

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

BENEFITS BEST VALUE QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaires circulated	720
Questionnaires returned	499
Response Rate	69%

Listed below are the results based on the number of respondents to each question.

Q1 Thinking about your last housing/council tax benefit claim, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	Base	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	It does not apply/ I don't know
Base	2179	256	806	280	368	84	385
		12%	37%	13%	17%	4%	18%
The local authority benefits office is somewhere that is easy for me to get to	449	50	177	62	82	33	45
		11%	39%	14%	18%	7%	10%
The local authority benefits office's opening hours are inconvenient for me	428	23	110	77	136	15	67
		5%	26%	18%	32%	4%	16%
Staff tried to sort out my claim on the phone so I didn't have to go into the office	421	48	137	49	52	11	124
		11%	33%	12%	12%	3%	29%
I was given the name of a person at the local authority benefits office to contact about my claim	418	32	125	45	82	15	119
		8%	30%	11%	20%	4%	28%
Overall, I am satisfied with the ways in which I can contact the local authority benefits office	463	103	257	47	16	10	30
		22%	56%	10%	3%	2%	6%

Q2 Did you go to your local authority benefits office when you made your most recent claim?

Base	463
	100%
Yes	183
	40%
No	280
	60%

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:

	Base	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	It does not apply/ I don't know
Base	1200	185	449	132	223	35	176
		15%	37%	11%	19%	3%	15%
I had to wait a long time before I saw the person I needed to	235	4	17	33	122	23	36
		2%	7%	14%	52%	10%	15%
I could talk with this person in a private place if I wanted to	245	54	137	5	9	4	36
		22%	56%	2%	4%	2%	15%
The local authority benefits office was "clean and tidy"	241	62	133	7	6	2	31
		26%	55%	3%	2%	1%	13%
More seats are needed in my local authority benefits office	230	6	32	67	78	5	42
		3%	14%	29%	34%	2%	18%
Overall, I am satisfied with the experience of visiting the local authority benefits office	249	59	130	20	8	1	31
		24%	52%	8%	3%	0%	12%

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

Base	473
	100%
Yes	179
	38%
No	294
	62%

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

	Base	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	It does not apply/ I don't know
Base	984	122	418	124	194	44	82
		12%	42%	13%	20%	4%	8%
The telephone call I made to the benefits office was answered quickly	202	36	114	16	15	5	16
		18%	56%	8%	7%	2%	8%
When I made the call to the benefits office I was transferred between several different people	191	7	54	31	65	14	20
		4%	28%	16%	34%	7%	10%
Once the call to my benefits office had been answered, my query was dealt with swiftly	200	30	109	20	19	6	16
		15%	55%	10%	10%	3%	8%
When I called the benefits office it was difficult to speak to the right member of staff	186	7	29	36	82	15	17
		4%	16%	19%	44%	8%	9%
Overall, I am satisfied with the telephone service provided by my benefit office	205	42	112	21	13	4	13
		20%	55%	10%	6%	2%	6%

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

	Base	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	It does not apply/ I don't know
Base	3075	431	1071	338	690	107	438
		14%	35%	11%	22%	3%	14%
Staff in the local authority benefits office were friendly	451	110	235	36	6	1	63
		24%	52%	8%	1%	0%	14%
I wasn't always confident that what the staff said was correct	425	21	75	74	166	18	71
		5%	18%	17%	39%	4%	17%
Things were explained in a way I could understand	438	70	242	36	24	5	61
		16%	55%	8%	5%	1%	14%
I felt unable to ask the questions I wanted to	432	10	29	65	224	33	71
		2%	7%	15%	52%	8%	16%
Staff were in a rush	428	6	17	53	241	44	67
		1%	4%	12%	56%	10%	16%
Staff treated me with respect	442	96	228	41	16	3	58
		22%	52%	9%	4%	1%	13%
Overall, I am satisfied with the service provided by staff in my local authority benefits office	459	118	245	33	13	3	47
		26%	53%	7%	3%	1%	10%

