Research report

Pension, Disability and Carers Service annual report of quarterly satisfaction monitor 2009/10

by Nick Howat, Oliver Norden and Erica Garnett

DWP Department for Work and Pensions

Department for Work and Pensions

Research Report No 761

Pension, Disability and Carers Service annual report of quarterly satisfaction monitor 2009/10

Nick Howat, Oliver Norden and Erica Garnett

Contents

List of tables

List of figures

Acknowledgements

The Authors

Nicholas Howat is a Senior Associate Director at TNS-BMRB Social Research. Nick has a long track record of working on customer surveys for government departments as well as major social research studies more generally in the UK. Nick was responsible for the overall running of the 2009/10 PDCS customer survey.

Oliver Norden is a Research Manager at TNS-BMRB Social Research. Oliver was responsible for the day-to-day management of the PDCS customer survey, and as such involved in all stages of the project. He also worked on previous customer satisfaction surveys for The Pension Service and International Pension Centre (IPC).

Erica Garnett is a Senior Research Executive at TNS-BMRB Social Research. Erica has been involved in every stage of the research process. Her responsibilities included fieldwork set-up and management, analysis, presenting the results and reporting. Previously Erica was involved in various stages of the Pension Service Customer Survey 2007. During her time at TNS-BMRB Erica has also worked on a range of projects for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) and other government departments.

Abbreviations

AA	Attendance Allowance
CA	Carers Allowance
CATI	Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing
CTB	Council Tax Benefit
DCS	Disability and Carers Service
DLA	Disability Living Allowance
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
GOR	Government Office Region
HB	Housing Benefit
MI	Management information
PC	Pension Credit
PDCS	Pension, Disability and Carers Service
TPS	The Pension Service

Glossary of terms

Attendance Allowance (AA)	Attendance Allowance is a tax-free benefit paid to customers, aged 65 or over, who need help with their personal care because of an illness or disability.
Council Tax Benefit (CTB)	This is the means-tested benefit available to help cover the costs of Council Tax. It is available to both people renting and owner occupiers.
Disability Living Allowance (DLA)	Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is a tax-free benefit for children and adults who need help with personal care or have walking difficulties because they are physically or mentally disabled.
Housing Benefit (HB)	This is a means-tested benefit paid to tenants or their landlords to help meet their rent.
Local Service	Local Service supports the work of Pension Centres primarily through providing home visits, but also through Local Service Information points, by prearranged appointments and providing talks in locations accessible to pensioners. It works in partnership with a range of organisations accomplished in dealing with pensioners' needs. Local Service is aimed at raising pensioners' awareness of what is available to them and increasing take-up of benefits.
Pension Credit (PC)	Pension Credit is an entitlement for people aged 60 or over which was introduced in October 2003, replacing the Minimum Income Guarantee. It provides a guaranteed income for pensioners and rewards those who have saved for their retirement.
Pension forecasts	A State Pension (SP) forecast informs customers of: the amount of SP they have earned already; the amount of SP they can expect at SP age based on what they have earned already and what they might earn before reaching SP age.

Summary

Background and objectives

The Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS) was formed in April 2008 from the amalgamation of The Pension Service (TPS) and the Disability and Carers Service (DCS). It is responsible for delivering a range of age and disability-related benefits. Following the formation of PDCS, a customer survey was launched to monitor satisfaction with the service and to ensure that the customer voice could be heard when it comes to operational and policy planning. This report brings together the findings from the first year of the customer survey.

The survey was designed to include only contacting customers. