

West Somerset Council benefits service is committed to getting feedback from customers, and using this to drive improvements to the service it provides.

At the start of the 2009-10 financial year, the service introduced a customer feedback survey, which we issue to all customers with their entitlement notices. As well as this, each e-mail the service issues provides a link to the survey.

Annual Findings

The full results of the survey are always available on our customer display screens, and on our website - <http://www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk/Advice--Benefits/Benefits/Customer-Feedback>

For the period to 30th September 2010, the main areas of interest were:

- 91.5% of customers were either satisfied or very satisfied with the time it took to calculate their new claim or change of circumstance. This is a slight drop from 92.9% during 2009/10.
- 100% of customers were either satisfied or very satisfied with the overall service that they received from the benefits service. This has increased from 97.5% during 2009/10.
- 100% of customers were either satisfied or very satisfied with the overall service that they received from the benefits service. This is unchanged from 2009/10.

We asked what one area of the service would you like to see improved, the main findings were as follows:

- 67.35% of customers felt that nothing needed improving. This has improved from 60.6% during 2009/10
- 14.3 % of customers felt we could improve the speed of assessing work - This has reduced from 17.5% during 2009/10
- 10.2% of customers felt the claim forms need improving. This has increased from 8.7% during 2009/10

Claim forms:

- The service has introduced new application form on 1st October 2010. The form was designed in consultation with various stakeholders, including customers, landlords, Housing Associations, West Somerset Advice Bureau, visually impaired individuals, and with special needs. As well as this we ensured that they met equality and diversity

guidelines. The new form will hopefully overcome concerns about the previous version

- As well as this, the service has launched "benefits" software, which enables customers to apply for benefit either at West Somerset Council, or at home by using our website. You can make the claim by answering a series of relevant questions, at the end of which it tells the customer exactly what evidence and information they need to provide. There is no need to complete an application form, and it is fully interactive, so you can claim electronically 365 days a year. We can also take applications by telephone if you prefer. We do not require a signature from you when using the new software

These two measures should improve the quality of the service's forms, and hopefully improve your satisfaction with this area of the service

Speed of Processing Work

As part of the survey, we asked our customers how long they thought it should take us to assess their claim. The results were 21.8 days for new claims, and 20.6 days for changes in circumstances.

Our actual performance during this period was 17.3 days for new claims and 6.2 days for changes of circumstance.

Whilst we have exceeded your expectations for processing times, we will continue to try and improve, ensuring that you are paid the correct amount of benefit as quickly as possible

What action have we taken?

- Customers can receive text messages to remind them about any information they need to provide us with
- We can email letters requesting further information. This reduces delays caused by posting the letters
- Claims can now be made electronically, using a simple method, and removing the need for a signature
- Claims can be made by telephone

These improvements have been made using your valuable feedback.

Please try to provide feedback on the service that we have provided you with, as this allows us to provide the service that you want