2: Survey Tabulations

6.2.1: Frequency & Demographic Tabulations

The following data tables show the frequency tabulations and demographic profile of respondents. Due to the general accuracy of this profile, and the DCLG guidance document specifications, it was decided not to employ data weighting techniques.

6.2: Frequency Tabulations

Table 1: The Office Is Easy To Get To (Q1a)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	168	28.6	30.7
(2) Agree	310	52.8	56.7
(3) Neither	38	6.5	6.9
(4) Disagree	25	4.3	4.6
(5) Strongly Disagree	6	1.0	1.1
Total (Valid)	547	93.2	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	40	6.8	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	478	81.4	87.4
(3) Middle Box	38	6.5	6.9
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	31	5.3	5.7

Table 2: The Office's Opening Hours Are Inconvenient (Q1b)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	44	7.5	8.4
(2) Agree	126	21.5	24.1
(3) Neither	74	12.6	14.2
(4) Disagree	232	39.5	44.4
(5) Strongly Disagree	46	7.8	8.8
Total (Valid)	522	88.9	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	65	11.1	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	170	29.0	32.6
(3) Middle Box	74	12.6	14.2
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	278	47.4	53.3

Table 3: The Staff Tried To Sort Out My Claim Over The Phone (Q1c)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	37	6.3	10.3
(2) Agree	101	17.2	28.1
(3) Neither	86	14.7	23.9
(4) Disagree	101	17.2	28.1
(5) Strongly Disagree	35	6.0	9.7
Total (Valid)	360	61.3	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	227	38.7	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	138	23.5	38.3
(3) Middle Box	86	14.7	23.9
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	136	23.2	37.8

Table 4: Given The Name Of A Person To Contact About Claim (Q1d)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	40	6.8	9.9
(2) Agree	146	24.9	36.0
(3) Neither	50	8.5	12.3
(4) Disagree	143	24.4	35.3
(5) Strongly Disagree	26	4.4	6.4
Total (Valid)	405	69.0	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	182	31.0	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	186	31.7	45.9
(3) Middle Box	50	8.5	12.3
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	169	28.8	41.7

Table 5: Satisfaction With Contacting The Office (Q1e)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	117	19.9	21.2
(2) Agree	358	61.0	65.0
(3) Neither	50	8.5	9.1
(4) Disagree	20	3.4	3.6
(5) Strongly Disagree	6	1.0	1.1
Total (Valid)	551	93.9	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	36	6.1	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	475	80.9	86.2
(3) Middle Box	50	8.5	9.1
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	26	4.4	4.7

Table 6: I Went Into The Office When Making Most Recent Claim (Q2)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Yes	371	63.2	74.3
(2) No	128	21.8	25.7
Total (Valid)	499	85.0	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	88	15.0	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A

Table 7: I Had To Wait A Long Time Before Seeing Person Needed To (Q3a)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (371)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	5	1.3	1.4
(2) Agree	26	7.0	7.5
(3) Neither	49	13.2	14.2
(4) Disagree	195	52.6	56.5
(5) Strongly Disagree	70	18.9	20.3
Total (Valid)	345	93.0	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	26	7.0	N/A
Total (Base)	371	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	31	8.4	9.0
(3) Middle Box	49	13.2	14.2
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	265	71.4	76.8

Table 8: I Could Talk To The Person In Private (Q3b)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (371)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	36	9.7	12.2
(2) Agree	152	41.0	51.7
(3) Neither	58	15.6	19.7
(4) Disagree	29	7.8	9.9
(5) Strongly Disagree	19	5.1	6.5
Total (Valid)	294	79.2	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	77	20.8	N/A
Total (Base)	371	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	188	50.7	63.9
(3) Middle Box	58	15.6	19.7
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	48	12.9	16.3

Table 9: The Office Was Clean & Tidy (Q3c)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (371)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	84	22.6	24.9
(2) Agree	230	62.0	68.2
(3) Neither	20	5.4	5.9
(4) Disagree	1	0.3	0.3
(5) Strongly Disagree	2	0.5	0.6
Total (Valid)	337	90.8	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	34	9.2	N/A
Total (Base)	371	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	314	84.6	93.2
(3) Middle Box	20	5.4	5.9
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	3	0.8	0.9

Table 10: More Seats Are Needed In The Office (Q3d)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (371)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	24	6.5	7.9
(2) Agree	103	27.8	33.9
(3) Neither	92	24.8	30.3
(4) Disagree	72	19.4	23.7
(5) Strongly Disagree	13	3.5	4.3
Total (Valid)	304	81.9	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	67	18.1	N/A
Total (Base)	371	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	127	34.2	41.8
(3) Middle Box	92	24.8	30.3
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	85	22.9	28.0

Table 11: Satisfied Overall With Visiting The Office (Q3e)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (371)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	67	18.1	19.8
(2) Agree	211	56.9	62.4
(3) Neither	37	10.0	10.9
(4) Disagree	16	4.3	4.7
(5) Strongly Disagree	7	1.9	2.1
Total (Valid)	338	91.1	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	33	8.9	N/A
Total (Base)	371	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	278	74.9	82.2
(3) Middle Box	37	10.0	10.9
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	23	6.2	6.8

Table 12: I Telephoned The Office When Making Most Recent Claim (Q4)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Yes	156	26.6	32.4
(2) No	325	55.4	67.6
Total (Valid)	481	81.9	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	106	18.1	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A

Table 13: The Call Was Answered Quickly (Q5a)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (156)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	38	24.4	25.5
(2) Agree	95	60.9	63.8
(3) Neither	8	5.1	5.4
(4) Disagree	6	3.8	4.0
(5) Strongly Disagree	2	1.3	1.3
Total (Valid)	149	95.5	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	7	4.5	N/A
Total (Base)	156	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	133	85.3	89.3
(3) Middle Box	8	5.1	5.4
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	8	5.1	5.4