Q7 Thinking about your last Housing/Council Tax benefit claim, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	Base	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	It does not apply/ I don't know
Base	2225	161	841	505	586	62	70
		7%	38%	23%	26%	3%	3%
The Housing/Council Tax benefits claim form was difficult to fill in	440	38	111	101	171	9	10
		9%	25%	23%	39%	2%	2%
I could fill in the form quickly	439	17	148	92	144	27	11
		4%	34%	21%	33%	6%	3%
The information that came with the form was helpful	441	28	244	105	43	4	17
		6%	55%	24%	10%	1%	4%
The letters sent about my claim were difficult to understand	438	26	88	107	188	11	18
		6%	20%	24%	43%	3%	4%
Overall, I am satisfied with the Housing/Council Tax benefits claim form	467	52	250	100	40	11	14
		11%	54%	21%	9%	2%	3%

Q8 How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the amount of time it took to tell you whether your claim for Housing/Council Tax Benefit was successful or not?

Base	476
	100%
% Satisfied	80%
95% Confidence Interval	±4%
Very satisfied	198
	42%
Fairly satisfied	181
	38%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	37
	8%
Fairly dissatisfied	31
	7%
Very dissatisfied	18
	4%
Don't know	11
	2%

Q9 Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service you receive from the local authority benefits office?

Base	474
	100%
% Satisfied	85%
95% Confidence Interval	±3%
Very satisfied	232
	49%
Fairly satisfied	171
	36%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	42
	9%
Fairly dissatisfied	14
	3%
Very dissatisfied	5
	1%
Don't know	10
	2%

Q10 Was your claim successful or unsuccessful?

Base	465
	100%
Successful	451
	97%
Unsuccessful	14
	3%

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?

Base	458
	100%
The ways in which I can contact the local authority benefits office	19
	4%
The experience of visiting the local authority benefits office	16
	3%
The telephone service provided by the local authority benefits office	26
	6%
	6
The staff service in the local authority benefits office	1
	1%
	100
The Housing/ Council Tax benefits claim form	22%
The time it takes to tell me whether my claim for Housing/ Council Tax benefit was successful	55
	12%
	155
None of these	34%
	58
Don't know	13%
	23
Other	5%

PLEASE WRITE IN

- Mine was all done through post
- I cannot complain
- Enough staff to cope with demand and who know what they're doing.
- Benefits summary is hard to follow
- Too many forms at times
- Always helpful
- I don't claim benefits
- The length of time to sort out change of circumstances.
- The forms indicating how much benefit you can get
- I'm nervous filing in any forms
- I do not think the different departments keep in touch with each other enough. The right hand does not seem to know what the left hand is
- Due to the new tax credits we no longer qualify despite having two children and being on a low income.
- Do not have any complaints
- A local office in Sudbury would be helpful.
- As always, excellent service
- Transport to office
- I have only visited local office in connection with pension and have had good service
- Letters explaining benefit awarded could say the total amount you now have to pay if benefit awarded.
- I was satisfied
- The length of correspondence ~ too much info for often older, ill, frail people.
- Very helpful
- Very happy with the service.
- Forms/letters informing client how benefit is worked out.

Care/Support worker does all of this

Cab driver phoned on my behalf, but my attendance at office and advice (surprisingly) from cab and office was superfluous. I sorted problem myself.

Staff are very helpful in helping fill in the form.

The visit from the lady who came to my house to help and discuss.

For an ongoing claim ~ the need to produce Birth Certificate etc., each year.

The claim form and the time it takes before confirmation

still waiting to hear

Communication between departments

Satisfied

The amount of time it takes you to let us know what we owe money by which case its so much we cant afford to pay it.

None

car parking facilities

The time it takes to tell me whether my claim was successful

1,3,5 & 6 need improving

1,3 & 4 need improving

Q12 Are you male or female?

Base	483
	100%
Male	204
	42%
Female	279
	58%

Q13 What was your age last birthday?

Base	475
	100%
Under 21	9
	2%
21 to 30 years of age	37
	8%
31 to 40 years of age	45
	9%
41 to 50 years of age	52
	11%
51 to 60 years of age	55
	12%
61 to 70 years of age	100
	21%
Over 70 years of age	177
	37%

Q14 How long have you/your household been living in your current accommodation?

