

## BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

### BENEFITS BEST VALUE QUESTIONNAIRE - ROUND 2

Questionnaires circulated	262
Questionnaires returned	167
Response Rate	64%

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
<b>Base</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>95</b>
		11%	35%	20%	17%	4%	12%
The local authority benefits office is somewhere that is easy for me to get to	156	13	54	34	35	10	10
		8%	35%	22%	22%	6%	6%
The local authority benefits office's opening hours are inconvenient for me	155	7	37	36	51	10	14
		5%	24%	23%	33%	6%	9%
Staff tried to sort out my claim on the phone so I didn't have to go into the office	152	20	40	31	17	5	39
		13%	26%	20%	11%	3%	26%
I was given the name of a person at the local authority benefits office to contact about my claim	151	14	46	32	27	4	28
		9%	30%	21%	18%	3%	19%
Overall, I am satisfied with the ways in which I can contact the local authority benefits office	155	34	92	19	3	3	4
		22%	59%	12%	2%	2%	3%

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

<b>Base</b>	<b>161</b>
	<b>100%</b>
Yes	67
	42%
No	94
	58%

**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
<b>Base</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>58</b>
		18%	33%	13%	18%	6%	13%
I had to wait a long time before I saw the person I needed to	89	1	4	10	47	15	12
		1%	4%	11%	53%	17%	13%
I could talk with this person in a private place if I wanted to	88	23	49	2	2	-	12
		26%	56%	2%	2%	-	14%
The local authority benefits office was "clean and tidy"	87	31	40	5	-	-	11
		36%	46%	6%	-	-	13%
More seats are needed in my local authority benefits office	88	2	9	28	28	8	13
		2%	10%	32%	32%	9%	15%
Overall, I am satisfied with the experience of visiting the local authority benefits office	88	23	41	10	2	2	10
		26%	47%	11%	2%	2%	11%

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

<b>Base</b>	<b>164</b>
	<b>100%</b>
Yes	82
	50%
No	82
	50%

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

	<b>Base</b>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	It does not apply/ I don't know
<b>Base</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>30</b>
		<b>15%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>7%</b>
The telephone call I made to the benefits office was answered quickly	90	18	53	6	7	1	5
		20%	59%	7%	8%	1%	6%
When I made the call to the benefits office I was transferred between several different people	87	3	15	14	35	13	7
		3%	17%	16%	40%	15%	8%
Once the call to my benefits office had been answered, my query was dealt with swiftly	88	20	39	14	7	3	5
		23%	44%	16%	8%	3%	6%
When I called the benefits office it was difficult to speak to the right member of staff	88	3	8	11	46	12	8
		3%	9%	13%	52%	14%	9%
Overall, I am satisfied with the telephone service provided by my benefit office	90	22	47	9	5	2	5
		24%	52%	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:**

	<b>Base</b>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	It does not apply/ I don't know
<b>Base</b>	<b>1104</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>119</b>
		<b>16%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>11%</b>
Staff in the local authority benefits office were friendly	159	45	87	9	-	-	18
		28%	55%	6%	-	-	11%
I wasn't always confident that what the staff said was correct	156	5	22	34	58	18	19
		3%	14%	22%	37%	12%	12%
Things were explained in a way I could understand	156	30	93	13	4	-	16
		19%	60%	8%	3%	-	10%
I felt unable to ask the questions I wanted to	157	3	5	22	79	29	19
		2%	3%	14%	50%	18%	12%
Staff were in a rush	157	4	7	10	84	30	22
		3%	4%	6%	54%	19%	14%
Staff treated me with respect	157	39	79	19	2	1	17
		25%	50%	12%	1%	1%	11%
Overall, I am satisfied with the service provided by staff in my local authority benefits office	162	46	86	20	1	1	8
		28%	53%	12%	1%	1%	5%