Table 14: The Call Was Transferred Between Several People (Q5b)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (156)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	3	1.9	2.1
(2) Agree	23	14.7	16.1
(3) Neither	18	11.5	12.6
(4) Disagree	81	51.9	56.6
(5) Strongly Disagree	18	11.5	12.6
Total (Valid)	143	91.7	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	13	8.3	N/A
Total (Base)	156	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	26	16.7	18.2
(3) Middle Box	18	11.5	12.6
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	99	63.5	69.2

Table 15: My Query Was Dealt With Quickly (Q5c)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (156)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	27	17.3	18.4
(2) Agree	87	55.8	59.2
(3) Neither	10	6.4	6.8
(4) Disagree	16	10.3	10.9
(5) Strongly Disagree	7	4.5	4.8
Total (Valid)	147	94.2	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	9	5.8	N/A
Total (Base)	156	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	114	73.1	77.6
(3) Middle Box	10	6.4	6.8
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	23	14.7	15.6

Table 16: It Was Difficult To Speak To The Right Person (Q5d)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (156)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	5	3.2	3.6
(2) Agree	17	10.9	12.2
(3) Neither	22	14.1	15.8
(4) Disagree	72	46.2	51.8
(5) Strongly Disagree	23	14.7	16.5
Total (Valid)	139	89.1	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	17	10.9	N/A
Total (Base)	156	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	22	14.1	15.8
(3) Middle Box	22	14.1	15.8
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	95	60.9	68.3

Table 17: Satisfied Overall With Telephoning The Office (Q5e)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (156)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	34	21.8	22.8
(2) Agree	83	53.2	55.7
(3) Neither	15	9.6	10.1
(4) Disagree	14	9.0	9.4
(5) Strongly Disagree	3	1.9	2.0
Total (Valid)	149	95.5	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	7	4.5	N/A
Total (Base)	156	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	117	75.0	78.5
(3) Middle Box	15	9.6	10.1
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	17	10.9	11.4

Table 18: Staff In The Office Are Friendly (Q6a)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	133	22.7	25.0
(2) Agree	318	54.2	59.7
(3) Neither	32	5.5	6.0
(4) Disagree	43	7.3	8.1
(5) Strongly Disagree	7	1.2	1.3
Total (Valid)	533	90.8	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	54	9.2	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	451	76.8	84.6
(3) Middle Box	32	5.5	6.0
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	50	8.5	9.4

Table 19: I Wasn't Confident That What Staff Said Was Correct (Q6b)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	18	3.1	3.6
(2) Agree	89	15.2	17.9
(3) Neither	67	11.4	13.5
(4) Disagree	237	40.4	47.7
(5) Strongly Disagree	86	14.7	17.3
Total (Valid)	497	84.7	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	90	15.3	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	107	18.2	21.5
(3) Middle Box	67	11.4	13.5
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	323	55.0	65.0

Table 20: Things Were Explained In An Understandable Way (Q6c)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	88	15.0	18.0
(2) Agree	302	51.4	61.9
(3) Neither	51	8.7	10.5
(4) Disagree	38	6.5	7.8
(5) Strongly Disagree	9	1.5	1.8
Total (Valid)	488	83.1	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	99	16.9	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	390	66.4	79.9
(3) Middle Box	51	8.7	10.5
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	47	8.0	9.6

Table 21: I Felt Unable To Ask Questions (Q6d)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	15	2.6	3.3
(2) Agree	57	9.7	12.4
(3) Neither	64	10.9	13.9
(4) Disagree	262	44.6	57.0
(5) Strongly Disagree	62	10.6	13.5
Total (Valid)	460	78.4	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	127	21.6	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	72	12.3	15.7
(3) Middle Box	64	10.9	13.9
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	324	55.2	70.4

Table 22: Staff Were In A Rush (Q6e)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	11	1.9	2.3
(2) Agree	34	5.8	7.2
(3) Neither	66	11.2	14.0
(4) Disagree	289	49.2	61.5
(5) Strongly Disagree	70	11.9	14.9
Total (Valid)	470	80.1	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	117	19.9	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	45	7.7	9.6
(3) Middle Box	66	11.2	14.0
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	359	61.2	76.4

Table 23: Staff Treated People With Respect (Q6f)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	111	18.9	22.4
(2) Agree	309	52.6	62.3
(3) Neither	43	7.3	8.7
(4) Disagree	22	3.7	4.4
(5) Strongly Disagree	11	1.9	2.2
Total (Valid)	496	84.5	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	91	15.5	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	420	71.6	84.7
(3) Middle Box	43	7.3	8.7
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	33	5.6	6.7

Table 24: Satisfied Overall With The Staff Service (Q6g)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	133	22.7	26.4
(2) Agree	284	48.4	56.3
(3) Neither	57	9.7	11.3
(4) Disagree	19	3.2	3.8
(5) Strongly Disagree	11	1.9	2.2
Total (Valid)	504	85.9	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	83	14.1	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	417	71.0	82.7
(3) Middle Box	57	9.7	11.3
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	30	5.1	6.0

Table 25: The Claim Form Was Difficult To Fill In (Q7a)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	34	5.8	6.7
(2) Agree	113	19.3	22.1
(3) Neither	117	19.9	22.9
(4) Disagree	217	37.0	42.5
(5) Strongly Disagree	30	5.1	5.9
Total (Valid)	511	87.1	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	76	12.9	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	147	25.0	28.8
(3) Middle Box	117	19.9	22.9
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	247	42.1	48.3

Table 26: I Could Fill The Form In Quickly (Q7b)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	26	4.4	5.2
(2) Agree	204	34.8	41.1
(3) Neither	110	18.7	22.2
(4) Disagree	132	22.5	26.6
(5) Strongly Disagree	24	4.1	4.8
Total (Valid)	496	84.5	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	91	15.5	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	230	39.2	46.4
(3) Middle Box	110	18.7	22.2
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	156	26.6	31.5