Base	481
	100%
Under 1 year	30
	6%
1-2 years	63
	13%
3-5 years	82
	17%
6-10 years	88
	18%
11-20 years	81
	17%
21+ years	134
	28%
Don't know/can't remember	3
	1%

Q15 How long have you/your household been living in this area?

Base	477
	100%
Under 1 year	10
	2%
1-2 years	25
	5%
3-5 years	40
	8%
6-10 years	62
	13%
11-20 years	73
	15%
21+ years	264
	55%
Don't know/can't remember	3
	1%

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

Base	477
	100%
Owned outright	115
	24%
Buying on mortgage	33
	7%
Rent from council	192
	40%
Rent from Housing Association/Trust	52
	11%
Rented from private landlord	73
	15%
Other	12
	3%

PLEASE WRITE IN

Owned by daughter
 Orwell Housing Association
 Tied cottage
 My daughter is buying the house I live in
 none
 Parents Home
 Landlady owns it outright
 Farm
 Own mobile home.
 H A pay small rent to Council.
 Do not pay rent
 jointly owned by my son and daughter

Q17 Which of these activities best describes what you are doing at present?

Base	465
	100%
	17
Employee in full-time job (30 hours plus per week)	4%
	35
Employee in part-time job (under 30 hours per week)	8%
	10
Self employed full or part-time	2%
On a government supported training programme (e.g. Modern Apprenticeship/ Training for Work)	3
	1%
	1
Full-time education at school, college or university	0%
	27
Unemployed and available for work	6%
	82
Permanently sick/disabled	18%
	221
Wholly retired from work	48%
	57
Looking after the home	12%
	12
Doing something else	3%

PLEASE WRITE IN

Carer
 Charity Work
 Carer
 Full time mother/part time student
 Single Parent
 Was single parent on benefit awaiting court case about my son as his father had taken him.
 Just been made redundant from part time job taken to supplement pension.
 Full time mother to two children
 Only work during school term time
 Looking after special needs child
 off sick
 OAP
 also I. Looking after the home
 Still active ~ buying from Jumble Sales!!
 . . . and working evenings for 2 hours a night.
 Doing something else.
 Caring for disabled husband
 Housewife
 Retired
 work aged learning
 Babergh County Council
 Retired
 Incapacity Benefit
 Temporary sick
 Looking after the home
 Looking after the home
 getting better over period of time
 . . . and the children
 Caring for my Mother

Looking after my 19 month old son
 waiting to pursue a career learnt at college, but health preventing at present
 lone parent
 housewife
 Single Parent looking after children - unemployed
 Being a mum until my daughter starts school.
 Minimum Income Guarantee
 Training at Bradbury Courtyard

Q18 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)

Base	466
	100%
Yes	231
	50%
No	235
	50%

Q19 Does this illness or disability limit your activities in any way?

Base	262
	100%
Yes	223
	85%
No	39
	15%

Q20 To which of these groups do you consider you belong to?

Base	465
	100%
British	461
	99%
Irish	4
	1%

Any other White background (please write in)

Polish
 Australian
 ENGLISH
 ENGLISH
 Anglo / Irish

Is there anything else you would like to add?