**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
<b>Base</b>	<b>788</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>12</b>
		<b>9%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>2%</b>
The Housing/Council Tax benefits claim form was difficult to fill in	158	14	38	40	58	6	2
		9%	24%	25%	37%	4%	1%
I could fill in the form quickly	156	10	46	43	49	7	1
		6%	29%	28%	31%	4%	1%
The information that came with the form was helpful	158	12	83	50	5	3	5
		8%	53%	32%	3%	2%	3%
The letters sent about my claim were difficult to understand	155	9	17	38	79	8	4
		6%	11%	25%	51%	5%	3%
Overall, I am satisfied with the Housing/Council Tax benefits claim form	161	22	75	44	14	6	-
		14%	47%	27%	9%	4%	-

**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?**

<b>Base</b>	<b>161</b>
	<b>100%</b>
<b>% Satisfied</b>	<b>76%</b>
<b>95% Confidence Interval</b>	<b>±7%</b>
Very satisfied	63
	39%
Fairly satisfied	57
	35%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	20
	12%
Fairly dissatisfied	8
	5%
Very dissatisfied	10
	6%
Don't know	3
	2%

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

<b>Base</b>	<b>161</b>
	<b>100%</b>
<b>% Satisfied</b>	<b>83%</b>
<b>95% Confidence Interval</b>	<b>±6%</b>
Very satisfied	65
	40%
Fairly satisfied	67
	42%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	21
	13%
Fairly dissatisfied	4
	2%
Very dissatisfied	2
	1%
Don't know	2
	1%

**Q10 Was your claim successful or unsuccessful?**

<b>Base</b>	<b>160</b>
	<b>100%</b>
Successful	154
	96%
Unsuccessful	6
	4%

**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?**

<b>Base</b>	<b>154</b>
	<b>100%</b>
The ways in which I can contact the local authority benefits office	6 4%
The experience of visiting the local authority benefits office	5 3%
The telephone service provided by the local authority benefits office	8 5%
	3
The staff service in the local authority benefits office	2% 39
The Housing/ Council Tax benefits claim form	25%
The time it takes to tell me whether my claim for Housing/ Council Tax benefit was successful	20 13%
	53
None of these	34%
	16
Don't know	10%
	4
Other	3%

**PLEASE WRITE IN**

Refer to old records for updates  
 Quite happy with all aspects  
 All the pages of info sent to me telling me about my claim amount etc - make it more simple to understand.  
 Clearer language in correspondence.  
 Overall all Okay  
 Make the answer to claim simple to understand  
 Duplication of info provided to B/A for income support recipients  
 Everything seems to be fine  
 If you have an on-going claim, I do not see why I should have to provide all original documents when nothing has changed.  
 The letters I receive telling me I own money to and I would be taken to court when I am on benefits.  
 Very long form  
 Contact between rent officer in Ipswich & Babergh D.C.  
 Don't change anything  
 Comments written in other box overleaf.  
 The name of an individual to contact regarding claim.  
 The amount of evidence required, or the frequency of providing all that evidence again and again  
 Also the housing/Council tax benefit claim form  
 At least 6 visits to photostat various wages slips as they became available to me.

**Q12 Are you male or female?**

<b>Base</b>	<b>161</b>
	<b>100%</b>
Male	55 34%
Female	106 66%

**Q13 What was your age last birthday?**

<b>Base</b>	<b>160</b>
	<b>100%</b>
Under 21	3 2%
21 to 30 years of age	19 12%
31 to 40 years of age	46 29%
41 to 50 years of age	34 21%
51 to 60 years of age	39 24%
61 to 70 years of age	9 6%
Over 70 years of age	10 6%

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

<b>Base</b>	<b>163</b>
	<b>100%</b>
Under 1 year	24
	15%
1-2 years	21
	13%
3-5 years	30
	18%
6-10 years	41
	25%
11-20 years	29
	18%
21+ years	15
	9%
Don't know/can't remember	3
	2%

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

<b>Base</b>	<b>161</b>
	<b>100%</b>
Under 1 year	10
	6%
1-2 years	10
	6%
3-5 years	11
	7%
6-10 years	23
	14%
11-20 years	31
	19%
21+ years	72
	45%
Don't know/can't remember	4
	2%