Table 27: The Information That Came With The Form Was Helpful (Q7c)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	32	5.5	6.3
(2) Agree	320	54.5	62.7
(3) Neither	112	19.1	22.0
(4) Disagree	42	7.2	8.2
(5) Strongly Disagree	4	0.7	0.8
Total (Valid)	510	86.9	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	77	13.1	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	352	60.0	69.0
(3) Middle Box	112	19.1	22.0
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	46	7.8	9.0

Table 28: The Letters Sent Were Difficult To Understand (Q7d)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	53	9.0	10.3
(2) Agree	128	21.8	24.9
(3) Neither	96	16.4	18.6
(4) Disagree	211	35.9	41.0
(5) Strongly Disagree	27	4.6	5.2
Total (Valid)	515	87.7	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	72	12.3	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	181	30.8	35.1
(3) Middle Box	96	16.4	18.6
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	238	40.5	46.2

Table 29: Satisfied Overall With The Claim Form (Q7e)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	60	10.2	11.3
(2) Agree	281	47.9	53.1
(3) Neither	111	18.9	21.0
(4) Disagree	48	8.2	9.1
(5) Strongly Disagree	29	4.9	5.5
Total (Valid)	529	90.1	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	58	9.9	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	341	58.1	64.5
(3) Middle Box	111	18.9	21.0
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	77	13.1	14.6

Table 30: Satisfaction With The Time Taken Make A Decision On Your Claim (Q8)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Very Satisfied	242	41.2	43.2
(2) Fairly Satisfied	172	29.3	30.7
(3) Neither	53	9.0	9.5
(4) Fairly Dissatisfied	55	9.4	9.8
(5) Very Dissatisfied	38	6.5	6.8
Total (Valid)	560	95.4	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	27	4.6	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	414	70.5	73.9
(3) Middle Box	53	9.0	9.5
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	93	15.8	16.6

Table 31: Satisfaction With The Overall Service Received From The Office (Q9)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Very Satisfied	253	43.1	45.1
(2) Fairly Satisfied	177	30.2	31.6
(3) Neither	44	7.5	7.8
(4) Fairly Dissatisfied	39	6.6	7.0
(5) Very Dissatisfied	48	8.2	8.6
Total (Valid)	561	95.6	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	26	4.4	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	430	73.3	76.6
(3) Middle Box	44	7.5	7.8
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	87	14.8	15.5

Table 32: Outcome Of Most Recent Claim (Q10)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Successful	459	78.2	88.6
(2) Unsuccessful	59	10.1	11.4
Total (Valid)	518	88.2	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	69	11.8	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A

Table 33: Aspect Of Service In Most Need Of Improvement (Q11)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Ways Can Contact Office	12	2.0	2.5
(2) Experience Of Visiting Office	9	1.5	1.8
(3) Telephone Service	14	2.4	2.9
(4) Staff Service In The Office	17	2.9	3.5
(5) Benefits Claim Form	92	15.7	18.9
(6) Time It Take To Know Outcome	90	15.3	18.5
(7) Other (Please Specify)	117	19.9	24.0
(8) None Of These	136	23.2	27.9
Total (Valid)	487	83.0	100.0
(0) Missing Values	100	17.0	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A

Table 34: Other Aspects Of The Service Requiring Improvement (Q11o)			
Base: 'Other' @ Q11 (117)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
Improve Communication/Information/Form	56	47.9	47.9
Improve office - size/access/privacy	16	13.7	13.7
Satisfied with benefits office	15	12.8	12.8
Unsatisfied with staff	13	11.1	11.1
Reduce claim time	10	8.5	8.5
Other	7	6.0	6.0
Total (Valid)	117	100.0	100.0
(0) Missing Values	0	0.0	N/A
Total (Base)	117	100.0	N/A

Table 35: Respondent Gender (Q12)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Male	175	29.8	31.3
(2) Female	385	65.6	68.8
Total (Valid)	560	95.4	100.0
(0) Missing Values	27	4.6	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A

Table 36: Respondent Age Group (Q13)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) 18-24 Years	28	4.8	5.0
(2) 25-34 Years	57	9.7	10.2
(3) 35-44 Years	97	16.5	17.3
(4) 45-54 Years	91	15.5	16.3
(5) 55-64 Years	80	13.6	14.3
(6) 65-74 Years	92	15.7	16.4
(7) 75+ Years	115	19.6	20.5
Total (Valid)	560	95.4	100.0
(0) Missing Values	27	4.6	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A
Average Age (Years)	N/A	N/A	54.50178571

Table 37: Respondent Length Of Tenure (Q14)			
Base: All Respondents (W: 821)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Under 1 Year	133	22.7	23.9
(2) 1-2 Years	75	12.8	13.5
(3) 3-5 Years	95	16.2	17.1
(4) 6-10 Years	97	16.5	17.4
(5) 11-20 Years	86	14.7	15.4
(6) 21+ Years	71	12.1	12.7
Total (Valid)	557	94.9	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	30	5.1	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A
Average Time (Years)	N/A	N/A	7.9

Table 38: Respondent Length Of Residence In Area (Q15)			
Base: All Respondents (W: 821)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Under 1 Year	38	6.5	6.9
(2) 1-2 Years	38	6.5	6.9
(3) 3-5 Years	61	10.4	11.1
(4) 6-10 Years	68	11.6	12.4
(5) 11-20 Years	107	18.2	19.5
(6) 21+ Years	237	40.4	43.2
Total (Valid)	549	93.5	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	38	6.5	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A
Average Time (Years)	N/A	N/A	15.3

Table 39: Respondent Tenure Type (Q16)			
Base: All Respondents (W: 821)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Owned Outright	89	15.2	15.7
(2) Buying On Mortgage	55	9.4	9.7
(3) Rent From Council	10	1.7	1.8
(4) Rent From Housing Ass./Trust	229	39.0	40.3
(5) Rent From Private Landlord	143	24.4	25.2
(6) Other (Please Specify)	42	7.2	7.4
Total (Valid)	568	96.8	100.0
(0) Missing Values	19	3.2	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A