I do not feel it necessary to make any comment other than I am quite satisfied with the services already operating
 I have always found the staff very helpful. I have had no trouble at all with any of my claims. Any problems have been sorted out very quickly
 Quite happy to fill in questionnaires as they help you to provide a better service
 You do a good job keep it up
 Why do single people like myself get so little help? Seven weeks on stat. sick pay and I am still trying to catch up on my finances. No help from you at all until I was back at work. Now I get letters every month because I am late paying Council Tax. Do you think the you are the only ones who I owe money to? Help was needed while I was off sick to help prevent needing a massive overdraft - it's me who has to pay it back.
 I think the time it takes for the Council to sort out the housing benefit as I was in my house for a couple of months and because the housing benefit department took their time I was sent an eviction notice.
 Last year I received an eviction notice, due to Babergh not paying my rent regularly and thus causing me to fall into rent arrears through no fault of mine, a very stressful time while I was trying to sort it out.
 The social security office in Sudbury has closed, I have to use the job centre; they telephone the Bury ST Edmunds office for me.
 I am extremely disappointed at the excessive Council Tax. As a pensioner it is becoming more and more difficult to find the payment.
 Your forms are not clear and are confusing and if you have an existing claim but your circumstances change I do not see why some of the information you already have cannot be used. Co-ordination between departments would not go amiss either.
 I filled out this form on behalf of my mother she is unable to see or comprehend to fill out for herself. She will be 96 on 26/09/03.
 The Council are far too keen to send out letters threatening action for rent arrears even though it is their offices that are causing the delays in benefit claims. The Council does not seem to work as a whole but as separate units.
 On one occasion I was visited by a member of staff otherwise all forms filled in by my daughter.
 I was widowed in July - have not returned my form as I don't know what my new pension will be. I know it's not your idea but I do object to the 'race' question and I don't like sneaky questions! If I was not satisfied I would contact you. If a person were not sufficiently well qualified a) you would not employ him and b) I should have no confidence! If I was still in the workplace I would like to be trusted!
 At this moment in time I am very satisfied with what you are doing. Please keep it up.
 Having to send all different things - like passport, bank statements etc. is a total pain although a necessity to avoid fraud. Everything fine otherwise - staff always helpful.
 I have filled this in for my father as I visit the Council offices on his behalf as he has been housebound for three years.

My daughter and grandson take care of all of my affairs

Local authorities know who their isolated pensioners are and should make some arrangements to personally contact them

The staff at Babergh have always been very helpful to me at all times and I have no complaints.

Overall the Council are quite pleasant except when it comes to house repairs.

My husband originally dealt with our application for housing. Through the mail I applied and was allocated a flat at Elizabeth Court, Sudbury. I've done my best with the questionnaire.

Money is wasted on letters sent out that nobody can understand. You tend to change the amount of entitlement whenever you fancy - several letters follow. Nobody can understand the logic of the letters.

I have never visited your offices, as your staff kindly come to my cottage and fill in the forms for me. Hadleigh is quite a distance from Boxted.

I have never been to the Benefits office as everything has been done by letter or form filling. Very satisfied with the everything has been done.

I have always been very satisfied with the way BDC staff have treated any queries I have had.

Could not always get to Hadleigh only by phone and filling in forms. We really could do with an office in Sudbury - does not need to be open everyday.

I found the staff at Babergh Council offices very helpful in helping me fill in the forms.

Thank you for your help, at least you are more helpful than S/Services from whom I get nothing

I have been claiming for housing & Council Tax benefit for several years and have always received friendly and efficient service from your staff

I have always found staff very helpful

Yes - is the Benefit Office the Job Centre or the Inland Revenue office or over Hadleigh as they have closed the DHSS in Sudbury?

Someone comes out to see me when I make a claim for which I am very grateful - Thank you

Yes The severe penalty charges made by banks, financial credit companies if payments direct debits are delayed. Monthly budget calculations should be used as well as weekly

As you can see I am happy with the service we receive and this is not a complaint more of a query with my last claim. I sent you my financial details for 2003/04 but because I received carers allowance if meant I had to pay income tax. After filling in claim form I forwarded this to you and you adjusted our rent down but you raised our council tax. I got in touch by phone to ask why and the lady went on to say it had been adjusted several times in 2002 and to my knowledge it hadn't to which she replied - council tax is worked out differently to rent which has left me in the dark.

Since my husband passed away, one of your staff filled in my claim form. They are friendly and helpful and I'm grateful for the help I'm getting. The claim was promptly dealt with.

I don't phone your office as there is no need to, my claim is sorted out automatically as I am 83 years old

My last claim took four months before I was actually paid money due to me.

I feel that there should be no necessity to provide bank accounts etc. every year if circumstances have not changed. You always know the amounts that pensions rise and it always appears to me that I am undergoing a means test every year and that you do not believe your clients. It is a belittling experience for pensioners.

My claim for income support and housing benefit was made for me several years ago by Age Concern to the best of my knowledge I have not claimed anything since. I just sign the papers you send.

When I have anything done for me I always ring or fill in the form.

When I have been unable to fully understand the forms that I have received I have telephoned Babergh - have had prompt replies and have been readily offered a visit by a representative to help me. On the two occasions I had visitors they were extremely helpful, polite, friendly and ready to help with any queries.

