

NorthEast Grants Office

Customer Survey

September 2013

Northern Ireland
Housing Executive

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INTRODUCTION

i. Background to the Survey

As part of the Customer Satisfaction Survey Programme agreed with Design and Property Services, the Research Unit conducted a telephone survey of people living in the North East Grants Office area who had applied for and received a grant from the Housing Executive to repair, renovate, replace or adapt their home.

The aims of the survey were:

- to evaluate grant applicants' perceptions of the grants process;
- to assess whether applicants thought they had a say in the services they received;
- to identify the priorities of applicants;
- to measure overall satisfaction with the service;
- to evaluate grant applicants' views on electronic delivery of services; and
- to identify shortcomings in the service and improvements required as perceived by the applicants.

In addition, the survey was carried out in support of the North East Grants Office's Customer Service Excellence Standard. The Research Unit consulted with Design and Property Services on the aims of the survey, questionnaire design, survey methodology and sample frame.

ii. Research Methodology and Sample

It was agreed that the sample frame should include grant applicants in the North East Grants Office catchment area whose application had been completed within a 12 month period, i.e. between July 2012 and June 2013. This was agreed as an appropriate cut-off point, bearing in mind resource constraints and the length of time grants customers could be expected to remember details of the application process. The Housing Executive's computerised Grants Management System and Private Sector Management System identified a total of 224 grant applicants whose telephone numbers were available, these applicants were included in the sample frame for the survey.

The agreed methodology was a telephone survey. The sample frame included applicants who had received Disabled Facilities Grants, Home Repair Grants, Renovation Grants and Renovation Grants. However, with reduced availability of funding, discretionary grants for renovation, replacement and home repair assistance are only available in exceptional circumstances and mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants therefore accounted for the majority (95%) of the overall sample.

iii. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to assess satisfaction levels with all stages of the grant application process. As the process varies somewhat for Disabled Facilities Grants, the questionnaire design took account of these differences.

iv. Fieldwork

Research Unit staff carried out the interviews by telephone during August 2013. Interviews were conducted over approximately 10 days. It was agreed that a quota of 100 achieved interviews would be sufficient for analysis.

From an eligible population of 224 households, the Research Unit selected a stratified random sample of 200, proportionate to each grant type. The sampling and response information are in Table A.

Table A: Sample and response information

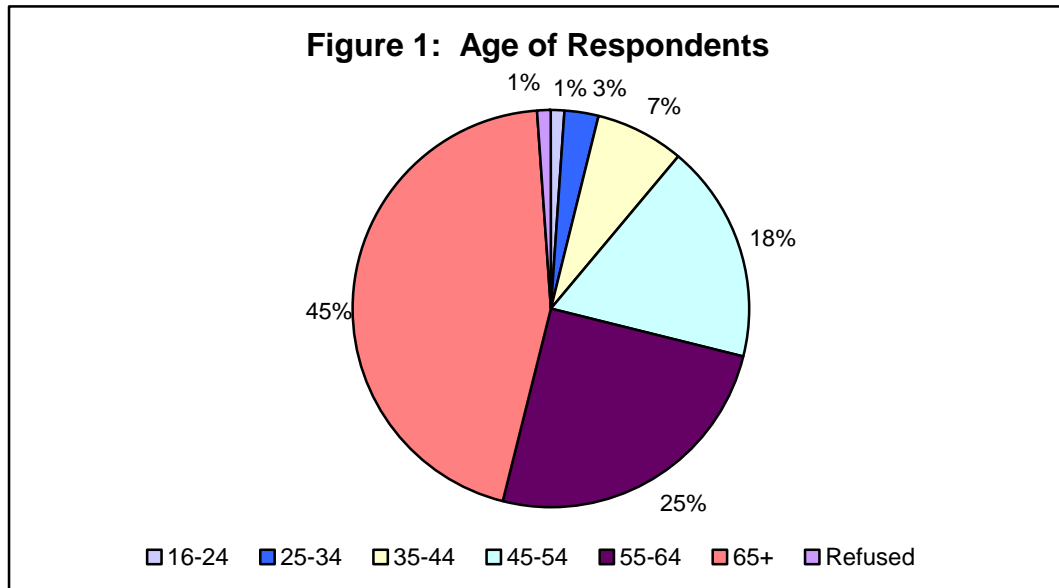
Grant Type	Sample	Achieved Interviews
Disabled Facilities	189	96
Home Repair	3	1
Renovation Grant	7	3
Replacement Grant	1	0
TOTAL	200	100