Table 40: Adults in Household Aged 18 + (Q17)			
Base: All Respondents (W: 821)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Owned Outright	299	50.9	54.2
(2) Buying On Mortgage	180	30.7	32.6
(3) Rent From Council	29	4.9	5.3
(4) Rent From Housing Ass./Trust	7	1.2	1.3
(5) Rent From Private Landlord	7	1.2	1.3
(6) Other (Please Specify)	30	5.1	5.4
Total (Valid)	552	94.0	100.0
(0) Missing Values	35	6.0	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A

Table 41: Respondent Employment Status (Q18)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Employee In Full-Time Job	37	6.3	6.6
(2) Employee In Part-Time Job	87	14.8	15.5
(3) Self-Employed	24	4.1	4.3
(4) Gov. Supported Training	0	0.0	0.0
(5) Full-Time Education	5	0.9	0.9
(6) Unemployed	25	4.3	4.4
(7) Permanently Sick/Disabled	64	10.9	11.4
(8) Wholly Retired From Work	210	35.8	37.4
(9) Looking After The Home	54	9.2	9.6
(10) Doing Something Else	56	9.5	10.0
Total (Valid)	562	95.7	100.0
(0) Missing Values	25	4.3	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A

Table 42: Respondents With Illness, Disability Or Infirmary (Q19)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Yes	247	42.1	46.3
(2) No	287	48.9	53.7
Total (Valid)	534	91.0	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	53	9.0	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A

Table 43: Respondents With Illness, Disability Or Infirmary That Limits Activities (Q20)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q18 (247)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Yes	204	82.6	82.9
(2) No	42	17.0	17.1
Total (Valid)	246	99.6	100.0
(0) Missing Values	1	0.4	N/A
Total (Base)	247	100.0	N/A

Table 44: Respondent Ethnicity (Q21)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) White British	524	89.3	90.8
(2) White Irish	47	8.0	8.1
(3) Other White	2	0.3	0.3
(4) Mixed White & Black Caribbean	1	0.2	0.2
(5) Mixed White & Black African	0	0.0	0.0
(6) Mixed White & Asian	0	0.0	0.0
(7) Other Mixed	0	0.0	0.0
(8) Chinese	0	0.0	0.0
(9) Black Caribbean	0	0.0	0.0
(10) Black African	1	0.2	0.2
(11) Other Black	1	0.2	0.2
(12) Asian Indian	0	0.0	0.0
(13) Asian Pakistani	0	0.0	0.0
(14) Asian Bangladeshi	0	0.0	0.0
(15) Other Asian	1	0.2	0.2
(16) Other Ethnic Group	0	0.0	0.0
Total (Valid)	577	98.3	100.0
(0) Missing Values	10	1.7	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A

Table 45: Other Comments & Suggestions (Q22)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
Satisfied with benefits office	38	6.5	40.9
Improve communication/Information/Form	15	2.6	16.1
Unsatisfied with staff	10	1.7	10.8
Other	30	5.1	32.3
Total (Valid)	93	15.8	100.0
(0) Missing Values	494	84.2	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A

Table 46: Sampling Window (Database)			
Base: All Respondents (587)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Window 1	453	77.2	77.2
(2) Window 2	134	22.8	22.8
Total (Valid)	587	100.0	100.0
(0) Missing Values	0	0.0	N/A
Total (Base)	587	100.0	N/A

6.3: Verbatim Comments

Q11. What needs improving - Other?

Yellow forms do not state original letters/pension slips/ bank statements need to be sent and that copies are not acceptable. This should be made clear, this saving time and money of making copies to be told that you must bring in the originals - only for them to make more copies. This wastes paper when we are supposed to be encouraging eco-friendly environments

Which office one needs to go to at the Council Offices. The staff are always helpful, polite and very caring to us older folk.

When you have a permanent disability this should be on file and new claims should not have to be made each time. Very frustrating.

When information is asked for, the staff should read it and ensure that it is entered on all computer systems/paper work

When I need to update or change my claim to sort out a bit quicker.

Waiting area needs to be larger to accommodate applicants. I prefer to visit offices when I can get someone to take me as then I can take necessary paperwork as the post is not very reliable.

Unlike other authorities Christchurch does not give period on the counterfoil of the cheque. Every time I change address I have great difficulty in checking that my cheque is correct as - 1. Arrears, e.g. payment to 'make up' from initial indicative level payment. 2. Normal payment. 3. Overlap payments - are combined on one cheque!!! It is important to give the period on the counterfoil as claims are not always for complete weeks.

Too many offices to visit, too much red tape. In addition the people at your office are very nice and helpful to me, the housing officer Mr. Duffey is polite and helpful. My son NAME REMOVED had to leave the house some time back due to the high rent he had to pay and he was my helper as I have to have my knees replaced. It broke up my family as he lost his mum and only two of us to take care of each other. Now I have to put off having my knees replaced which is so painful for me. My son was my carer helper he was only 18 and he had to leave ADDRESS REMOVED where he was looking after me his dad, father, NAME REMOVED age 62 due to the high rent he was charged, by son NEME REMOVED.

To understand how the claim is worked out, how they reach their final decision.

They took so long to answer my claim. I now have an overpayment and arrears on rent which is totally unfair and don't think I should be responsible for arrears because I wouldn't be in arrears if they were quicker. And I found the staff moody, especially the one with short black hair, tall, young.

They need to be quicker in sorting out claims, its take too long and can put people in trouble

There is very little consideration for living expenses outside of rent and tax. I am on a special food diet which is not cheap, I cannot afford to live anywhere near comfortably and as a genuine British Citizen born here, paid in top the system since the age of 15, to be told I've got too much money to receive help, in the current climate is to say the least, very offensive and confusing. I as with many I'm sure, honestly am starting to think i would fare better had I not been born here. I am not racist, I'm not a nasty person but you must see how it looks when we cant get the help we need, yet others seem to know how to get all they can without having put a penny into this country. Sorry but you asked.