I have filled this form for my husband after asking him the questions as he is blind and disabled.

It should be easier to get on the council/housing association list for housing. More help should be given towards a deposit for private rent. It would be an awful lot better if benefits Housing/C.Tax were explained properly without being passed from person to person as it can get very confusing.

I am very satisfied with the way the housing/council tax forms are dealt with but instead of wasting money sending out questionnaires maybe you could use it to have our bin (regular waste) emptied weekly (stinky nappies sitting in a bin for two weeks isn't pleasant!!

Sorry I am 90 years old and feel 100 - I am of no help to anybody!!

The way Babergh deal with claimants is very private, very efficient and helpful.

Your employee who came to the house to assist me to fill in the form was courteous, polite and very helpful to a person of my age.

I have found Babergh courteous, understanding and efficient.

I have answered these questions assuming that you are referring to Sudbury Job Centre as my Local Benefits Agency. It is not completely clear.

Courteous and friendly service from the lady that visited me.

Regarding Q18 I was operated for throat cancer some years ago. Skin grafts from my chest and shoulder left scars (stitches) which do limit my physical activities slightly but quite severely. However the operation was a success in as much as I did not require further treatment or surgery but periodically for six years visited hospital for simple check ups.

With reference to my council tax benefit, the dealings I have had with representatives who have called at my home have always been helpful, polite and by letter which again has always been helpful and polite. Telephone appointments made were kept and on time, offers of refreshments were politely refused as they had other appointments.

I work for 36 weeks of the year and I feel the present way of assessment is not the best i.e. the last wage slip I sent in meant I had been overpaid which I accept has to be paid back but it is now being deducted in September and my wages for September are zero. I did write on my payslips when I sent them in that I wouldn't have any wages until October. Would it not be better to take my gross earnings for the year and divide them by 12 and then reassess next end of tax year and re-adjust. It would save time your end and a lot of paper.

I filled this form in on behalf of my mother, forms such as these phase her. My mother is not un-intelligent or confused but lengthy forms do not encourage participation and if I had not intervened she would not have proceeded with her claim. I wonder how many others, similar to my mother, without assistance are not claiming even though they are entitled.

I am grateful for benefits and kind consideration at all times.

I was not informed at any time during my claim or when I was receiving it that I would have to pay back the benefit if my WFTC claim was successful and backdated. Despite staff knowing that this was the reason I was claiming. This is something that we should be made aware of.

I have never visited the local office as I haven't a car and the bus route is inconvenient. All transactions/queries have been dealt with by phone.

Babergh is a good council they want to satisfy customers. The only thing I have found is that workmen come out early in the morning and we don't know they are coming. I'm not complaining we are pleased that people want to sort the house out. They are on the ball, more than West Sussex who are lax. I have secondary breast cancer 80% liver affected so I find it hard to rise early due to chemo. When I first applied for benefit I was recently widowed and I was so grateful for the help, sympathy and understanding I received from your staff.

I would just like to add that service at Babergh in all aspects is top class staff very friendly and helpful at all times. Just started to use restaurant - very good - good variety of menu.

My own benefits claim was dealt with on a home visit from one of your staff. The service was very good and your member of staff was very helpful.

I have never had to ask for help before but when I was awarded Income Support I knew I had to approach the Benefits Office at Babergh. When I arrived at the office I was very apprehensive and a very charming lady soon dispelled my anxiety. I cannot speak too highly about the way in which my claim was handled.

I am concerned about the amount of ongoing correspondence I receive (due to my changing circumstances) and would like to know how long (or how much) I should keep by way of records.

I have had a disability for over 7 years yet I still have to fill in forms regularly though nothing changes.

I am disabled with curvature of the spine. I look after my wife who is permanently ill and is a wheelchair and is 82 years old. Any assistance in filling forms would be much appreciated or alternatively an easier form to fill in.

The one thing that aggravates me most is that every year you have to have everything that you have had in previous years, bank statements etc. No way is my situation going to change and if it did I'd be the first to tell you. The change every year is that my money or savings gets less and less.