Commentary and Analysis

1.0 Respondent Profile and Grant Type

1.1 Age of respondents

More than two-fifths (45%) of respondents were aged 65 or older; 25 per cent were aged between 55 and 64, 18 per cent between 45 and 54, and 7 per cent were aged between 35 and 44. Less than one-tenth (5; 5%) were aged between 25 and 34, 16 and 24 years or refused to state their age (Figure 1, Table 1.1).



1.2 Ethnicity of respondents

Almost all (99%) of respondents described their ethnicity as white. The remaining respondent refused to state their ethnicity (Table 1.2).

1.3 Household Religion

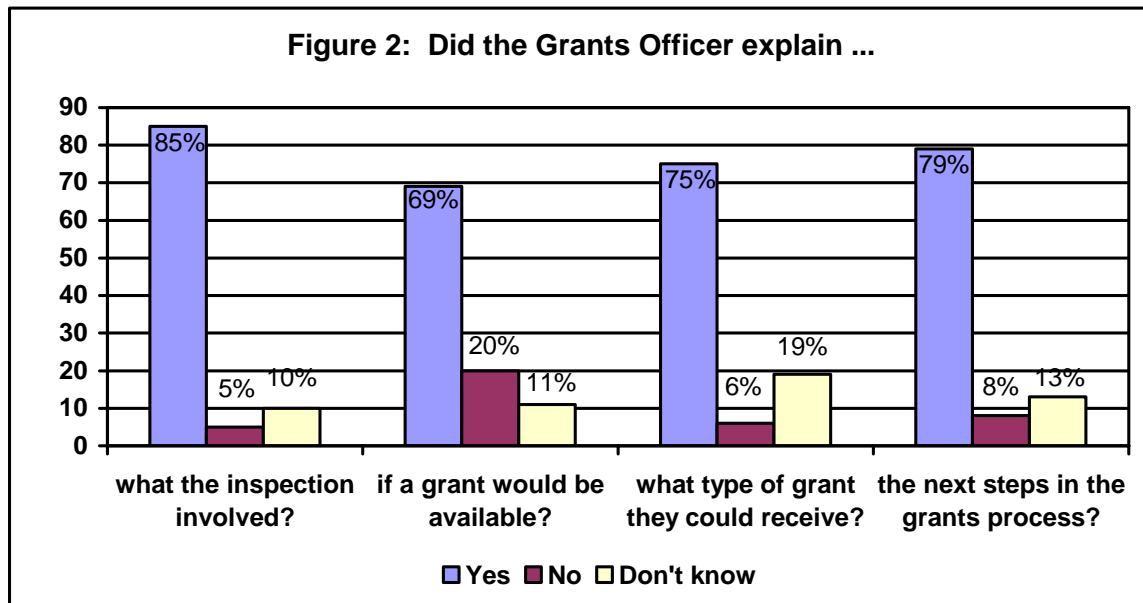
More than three-fifths (62%) of respondents described their household religion as Protestant and 25 per cent described their religion as Catholic. Fewer respondents (5; 5%) had 'no religion'; four households (4%) were described as 'mixed religion' and one (1%) as other religion. The remaining three (3%) respondents refused to state the religion of their household (Table 1.3).

1.4 Grant Type

Almost all (96%) of respondents had received a Disabled Facilities Grant, 3 per cent had received a Renovation Grant and 1% received a Home Repair Grant (Table 1.4).