The wording on the forms sent about how much money you receive and why, it needs to read, you are entitled to x amount because you earn x amount so the amount we pay you is x amount, not all the % and how much is taken away and how much is given, for each stage (i.e.) number of children, bedrooms.

The whole system needs changing. The staff were very rigid. We should be able to deal with the application by electronically sending info by e-mail and scanned documents. The housing benefit should be such a way that when the people's income falls below certain level or if they cannot work very well or people get only few days work, the benefit shouldn't be stopped. Stopping and restarting is the main factor people get stuck on the benefit register. I have taken a risk and back working temporarily. Anyway I wouldn't like to claim Housing Benefit unless it's absolutely necessary.

The whole form system requires simplification and in my opinion would require legislation.

The waiting area could be a bit bigger - not many seats.

The staff at the benefits office do not communicate enough with other departments, i.e. landlords, as it took me five trips down to sort out my benefits.

The staff's (one in particular) attitude.

The service was excellent, very quick and caring.

The only benefits I claim for is housing benefits, all the rest of this is a jumble to me.

The office was busy and the first young woman I saw was very loud in her speech, everyone could hear her and the fact that I had separated from my husband I found this very inappropriate in front of other people. Other visits since I have seen more mature women who were more discrete and not loud they were much more professional.

The number of times information was repeatedly asked for - even though produced/not produced through no fault of mine.

The letter which explains actual benefit one receives.

The layout of the benefit form referred and sometimes you receive a letter one day but it will be cancelled out by another letter in a couple of days (money could be saved on postage and amount of paper used for correspondence!).

The last HB adjustment I had was after a visit by Mr Avery so most of your questions here are difficult to relate to. Perhaps that would have been worth checking first.

The council does a wonderful job for Christchurch when you see the state of others.

The claim form wasn't difficult for me to fill in and evidence but I could appreciate that a certain sector of the community would find it difficult to complete even with the completion rules.

The benefits office is very small with little seating areas and although the counter is partitioned it is possible to hear peoples conversations. It would be nice to have a little more space and privacy

The awareness of a private interview, if necessary instead of open counter

The amount of time it takes then puts you in arrears

The actual computation could merit being made simpler and thus easier to follow.

The accuracy of checking claims - because my childminder made one mistake last year filling in form last year - this was not picked up on until now - even though two officers from CTB office visited my home on 2 separate occasions to check all my personal details. Am not happy with this as am now going to be in the red until I've paid back the amount I owe.

Staff checking claims still being relevant within timescales, not two years later. Staff accepting proof provided by benefit office when requesting discount on council tax. Benefit office very difficult to obtain extra info, council tax requests. This delays claims being processed.

Staff always respectful and helpful. As a fairly regular visitor to the office, I have found all staff to be very good.

Sometimes the claims can take a while to sort out and can get people into a bit of bother where rent is involved. I have moved address so this time didn't take too long to sort out. But my claim before that when my daughter turned 18 years old took a while and I had to pay rent while all the paperwork that was needed was sorted. May I stress not at all to do with benefits. So fault was with JSA.

Simpler explanation of the result

Shorten it. Make it more easy and less technical

Several months to sort my claim, many visits to the office, lost paperwork, new versions, mistakes, misinformation, passing the buck. I have made 1+ visits this year and now they increase my council tax by ten times after they agreed the initial amount. I do not know where to go with this now. It is very distressing.

Service from local benefits office can only do one's best.

Seating

Resolving complaints. Would have liked to meet the decorating person and not wait for them to write to me.

Rather than sending out housing benefit cheques please would you think about paying them directly into bank accounts?

Perhaps a change of position of the office as the few steps down to it could prove difficult for less mobile people.

Opening hours, too short for those who work but are in low paid jobs, maybe a couple of hours on Saturday would help

Office is very small needs to be updated as more space is needed.

No complaints

Never visited any office as I do not receive any benefits. Because of my disability - Artherists in both knees and bad back I was advised to apply for attendance allowance which I did by phone.

My claim form was completed and submitted by department for works and pensions (disability and carers service).

More staff needed on front desk needed as waiting with two children is very hard in a small space and a queue.

More seats in the waiting area at housing benefits office

More privacy. Therefore not at a counter where other members of the public can hear about your business.

More privacy, office full

Links to other benefit systems to automatic process

Letters threatening to cancel benefit if time limit not adhered to.

Letter sent out about claim quite hard to understand.

Just wish I was clearer to understand just what were given for what.

Just a bit rushed as a little busy, you knew they wanted to deal with you quickly so to move onto the next person, but overall they dealt with it fine.

It would be helpful if items were broken down and more easily understood.

It was all so easy, and the lady was most helpful.

It took 6 trips and three phone calls before my claim was completed, information provided to the office was lost and had to be submitted. Calculations were also wrong. They had to be revised three times

It could be more pushchair friendly as sometimes had a job getting up and down the stairs if no one was around to help.

Initially there were difficulties between information given to the visiting officer and that received by the office staff. This necessitated two further visits to the office which was difficult for me due to disability.

Info needed to support a claim shouldn't be so strict if you've seen wage slips and bank statements and been told with a signature - the truth - claimants should be given benefit of doubt in some cases.

In May 26 a member of staff visited me to check on my financial position. He noted that my savings were less than previously recorded. I assumed that he would see that my Council Tax benefit and pensions credit would be adjusted accordingly. I was wrong. Nothing happened until I contacted the regional pensions office at Bath. Only there was my Pensions Credit increased followed by an increase in my Council Tax Benefit in the first week of July. There is an obvious room for an improvement in the service here.

I wrote to the benefits office and the reply was in a few days time.

I was overpaid and asked to pay back £3 in one lump sum which I could not do, this then happened again when I spoke to the manager of Christchurch he said it was my own fault that

I did not make it clear enough on the form the second time it was paid out by someone who was only temping and she did not know any better. I was let down by a manager who did not care less. I also questioned part of my self-employment paperwork after asking my accountant to look at it but your staff said she could not look at any letter he had written for her on behalf of me.