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

<b>Base</b>	<b>160</b>
	<b>100%</b>
Owned outright	17
	11%
Buying on mortgage	15
	9%
Rent from council	52
	33%
Rent from Housing Association/Trust	31
	19%
Rented from private landlord	44
	28%
Other	1
	1%

**PLEASE WRITE IN**

Private landlord  
 Hostel  
 Private Landlord  
 Orwell Housing Association

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

<b>Base</b>	<b>153</b>
	<b>100%</b>
	10
Employee in full-time job (30 hours plus per week)	7%
	19
Employee in part-time job (under 30 hours per week)	12%
	8
Self employed full or part-time	5%
On a government supported training programme (e.g. Modern Apprenticeship/ Training for Work)	1
	1%
	1
Full-time education at school, college or university	1%
	17
Unemployed and available for work	11%
	41
Permanently sick/disabled	27%
	17
Wholly retired from work	11%
	33
Looking after the home	22%
	6
Doing something else	4%

**PLEASE WRITE IN**

Income Support  
 Caring for my young kids  
 retired  
 Training for work part time with learning disability  
 Carer  
 80% disabled  
 On Incapacity Benefit  
 Looking for work  
 On sick leave  
 Sick but not permanently  
 P/T college and caring for my Mother  
 On income support  
 Full time carer of disabled relative  
 Incapacitated and depression  
 Sick now, but hoping to go back to work in May/June 2004  
 Sick at moment.  
 Part-time student  
 Full-time mother  
 Self employed not working  
 Heart problem  
 University  
 Sick - not permanent  
 Sick - not permanent  
 Temp. sick/available for certain types of work  
 Part time work linked to Job Centre  
 Family credit

**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)**

<b>Base</b>	<b>158</b>
	<b>100%</b>
Yes	73
	46%
No	85
	54%

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

<b>Base</b>	<b>82</b>
	<b>100%</b>
Yes	72
	88%
No	10
	12%

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

<b>Base</b>	<b>154</b>
	<b>100%</b>
British	153
	99%
Irish	1
	1%

**Any other White background (please write in)**

Welsh  
 French  
 ENGLISH  
 Father Spanish/Mother German  
 English

**Is there anything else you would like to add?**

I have to come into the office as I have disabled benefit books which you have to see and copy. I won't send them by post in case they get lost. I don't know what I would do if my daughter did not drive.

I have literacy problems which is why I have problems with forms and letters. My house manager helps me with these.

The only problem I had with the whole service was that the Job Centre Plus didn't communicate, or visa versa, so the claim was delayed while they established I was entitled to income support. Luckily I had an understanding landlord.

We were very pleased with all the staff who processed our claim for housing / council tax benefit. All were very friendly and helpful. Thank you all very much.

Could you tell me why Cockfield has a high council tax. Where we live we have no street lighting and a very poor bus service, which is, I think, one in the morning and one in the evening back home again. You really have to have a car here and if you haven't or can't drive you are stuck. Since paper work was needed I visited. I then had to revisit as your staff hadn't copied sufficient or correct papers.

Overall the service was good for me. Had help with forms down town hall which a lot of people don't know about.

Why do the letters in which the forms are sent have a distinctive appearance?

I think it is unfair to calculate how much money is coming in to the household when it includes childrens money ie. child benefit. This is not income that we use for ourselves, only on our children.

It would help if there was a freephone number or free phone at the town hall or job centre to get in touch as some people have only incoming calls on BT line.

Babergh Benefits and Housing Dept. have always been helpful, the staff kind and efficient. Thank you.

I have always found the staff at the benefits section at the council to be very friendly and efficient - something which other departments at the council do not always show the public.

Refilling claim form and presenting documents every year is unecessary - surely a simple way would be a standard renewal form which requires NI number / claim number and proof of benefit received would suffice as you already hold details of claimant on record.