2.0 Contact with Grants Office

- 2.1** More than four-fifths (85; 85%) of respondents said they had been involved in every stage of the grants process and the remaining 15 (15%) had been involved in some of the stages (Table 2.1).
- 2.2** The majority (93; 93%) of respondents stated they were aware of their case officer at an early stage in the process, a small proportion (5; 5%) of respondents stated this was not the case and two (2%) could not remember (Table 2.2).
- 2.3** More than three-quarters (77; 77%) of respondents had been offered a Preliminary Test of Resources. Less than one-tenth (9; 9%) had not, eight (8%) could not remember and six (6%) stated a Preliminary Test of Resources was not applicable (Table 2.3).
- 2.4** Almost all (97%) respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with the preliminary contact from the grants office; a small proportion (1; 1%) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and two (2%) were dissatisfied/very dissatisfied (Table 2.4).
- 2.5** More than four-fifths (87; 87%) of respondents said the grants officer had made an appointment to visit them. Of those respondents who said an appointment had been made, all (87; 100%) said the appointment had been kept (Tables 2.5 and 2.6).
- 2.6** Respondents were asked a series of questions to establish if the grants officer had explained the grants process to them. The majority (85; 85%) of all respondents said the grants officer had explained what the inspection stage involved (Figure 2, Table 2.7).
- 2.7** More than two-thirds (69; 69%) of respondents said the grants officer had explained whether he/she thought a grant would be available (Figure 2, Table 2.7).
- 2.8** Three-quarters (75; 75%) of respondents said the grants officer had advised them on the type of grant they could receive (Figure 2, Table 2.7).
- 2.9** More than three-quarters (79; 79%) of respondents said the grants officer explained the next steps in the grant application process (Figure 2, Table 2.7).
- 2.9** The majority (94; 94%) of respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with the inspection stage of the process (Table 2.8).



- 2.10 More than two-fifths (43; 43%) of respondents had telephoned the grants office during the course of their grant application, in the 12 months. Of these respondents, 38 had been told the name of the person dealing with their call and five were unsure (Tables 2.9 and 2.10).
- 2.11 Almost all (42) respondents who had telephoned the grants office had found the staff polite, said also that staff were knowledgeable and they had not felt hurried or rushed by staff dealing with their query (Table 2.11).
- 2.12 Of the respondents who had telephoned the grants office (43; 43% of all respondents), 35 said the person who initially took the call had been able to deal with their query and eight stated the person who initially took their call was unable to deal with their query (Table 2.12).
- 2.13 Almost all (42) respondents who had telephoned the grants office were very satisfied/satisfied with the overall service they had received. The remaining respondent was dissatisfied/very dissatisfied (Table 2.13).

3.0 Grant Forms¹

3.1 Schedule of Works

More than three-quarters (76; 76%) of respondents had dealt with the Schedule of Works package. Of these, 66 (87%) thought the Schedule of Works package was clear, while six (8%) thought it was not clear and four (5%) didn't know or could not remember (Table 3.1).

3.2 Contact by Case Officer

More than half (54; 54%) of respondents had been contacted by their case officer after they received the schedule of works package, 37 (37%) could not remember if the case officer had contacted them and nine (9%) stated that the case officer did not contact them (Table 3.2).

3.3 Test of Resources Form

More than half (52; 52%) of respondents had completed a Test of Resources form. Of these, more than four-fifths (45; 87%) thought the test of resources form was not difficult to complete, seven (13%) thought the form was difficult to complete (Table 3.3).

3.4 Grant Approval Document

The Grant Approval Document had been dealt with by almost three-quarters (74; 74%) of respondents. Of these more than four-fifths (66; 89%) thought the grant approval document was clear, six (8%) didn't know or could not remember and two (3%) thought the form was not clear (Table 3.4).

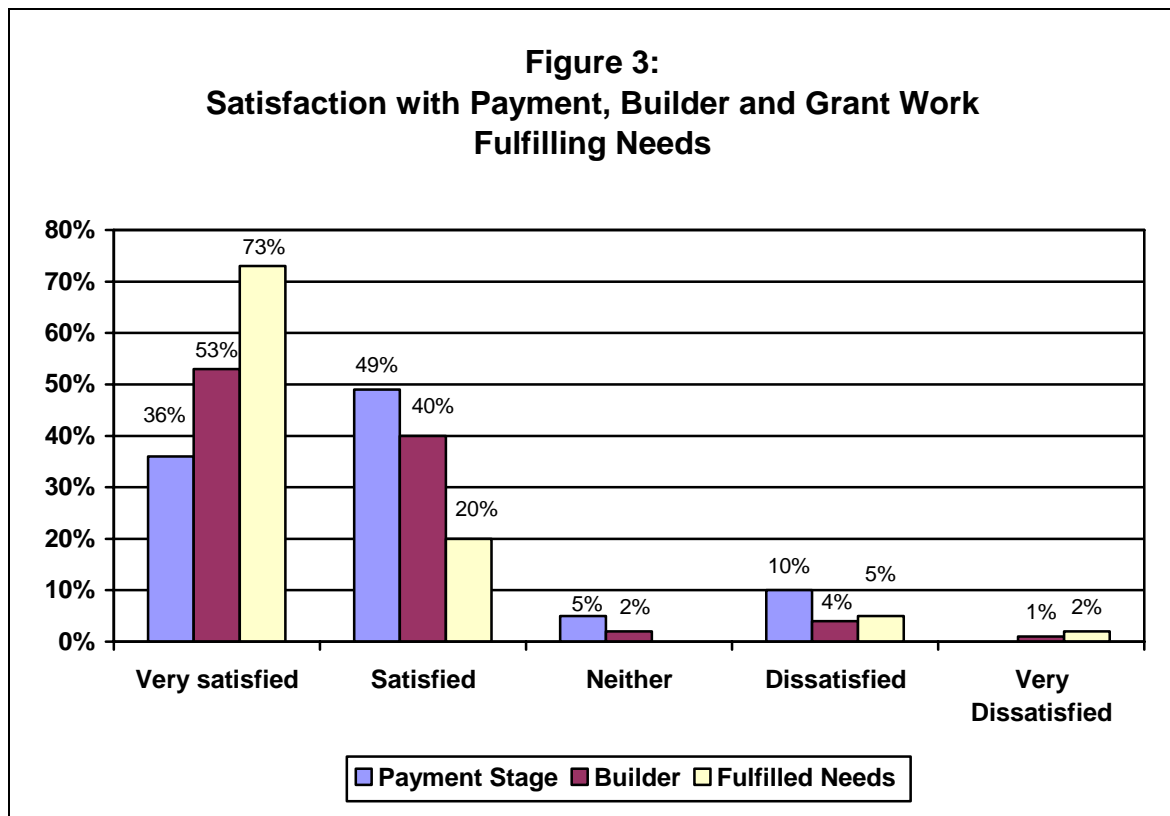
3.5 Contact by Grants Officer

More than half (57; 57%) of respondents stated the grants officer contacted them after their grant had been approved, 33 (33%) could not remember the grants officer contacting them and ten (10%) said the grants officer did not contact them (Table 3.5).

¹ Respondents who stated that someone else (family member/friend, builder or representative from Fold/Gable) had dealt with the grant forms on their behalf are not included in the analysis relating to the grants forms.

4.0 Payments, Contractors and Length of Time to Process Grant application

- 4.1 More than four-fifths (85; 85%) of respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with the payment stage of the grants process, ten (10%) were dissatisfied/very dissatisfied and five (5%) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (Figure 3, Table 4.1).
- 4.2 The majority (93; 93%) of respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with the builder who had carried out the work, five (5%) were dissatisfied/very dissatisfied and two (2%) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (Figure 3, Table 4.2).
- 4.3 All respondents who had received a Disabled Facilities Grant (96; 96%) were asked if the work fulfilled their needs. Of these, the majority (89; 93%) were very satisfied/dissatisfied that the grant work carried out fulfilled their needs (Figure 3, Table 4.3).