I was earning £52 my mortgage was £416 p.m. I was not entitled to help because I was on tax credits. I had to find £9 p.m which was impossible, I think this is very wrong. I think they should be certain a person is entitled to these benefits before paying them out only to ask for it all back.

I think the way the housing benefit is worked out is bad as my husband gets bonus but not each month. We end up having to pay money back and it puts you in debt with them.

I think the letters they send to you could be made a little bit more clearer and with less paper

I think it would help if the office was bigger. It would save people queuing up the stairs, etc. Thanks.

I sometimes feel there is a lot of unnecessary paperwork, often duplicated for what seems like a straightforward claim.

I received a small discount of my CT but do not know what it was for, no explanation was offered. A further letter received said I was ineligible for benefit. Is there two benefit offices?

I only have attendance allowance, no other benefit.

I know you have 2 mins parking time for paying council tax but it would be nice to extend the time, for when you are making a claim. When you make a claim, its because you cant afford to live on your wages, so free parking would benefit all the people who have to make a claim. Thank you.

I have no problems with the service provided; the staff are always friendly and polite. However, as a single mother on income support, trying to work a few hours a week in order to do what I can for my family, keep my skills up to date and remain in a working environment, the system really lets me down, especially as i can get no help with child care cost!!

I have dealt with al my claims etc by correspondence. Replies have been within prosecuted time.

I have always been very satisfied, whether by phone or personally. Thank you.

I had, lots of running around collecting statements and proof of things which they have from the last claim, very time consuming

I found the form confusing telling me about my claim result

I found it quite difficult to talk to Mr M Beale, as his line is always engaged, but I found the other members in the benefit office was quite helpful

I felt that to transfer the decision to a rent officer to determine whether I was paying a fair rent on a bed mobile home at £565 - monthly was a waste of time and I have only just received the under paid final amount of £15.75 on the 12/1/27

I experienced a degree of confusion about my recent application, but at my ag (89) this is not surprising! I had changed my savings which was because of the problem.

I don't think that the local staff can explain the an answers you want to know (that is national). This is not aimed at any local branch I think it is an explanation to questions that need to be answered by the overall government on their forms for better understanding by the public.

I can only go by myself personally, I have been treated with respect and kindness with all communication I have made to the benefits department

I am very pleased and grateful for the help and courtesy I have received from the office. I am very disabled, can't walk much.

I am not satisfied with the system of posting cheques to me at home, several times I started to receive my benefit its has been sent to another flat in my block, also I have requested by phone at least three times I want my benefit to be paid directly into my bank account and have been told it would happen shortly, my first request was around two and a half years ago. I don't like this system as it lets everyone who your business by the unmistakable green striped envelopes

I am in Twynham sheltered flat and I do not pay rent or council tax as I am on income support and get attendance allowance.

How your claim is explained, the amount you are required to pay landlord etc. This is not explained. Also the benefits department apparently works on a 13 month year. Landlords don't, This makes it very difficult to understand

How the breakdown assessment is explained - what it means in simple terms.
Helping people who really need the benefits & not saying no for no apparent true reason - red tape.

Have been left with large over payments that I should not of had to pay, on several occasions. Told the job centre, but housing benefit did not receive notification of stopping my claim. I am on a low income and it really messes my year up

Explanation on how the benefit was worked out could be made a bit easier to understand

Explanation of calculation for allowance on self employed income

Explaining how benefits are worked out.

Ensure the information requested at the initial visit is correct and therefore stop having to make return visits to the L.A.

Disabled access - door for wheelchair closed on me and trapped me - my husband had to stop it and hold it. Drop kerbs outside Christchurch Council and the traffic lights there too high.

Disabled parking only 2 minutes and it took longer than that for staff to photocopy documents including £8 premium bonds. Steps down to benefits office so I could not go. Privacy nil. We had to give all our private details to staff in the waiting room. The chair there was wet so my husband did not sit. I was in my wheelchair.

Customer care seems to have vanished from today's world. Although benefits deal everyday with this work, like myself redundancy can upset a lot of people. Some compassion and understanding that clients can be sensitive and need reassurance. Every visit you feel everyone is too busy to deal with you, if you don't understand something they look at you as if you are simple. I also feel the forms are too long. If you have claimed before within five years and all contact details are the same then a shorter claim form would be good. Phones are not answered from time to time. BT have a general scheme if busy you leave your number but you keep your position in the queue and BT call you back when at the front.

Council tax claim forms are longwinded and could be simplified. Also the figure work explaining the claim is not always easy to understand.

Constantly receive letters asking questions that you have already answered, even then the answers are ignored. Not enough of what info @ reception is put down in writing and therefore unnecessary letters sent. Lot of time and money wasted. You cant telephone with answers - they ask you to come in personally. Once i had to come in six times answering different questions simply because I couldn't talk to the right person and things are dealt with through a 3rd party (usually a young person on the desk). Every time I ask if they need anything else ie: paperwork and the answer is always we'll let you know - and then again they ask you to attend. Very frustrating.

Considerable confusion between council and DWP. Also failure - initially - to allow for status as carer (underlying entitlement) despite taking copy of letter confirming this.

Claim believed still ongoing

Change of circumstances, i.e. time it takes to pay money back to us, also sorting increases in income quicker so as not to have to pay so much back to you.

Can get crowded because the office is very small.

Benefit to be paid direct to bank account

As far as I am concerned the service I received was always prompt, friendly and informative.

Amount of conflicting paperwork sent to me.

Although I informed staff that I wouldn't be entitled to any benefits (housing etc) I was unable to get a definite answer until I filled all the time consuming forms. I knew I was above the money limit. Whenever I phoned it was always extremely difficult speaking to the correct/appropriate person.

Allowing different situations to be dealt with differently, i.e. I am in a seasonal job and provided my P6. However the council preferred constant visits and forms to be filled in every five weeks because no flexibility was available. Money, stress and time was present. Plus wasted paper, fuel and money.

All OK except for misplacing my claim.