I am grateful for relief given on council tax but as renewal is in May (the form comes in) and as a retired couple our savings go down a bit each year - this creates two lots of several sheets of paper - the old relief plus new - and standing order adjustments - some way to cut this would surely be a saving to your department.

Buses would be helpful between Copdock and Hadleigh - dislike having to send personal details through the post with annual application form (bank statements etc.)

I am grateful for the benefits I receive - thank you.

I have answered the questions to the best of my ability as far as I know.

Very disappointed with the time and items that went missing when you were dealing with the claim. Too many departments not knowing what relevant persons are doing e.g. Council Tax/Housing Benefit

Satisfied with weekly payment amounts re. income support

For the ten years my husband and I have been 'customers' of Babergh (since leaving a tied house) we have always praised then and received good treatment when we came to your offices in Hadleigh - prompt and courteous attention (and we had not made an appointment). Now the application arrives in the post - I fill them in and it goes from there - documents for photocopying are always returned to me by return - thank you all. I have only ever visited the local Sudbury office last year in connection with my husbands death and found courteous service and a helpful little man there.

My son in law helps me fill in forms and on the last occasion he came to bring them in himself as I am not mobile. He and I have always been satisfied with the courtesy and efficiency we have received. After my husband died it took along time for details of circumstances to reach you, was promptly dealt with when received. Had a fall and was away for two months.

Pleased with services supplied.

This is a waste of our money

Too much paperwork - sixteen pages to tell me how much I pay - waste of time, paper and money

My husband to whom this form was addressed to suffered from a stroke 22 years ago so cannot write very much so I have filled in the form as I have to with all forms so hope this will be accepted.

I am progressively encouraged by the gradual improvement of the service provided by the Babergh Benefits team. It still needs simplification but it is positively improving which is a marked change from years gone by. Generally helpful friendly staff and not too difficult to deal with.

My daughter deals with all my correspondence relating to claims etc. Please do not send my any more of these questionnaires as I am unable to deal with this.

Although I find forms difficult I think it's probably because I had a stroke a couple of years ago.

The envelope for return is inadequate to take this form when folded!

I have filled this form in the best I can because I don't have to go to my benefits office as the forms are sent to me from Babergh Housing Office. I hope I answered the questions ok.

I am satisfied with everything.

I ticked none of these for Q11 since I came to your offices in Hadleigh for my first claim in March 2001 and thereafter you have sent me forms to fill in as I am retired and on Income Support. Any queries are dealt with by phone. Both staff at your offices and those I talk to on the phone are always most helpful and courteous and for me no improvement is required.

I returned from holiday 20 September and so questionnaire may be late getting back to you.

Due to a fractured skull, lost sense of smell and takes me a long time but with great care to get down my stairs

I would like the letters from Babergh regarding tax and income support to be easier to understand, it would be better if the letters to me were straight forward what I have to pay.

Rather than the last 3 months of capital statements it would be much better to send all statements covering 1 year i.e. from the date of last claim to the next. Many errors were made because Babergh did not know what was happening to the statements in the other 9 months of the year.

Please don't send me any more forms to fill in.

When applying for Council Tax benefit, I asked them if I had to put down ground rent as we pay this every month. I was told no as you don't take this into account which I could not understand as this is a large amount of money which we pay out every month.

I am returning this to you as I do not live in your area. I moved from 25 Gowers End on 12 July 2003 and I did inform you of this so therefore this survey has no relevance to me, I come under Braintree so do not have benefits from your area.

My claims have always been dealt with by post - very promptly and satisfactorily. I hope this covers your questionnaire. Please forgive late reply - at 80 plus my memory is hopeless.

Apologies for late completion!

I do not receive housing or council tax benefit - only the single persons council tax discount

I have always found the staff helpful, as when my main drain froze up, I phoned and was given a phone number, drain done within the hour - cost £40 - many thanks!

I cannot believe the amount of surveys the Council is sending out at the moment, when Council Tax is at it's highest!?? Sorry for the late return.

The advisor at the job centre was very helpful, and she dealt with all the aspects of my income support claim. It was therefore unnecessary for me to go to the benefit office in Sudbury.