5.0 Communication from the Grants Office

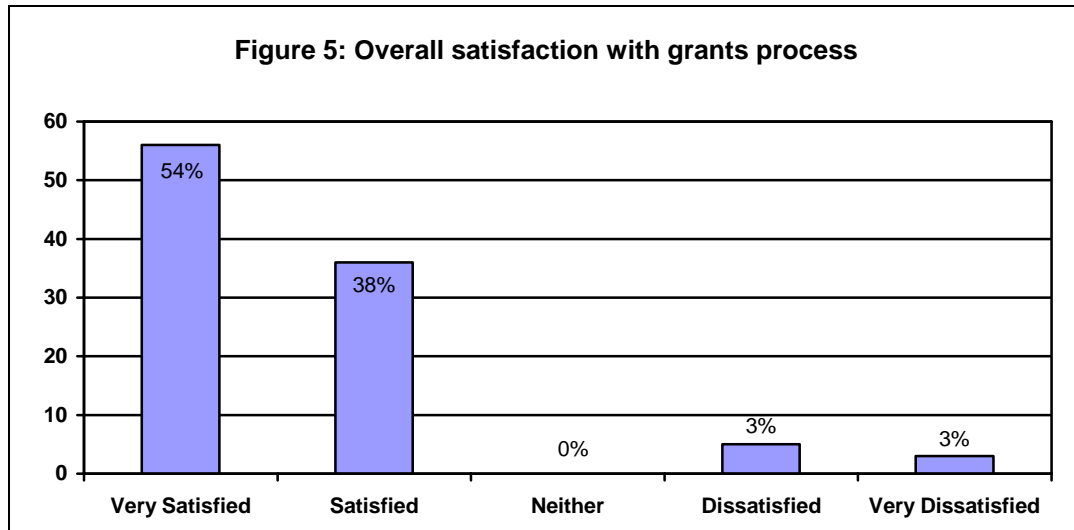
- 5.1** All respondents (100; 100%) said a builder had been involved in the grant process; fewer respondents said an occupational therapist (86; 93%), architect (69; 69%) and/or Fold/Gable (57; 57%) had been involved in the grant process on their behalf (Figure 4, Table 5.1).
- 5.2** Almost all (95; 95%) of respondents felt that the grants office had worked well with the builder, while three (3%) were unsure and two (2%) felt the grants office did not work well with the builder (Figure 4, Table 5.1).
- 5.3** The majority (86; 93%) of respondents had received assistance from an Occupational Therapist (OT) during the grants process. The majority (86; 93%) of respondents felt the grants office had a good working relationship with their OT during the grant process; five (5%) were unsure and two (2%) felt the grants office did not work well with their OT (Figure 4, Table 5.1).
- 5.4** More than half (57; 57%) of respondents had received assistance from Fold or Gable during the grants process. Of those respondents, 52 (91%) felt the grants office had worked well with Fold/Gable, four (7%) respondents were unsure and the remaining respondent (2%) felt the grants office did not work well with Fold/Gable (Figure 4, Table 5.1).
- 5.5** More than two-thirds (69; 69%) of respondents had required assistance from an architect. Of these, fifty seven (83%) felt the grants office had worked well with them during the grants process, ten (14%) were unsure and the remaining two (3%) felt the grants office did not work well with the architect (Figure 4, Table 5.1).

Figure 4: Do you think the Grants Office worked well with ...

	Numbers %			
	Yes	No	Unsure	Total
The builder?	95 95%	3 3%	2 2%	100 100%
The occupational therapist?	86 93%	2 2%	5 5%	93 100%
Fold/Gable?	52 91%	1 2%	4 7%	57 100%
The architect?	57 83%	2 3%	10 14%	69 100%

Bases: 100 (builder); 93 (OT); 57 (Fold/Gable); 69 (architect):

- 5.6** The majority (95; 95%) of all respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with the letters they had received from the grants office (Table 5.2).
- 5.7** Almost all (96; 96%) of all respondents felt they had been treated fairly throughout the grants process (Table 5.3).
- 5.8** The majority (92; 92%) of all respondents were overall very satisfied/satisfied overall with the grants process and eight (8%) were dissatisfied/very dissatisfied (Figure 5, Table 5.4).



6.0 Internet Access

6.1 More than half (53; 53%) of all respondents had access to the internet. Of these, twenty six (49%) said they would be interested in accessing grants forms and documentation via the internet, twenty four (45%) said they would not be interested and three (6%) did not know (Tables 6.1 and 6.2).

7.0 Further Comments

7.1 Respondents were asked if they would like to make any other comments about the grants process', more than half (59; 59%) made a comment. The majority (33; 56%) were satisfied with the service they had received. The remaining respondents said;

- Process took too long (12; 20%)
- Dissatisfied with service (7; 12%)
- Grant did not cover total cost of works carried out (2; 4%)
- Too much bureaucracy (1; 2%)
- Grants service needs to be better advertised (1; 2%)
- Intrusive questions to get grant (1; 2%)
- Small job lead to difficulty getting a plumber to carry out work (1; 2%)
- Too expensive to pay architect fees up front and have to wait for reimbursement when grant completed (1; 2%) (Table 7.1)

Appendix 1: Tabular Report

North East Grants Customer Survey

Table 1.1: Age of Respondents

	Numbers	Percentages
16–24 years	1	1
25-34 years	3	3
35-44 years	7	7
45-54 years	18	18
55-64 years	25	25
65+ years	45	45
Refused	1	1
TOTAL	100	100