All of the above apply to my experience (unclear answers to questions, gobbledegook presentation and forms, contradictory forms that need explanation and pedantic answers spoken like a mantra generally unhelpful).

A man came to see me and helped with forms etc, he gave me a phone number that I could contact him if I had any queries, so I was more than happy with the services.

A lot of paperwork arrives in quick succession, so confusion over final result is caused.

A little more privacy when discussing with the staff would be welcomed - going into a quiet room to discuss the issues has to be pre-booked so not very convenient as visits are often impromptu.

Q16. In which of these ways does your household occupy your current accommodation – Other?

Q17. How many adults aged 18 or over are living here?

Was renting, now waiting to hear about Housing and Tax Credit benefits.

Twynham sheltered housing

Temporary accommodation

Temporary Accommodation

Sheltered housing

Shared ownership with Swaythling Housing. 5/5, no mortgage.

Shared ownership (after divorce) with Housing Association.

Reversion

Renting from housing society.

Rented from private landlord through a letting agent.

Rent through Saxon Management.

No rent

Leasehold, Twynham Housing are my landlords.

I was at Dorset Grange, Avenue Road, for six years with the same Housing Association.

Housing association

Half rent/half buy.

Equity. Norwich Union

Christchurch housing for the elderly

Alms house

Q18. Which of these activities best describes what you are doing at present – Doing something else?

Voluntary work for age concern

Voluntary work at Christchurch Hospital League of Friends 3.5 hours per week.

Temporary agency work, over 30 hours/week.

Sick in hospital

Sick at the moment

Recovering from half knee replacements. Osteo-arthritis in both knees since 2003.

On sick at present hope to go back soon

On income support, single mum.

On income support as I am pregnant.

On incapacity for stress

On benefit till fit to go on Jobseekers' Allowance

Off sick at the moment.

Maternity

Made redundant after 25 years with same company. Looking for part time work.

Looking for a part time job around my injury

Long term sickness, have been out of work for a year but am returning in the next two months

Just came off SSP - am claiming incapacity benefit due to a car accident in Feb 06.

Incapacity

Income support/incapacity benefits

I have a totally disabled wife to look after.

I am recovering from breast cancer I hope.

Full time foster carer

Full time carer

Full time carer

Doing permitted work under 16 hours.

Currently on incapacity/income support

Claiming incapacity benefits but looking for p/t work (16 hours) to access my ability to work.

Charity work

Caring for elderly father

Carer for disabled wife

About to begin a swk-tesol course

Q22. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Your staff need to listen and understand people's situation and not tar everybody with the same brush! More polite even though they are having a bad day! Need to help people rather than judge!

You should put a toy box in the benefit office. Kids don't tend to run riot if there is something to entertain them.

Yes, why can I not get any benefits or (other people) on your water and sewage bills. My phone number is NUMBER REMOVED.

Yes more pension please.

Yes keep up the good work. It is very much appreciated. I have always found everybody friendly and helpful.

Would like the council to do their best and try to get bus route back along Kings Avenue as most of tenants are getting worn out walking to the nearest bus stop in Stour Road. It's a drag. Thank you.

When you make a claim or are waiting to hear you get into arrears through no fault of your own which gives you added pressure.

When trying to attend the civic centre, I do not like the walk from the bus to the door as all the cars come quite close as there is no proper path

When submitting my first claim I found a lack of privacy and a lack of knowledge by the person I saw.

We have received council tax reduction just on my husband's salary. There is nowhere you can find the minimum wage to allow a claim to be made, it was just applied for not even thinking a reduction would be made. Perhaps the minimums would be made available for people's information.

We are very satisfied for all that is done for me and my wife. Thanks.

To whom it may concern. I find that my local benefits council has done as much as they can for my wife and myself in our retirement.

To have rental deposit scheme properly explained as it was very confusing what I had to find financially myself - No help at all had to do plenty of guess work!! Problem solving myself.

This home and garden are our life's work so I want to live here the rest of my life.

The time taken for notification of JSA (over 8 weeks!) results in claim for housing benefit being consequently delayed. This is the fault of JSA, not the local authority.

The staff were aggressive, unprofessional and deliberately unhelpful to the point of causing a great deal of stress. Miss Davies in particular shouted at me for no reason and made me take documents to her office three times, knowing she already had them. She was extremely rude and aggressive

The staff need to make sure they keep track of paperwork and records to save numerous unnecessary trips to the council office

The staff I dealt with were extremely kind and respectful.

The staff at xchurch council housing benefits were very friendly and not at all patronising, at times it must be a very trying job, and they seem rushed and understaffed, but still polite and helpful.

The office presumptions about individual circumstances are not always correct - there are quite a few honest people around!

The last claim I made I assumed I had the same capital, I have less now. I have not told them yet.

The forms which tell you how your money is worked out are unnecessarily long and almost impossible to understand.

The council tax is too high and should be drastically lowered for people to more comfortably find the money to pay it.

The amount or (none amount)of help for private tenants who are unable to work through disabilities which are no fault of their own.

The amount of tariff income on my capital has gone down considerable over the last two or three years. I sent a letter to the council detailing same but heard nothing

That I am so grateful for the assistance Christchurch council has given me in this time of life.

Thank you for your efforts on my behalf.

Thank you for the form. I always phone Civic Offices regarding tax and housing benefits as mistakes were made at Twynham Housing. This caused me stress.

Thank you

Staff have treated me appallingly and I will never forget my experience of having to deal with such rude, disrespectful and unhelpful people. I will not be returning to the Christchurch area based on this.

Since the bus service has been stopped I am now housebound, as I cannot walk to the main road.

Self disabled from effects of stroke in 2001. Wife disabled from osteoporosis and crumbling of the spine.

Received home visit to establish first claim. Very helpful for elderly people.

Q18. Difficult to answer - I am in between jobs at present - possibly looking at self employment.

Put in a claim in 2004, unsuccessful - why - because they put my wife's wages down as weekly instead of monthly. I was told in July 06. I should have read the letter properly instead of putting in a drawer, so for two years we could have been claiming council tax benefit.