I have filled this form in for my father as he is 90 and I do all his paperwork and correspondence for him. He is unable to go to the benefit office unless I take him, and I work full time. As his carer, I have had no problems with the benefit procedures.

would like to see more Council Housing / Association Housing available more schemes available so at our age have a chance to settle and have peace of mind that we are not on the move all the time.

Regret delay ~ 'Procrastination is thief of time!' However easy, it's another form.

I found these questions quite hard to answer as it was a long time ago I claimed for these benefits, so I have answered as best I can. I was not sent this questionnaire until 8th October.

I found the telephone staff helpful, but the length of time from the date of the claim, to the receipt of first payment took far too long.

When there is a re-claim and your personal details remain exactly the same (only the fact that your job has ended is different). Surely there can be a rapid claim form because it is a great temptation to put 'as in all other claim forms' / 'no change' ~ yet we still have to fill in a huge form every time.

Owing to old age and being immobile, a relative attended the benefit office with particulars.

We do not know the name of the lady who sorted our claim, but she was very helpful, pleasant and kind. She is a credit to Babergh.

Regarding question 2, I did not make the claim myself.

Please note Jessica is too unwell to read this, let alone get to your office ~ however, I attended the office on her behalf and found everyone very helpful and friendly.

Answer to Q.5 : I made application to care and repair for help with emergency planning. This was rejected. Then I made application for grant from DHSS which they accepted and for which I am forever grateful, otherwise I would have had to vacate my home. Initial approaches to Benefits Office and Cab proved unsuccessful. However, I pursued problem which was ultimately resolved.

Not interested.

I am 88 and cannot do this.

I am blind in my left eye (it is artificial), because of accident, and my right eye partial blind with cataract.

Every time a claim is made, the Tenancy Agreement has to be sent to you. I don't see why you want this every time.

When my assessment was made, I still cannot understand why I am charged £31 a week as income from savings, I feel I am penalised for saving through my working life, and the interest is no where near this figure.

I have had a lot of help filling in form from Richman Fellowship

Dear Sirs, I can say the service was very helpful - my powers of concentration are not what they used to be since I lost my wife.

Being half blind I could not fill in the claim form but had to get someone else to fill it in with my help. I'm sorry I could not see even this large print questionnaire but I did my best with the aid of a strong magnifier. There are practically many mistakes. I am sorry.

The only thing I thought could improve is that when you walk into the benefits office and sit down, there should be someone to ask you who you would like to see or what about, as I waited a while because who I spoke to wasn't aware I wanted to see someone about something in particular.

Do not use the benefits office so it is difficult to pass comment on services offered.

As I was told we would receive benefit, I claimed - we did not receive assistance. I do not feel you should continue to send this form if the first is not completed - waste of money!

letters rec'd by ourselves about HB + C/tax benefit are long and boring - just a short letter would do, we are not technically minded to understand just what it all means - just tell us what or not we get. I am partially deaf & mostly use an amstram emailer to communicate & not the phone, as I cannot hear the conversation. THIS IS THE 3RD QUESTIONNAIRE I HAVE FILLED IN & SENT TO YOU - PLEASE TRY TO KEEP HOLD OF THIS ONE!

sorry for the reply delay

With regard to the uncompleted form: I pay full rent and no benefits - I feel I can do so. My dealings with Babergh has always been good. I have no complaints, although I do object to pay for wardens who do very little, however, I am happy to be a Babergh tenant.

I haven't answered any questions about the benefit office. I do not know where it is, I have never visited it.

my experience overall has been a pleasant one, and I have been treated with respect, which makes it easier for me to overcome how I feel about being on benefits, but as a lone parent it is difficult to work. many thanks for that. sorry about delay with form.

we have been on council list for 10 years and now have 3 children in a very cramped house. The sleeping arrangements are not very good as my eldest daughter who is 9 next month, has to be sharing her room with her 6 year old brother, and have the 1 year old in with me.

I am not on the phone, as I am very deaf and old, don't understand half the questions - best I can do.

Although I have finally filled this form in I cant say I see the need for it. I would rather have been interviewed. Hope I have ticked the right boxes

I have learning difficulties and my House Manager or Support Worker help me with my application forms. I have not got any complaints about how my claims have been dealt with. I cannot easily get into the offices but I can ring up for assistance.

Completed on 5th December 2003