Base: 100 (all respondents)

Table 1.2: Ethnicity of Respondents

	Numbers	Percentages
White	99	99
Refused	1	1
TOTAL	100	100

Base: 100 (all respondents)

Table 1.3: Household Religion

	Numbers	Percentages
Protestant	62	62
Catholic	25	25
Mixed Religion (Protestant/Catholic)	4	4
Other	1	1
None	5	5
Refused	3	3
TOTAL	100	100

Base: 100 (all respondents)

Table 1.4: Grant Type

	Numbers	Percentages
Disabled Facilities Grant	96	96
Home Repair Grant	1	1
Renovation Grant	3	3
TOTAL	100	100

Base: 100 (all respondents)

Table 2.1: Was the applicant involved in every stage of the process?

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes, every stage	85	85
Yes, some of the stages	15	15
TOTAL	100	100

Base: 100 (all respondents)

Table 2.2: Were you aware of your case officer at an early stage in the process?

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	93	93
No	5	5
Don't Know/Can't Remember	2	2
TOTAL	100	100

Base: 100 (all respondents)

Table 2.3: Were you offered a Preliminary Test of Resources?

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	77	77
No	9	9
Don't Know/Can't Remember	8	8
Not Applicable	6	6
TOTAL	100	100

Base: 100 (all respondents)

Table 2.4: How satisfied/dissatisfied were you with the preliminary contact from the Grants Office?

	Numbers	Percentages
Very satisfied	42	42
Satisfied	55	55
Neither	1	1
Dissatisfied	2	2
Very Dissatisfied	0	0
TOTAL	100	100

Base: 100 (all respondents)

Table 2.5: Did the Grants Officer make an appointment to visit you?

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	87	87
No	6	6
Don't Know/Cant Remember	7	7
TOTAL	100	100

Base: 100 (all respondents)

Table 2.6: Did the Grants Officer turn up to the appointment?

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	87	100
TOTAL	87	100

Base: 87 (respondents who had an appointment)

Table 2.7: Did the Grants Officer explain...

	Numbers %			
	Yes	No	D/K	Total
what the inspection stage involved?	85 85%	5 5%	10 10%	100 100%
whether they thought a grant would be available?	69 69%	20 20%	11 11%	100 100%
what type of grant you could receive?	75 75%	6 6%	19 19%	100 100%
the next steps in the grants process?	79 79%	8 8%	13 13%	100 100%

Base: 100 (all respondents)

Table 2.8: How satisfied/dissatisfied were you with the inspection stage of process?

	Numbers	Percentages
Very satisfied	40	40
Satisfied	54	54
Neither	4	4
Dissatisfied	2	2
Very Dissatisfied	0	0
TOTAL	100	100

Base: 100 (all respondents)

Table 2.9: Did you make telephone contact with the Grants Office at any time during your application?

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	43	43
No	48	48
Don't Know/Can't Remember	9	9
TOTAL	100	100

Base: 100 (all respondents)

Table 2.10: Did the person dealing with the call give his/her name?

	Numbers
Yes	38
Don't Know/Can't Remember	5
TOTAL	43

Base: 43 (respondents who had contacted the grants office by telephone)

Table 2.11: Did you find the staff...

	Yes	No	Total
	Number	Number	Number
polite?	42	1	43
knowledgeable?	42	1	43
In a hurry/rushed?	1	42	43

Base: 43 (respondents who had contacted the grants office by telephone)

Table 2.12: Was the person who took your call able to deal with your query directly?

	Numbers
Yes	35
No	8
TOTAL	43

Base: 43 (respondents who had contacted the grants office by telephone)

Table 2.13: How satisfied/dissatisfied were you with the telephone service?

	Numbers
Very satisfied	25
Satisfied	17
Neither	0
Dissatisfied	0
Very Dissatisfied	1
TOTAL	43

Base: 43 (respondents who had contacted grants office by telephone)

Table 3.1: Do you think the Schedule of Works Package was clear?

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	66	87
No	6	8
Don't know/can't remember	4	5
Sub Total	76	100
Fold dealt with document	16	
Family/friend dealt with document	7	
Builder dealt with document	1	
TOTAL	100	

Base: 76 (respondents who dealt with the Schedule of Works Package)

Table 3.2: Were you contacted by your case officer after receiving the Schedule of Works Package?