Payments of benefits should be available to pay direct into a bank account rather than a cheque.

Payments could be paid direct into bank accounts with periodic random checks to claimants, as Bournemouth do, saving postage.

Overall Christchurch benefit office is the best I have used.

Our house is leasehold. Our ground landlord is Twynham housing association.

No. Very satisfied.

My wife is registered disabled, and confined to a wheelchair outside the home.

My husband and I parted June 2006 he is my carer. All our paperwork was checked with h/a and council. Its still not sorted hopefully, maybe this survey will help towards customer care - good manners - being competent.

My comments are made in the spirit of your claim on the first page paragraph 2. I hope they are of use and that my experience was an isolated one however I know it is.

My claim was fine but 3 months you decided I wasn't entitled after all and asked for it back. This happens every time I claim and has put me off claiming what I have been entitled to for the last 3 years. The stress of you overpaying is too much.

More helpful information concerning rates of benefit and types of accommodation eligible for benefit should not be kept confidential or hidden.

Make the forms easier

Local benefit office excellent.

Keep up the good work.

Just many thanks for help we received.

Just better working out of the benefits you receive!

It is a wonderful part of England. I wish I had left London a long time ago.

In 2004 I lost my son in a R.T.A, and found I was beneficiary to his will. I found that he had left me life insurance, I also found out I had to loose my income support along with my housing benefit etc. I feel this is so wrong, as my daughter and myself have to live on his money, we should be able to use his money for a trust fund for his sister, along with holidays etc. Is there anyway I could get help from benefits?

If you provided more council housing I would not have to apply for housing benefit etc as private renting is so expensive.

I would appreciate more housing benefit as daily living is more expensive. Everything in utilities is going up - even food is a problem.

I think the staff are incompetent and they have even told me they have trouble understanding the claims. Many of the staff are rude and talk down to you and I have no confidence in them after they completely messed up one of my claims last year when I was worrying due to a 5p pay rise.

I only have attendance allowance, no other benefits. They said I'm over the limit. Thank you

I moved recently and I was so pleased to find everyone was so helpful and kind to me.

I live in a bed-sit not a flat. Very small, no window in bedroom part.

I hope this was recyclable paper or did you have to chop another tree down

I hope my answers are helpful

I have returned home to live after 35 years away. I have been really impressed with the council, I been to see them and telephoned, each time they have been excellent, also telling me not to worry which stopped me from getting anxious. Top points to Christchurch benefits office.

I have recently moved from Bournemouth council and have been pleasantly surprised with the quickness and efficiency of the benefits office - Bournemouth could learn a lot.

I have osteoporosis in my legs also short term memory too.

I have never claimed before two years ago and I have received nothing but kindness and helpfulness, both quick and efficient service, thank you

I have always found the staff helpful and prompt in replying

I had help from CAB to fill out form and still took very long. Some people will struggle and end up with arrears and subsequent debt/eviction.

I found the staff very helpful

I found claiming benefits very stressful and even when I came off benefits it was just as stressful. It has put me off trying to claim again while living in xchurch.

I found all staff very helpful and understanding, from my first ever enquiry

I feel it would be helpful if a disabled claimant could have someone from the benefits office come out to their home to help fill in the forms correctly. This would save time and unnecessary journey to and from the offices.

I do not think people should be pestered every year with forms over a certain age but if there is any change in their circumstances they should be honest enough to tell you.

I can't have my kitchen brought up to date, please can you look into this upset for matter for me. I am paying out of my own pocket and am on person credit. I am waiting to have my new replaced. I can't get any help at all, for a shower as I slipped in the bath.

I appreciate the help I am having in my times of need, thank you so much.

I am very satisfied with my benefits. Have been away that's why did not answer before.

I am very grateful for Mr. Allery's home visits.

I am very disabled. The Pensions Office dealt with Council Tax.

I am still waiting for someone to call and advise me if the cheque you sent is ok for me to keep. Thank you.

I am so very grateful for the help I receive from the housing benefits. I am a very independent person and would have dearly loved to have bought this flat as a sitting tenant, but is apparently not to be. I myself, my mother, my sister and my aunt had to give up work and I think I should have been compensated.

I am perfectly satisfied with the service I have received from the benefit office.

I am off sick and my wages go to half pay on the 21st January 2007. So I am worried about losing my flat. I am waiting for a housing association flat to come available. I will have to make a new claim and hope my landlord will be patient.

I am more than satisfied with the service I received from all staff at my local benefits office.

I am and have always been a satisfied client.

Hope this helps. In the meantime thank you for your help.

Having brought the same information into the council office four times they have still not managed to enter the correct information on my council tax form.

Get the letters produced from the Benefits system correct. It would appear as if the database is inaccurate because names and addresses are being printed incorrectly.

For once I was able to complete myself; usually they are very difficult to understand.

Following the death of my husband a lady at the Benefits Office and my mum helped sort out my claim so I was unable to answer Q3/Q5 as I don't remember dealing with people myself. I have dealt with them before though hence I answered other questions.

Each person from the Benefits Office (both at home or office visits) have been both informative and helpful. Only occasionally on the telephone they may seem to be not as helpful.

Disabled access and privacy at Christchurch council was appalling.

Didn't go to the office, I am very disabled. A gentleman from the office came to me. He also filled in the forms for me.

Council tax is unaffordable and I can't manage to buy necessities let alone luxuries. It's unfair.

Council tax claim has been ongoing since Nov 2006. Due to pension credit hold ups - Now resolved 10-02-2007 - one more visit to town hall and council tax claim should be sorted.

Benefits staff were very helpful sometime back when the pension credit made a big mix up.

Benefits office has improved immensely and forms are much easier to fill in and understand.

At a time when I needed this housing assistance the most I was not let down. Thank you immeasurably.

As I am registered blind, a friend has filled the form in on my behalf.

Applied for council tax benefit, I found the people at the council offices, very helpful and polite.