Each year the claims for benefit forms (council tax) are sent, why on earth do we have to fill in these forms when our circumstances haven't changed within five years, and to have to send proof of who you are, how long you have been disabled etc, how long you have been claiming, this is all wrong. It's on computer and by now they should be able to tell if you are genuine or not. Disabled people should automatically be given the winter fuel payment, not wait until they are 60, not all can claim income support, medication should be given to disabled free not wait until they are 60. I don't expect anyone will take any notice of my views, we shall carry on struggling.

As a long term claimant I am more than satisfied with the ongoing help and advice I receive from Babergh district Council. They have always been reliable and kept me well informed.

This form was confusing. What do you mean by "your most recent claim?" Its a case of re-affirming the existing claim by post, enclosing the same info over and over again

It would be helpful if staff would advise the customer on where we could go to get extra help filling out forms for housing benefit or council tax.

Council tax people at Babergh have an attitude and don't listen to what is said nor seem to know what there own people are doing nor seem to know how to work on information given to them as I have had several letters sent to me about an ex-partner who left in 2000 (which I told them I lost my husband in October last year, all of the staff I have seen on home visits and my daughter has spoken to, have been very, very helpful and discrete to my loss. Thank you.

I found it very stressful when I get letters to tell me that I owe money to the council because of rent and council tax when I don't as I am on income support and i got a court hearing in the post when I was pregnant with my second baby and I had to dept collectors round as well. Then when I ring up all they say is it is there mistake which is fair enough, but it has happened two times and I have only lived here for one year and 3 or 4 months. I find it very stressful filling out the forms when our circumstances have not changed.

When applying for Council Tax or Rent Benefits, it would be of more help to include outgoings rather than just amount of monies coming in.

I would like to thank all the people at Babergh District Council for all there hard work. They have been very helpful to me. Mrs L Gibson.

Why can't we have street lights on River View Road, Harkstead as its dangerous and frightening at night.

Overall your forms are reasonably easy to fill in and you always return wage slips and other relevant documents very quickly. The completed form always seems I always miss something out, can't be as easy as I thought. I don't deal with anyone over the phone as yet so i can't really comment on that. What I will comment on is the reams of paperwork that is sent to me - far too much for my liking. Bigger envelopes to return forms in would be very helpful.

Have no trace of receiving a questionnaire before this one 09/02/04.

I think in the times we live in, you will never please them all, but we don't know what we got till it's gone! Thankyou for everything.

There is one particular member of staff (who I have spoken to on the telephone on several occasions) who is very unhelpful. However, when I have visited your offices and had a face-to-face meeting I have always been giving the information I need and treated with respect. It's a pity The last benefits forms I send back, I don't quite understand whether I am entitled to benefits or not, I would appreciate a clearer reply. Thank you.

I have always found the staff to be very cordial and helpful. I apologise for the delay in sending this form back

We have been in receipt of benefit for some years. The new forms however have made the claim process very difficult and long winded. Mainly due to the amount of evidence rqd. to support financial status. Our claim was allowed and then disallowed when it was found one piece of evidence was missing.

I dont wish to hear rom you again. All you do is put people in debt, lose forms and tell us "We have a backlog, thats why your housing benefit and council tax forms are taking time". the survey was a load of bull. Get people who don't work off their backsides and make them find a JOB. You dont give us loan parents, who bring up their kids on their own a chance. Please pass this form onto the right person, or doesnt "my say count for anything"

My circumstances are unusual in that I have suffered as a victim of crime, along with my son and we both have PTSD and are under GP care and counselling. There is also a threat to our security, resulting in keeping our identity and whereabouts highly confidential in accordance with Court Orders and Police instructions

Regarding Q19 - I had an industrial accident several years ago resulting in a back injury. This liits the work I can do. i.e. heavy lifting causes a problem from time to time

I am disabled

Due to learning disability I am unable to complete this questionnaire. This is due to my support worker access and contacts the Housing and Council benefit on my behalf.

Due to having learning disability I am unable to complete this questionnaire. this is due to my support worker access and contacts the Housing and Council Benefit on my behalf.

Date: 7th April 2004