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	54	54
No	9	9
Don't Know/Can't Remember	37	37
TOTAL	100	100

Base: 100 (all respondents)

Table 3.3: Do you think the Test of Resources Form was difficult to complete?

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	7	13
No	45	87
Don't know/can't remember	0	0
Sub Total	52	100
Family/friend completed form	6	
Fold completed form	18	
N/A	24	
TOTAL	100	

Base: 52 (respondents who completed the Test of Resources Form)

Table 3.4: Do you think the Grant Approval Document was clear?

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	66	89
No	2	3
Don't know/can't remember	6	8
Sub Total	74	100
Family/friend dealt with document	6	
Fold dealt with form	19	
Builder dealt with form	1	
TOTAL	100	

Base: 74 (respondents who dealt with the Grant Approval Document)

Table 3.5: Were you contacted by the Grants Officer after you received approval?

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	57	57
No	10	10
Don't Know/Can't Remember	33	33
TOTAL	100	100

Base: 100 (all respondents)

Table 4.1: Overall, how satisfied were you with the payment stage?

	Numbers	Percentages
Very satisfied	36	36
Satisfied	49	49
Neither	5	5
Dissatisfied	10	10
Very dissatisfied	0	0
TOTAL	100	100

Base: 100 (all respondents)

Table 4.2: How satisfied/dissatisfied were you with the builder who carried out the work?

	Numbers	Percentages
Very satisfied	53	53
Satisfied	40	40
Neither	2	2
Dissatisfied	4	4
Very dissatisfied	1	1
TOTAL	100	100

Base: 100 (all respondents)

Table 4.3 How satisfied/dissatisfied are you that the work carried out fulfilled your needs?

	Numbers	Percentages
Very satisfied	70	73
Satisfied	19	20
Neither	0	0
Dissatisfied	5	5
Very dissatisfied	2	2
TOTAL	96	100

Base: 96 (respondents who received a disabled facilities grant)

Table 5.1: Do you think the Grants Office worked well with ...

	Numbers %			
	Yes	No	Unsure	Total
The builder?	95 95%	3 3%	2 2%	100 100%
The occupational therapist?	86 93%	2 2%	5 5%	93 100%
Fold/Gable?	52 91%	1 2%	4 7%	57 100%
The architect?	57 83%	2 3%	10 14	69 100%

Bases: 100 (builder); 93 (OT); 57 (Fold/Gable); 69 (architect)

Table 5.2: Overall, how satisfied/dissatisfied were you with the letters you received?

	Numbers	Percentages
Very satisfied	35	35
Satisfied	60	60
Neither	3	3
Dissatisfied	1	1
Very dissatisfied	1	1
TOTAL	100	100

Base: 100 (all respondents)

Table 5.3: Overall, do you think you were treated fairly throughout the grants process?

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	96	96
No	3	3
Don' know	1	1
TOTAL	100	100

Base: 100 (all respondents)

Table 5.4: Overall how satisfied/dissatisfied are you with the grants process?

	Numbers	Percentages
Very satisfied	56	56
Satisfied	36	36
Neither	0	0
Dissatisfied	5	5
Very Dissatisfied	3	3
TOTAL	100	100

Base: 100 (all respondents)

Table 6.1: Do you have access to the internet?

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	53	53
No	47	47
TOTAL	100	100

Base: 100 (all respondents)

Table 6.2: Would you be interested in accessing grants forms and documentation via the internet?

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	26	49
No	24	45
Don't know	3	6
TOTAL	53	100

Base: 53 (respondents who had access to the internet)

Table 7.1: Would you like to make any other comments about the grants process?

	Numbers	Percentages
Satisfied with service	33	56
Process took too long	12	20
Dissatisfied with service	7	12
Grant did not cover total cost of works carried out	2	4
Too much bureaucracy	1	2
Grants service needs to be better advertised	1	2
Intrusive questions to get grant	1	2
Small job lead to difficulty getting a plumber to carry out work	1	2
Too expensive to pay architect fees up front and have to wait for reimbursement when grant completed	1	2
Sub Total	59	100

Base: 59 (respondents who made a comment about the service they had received)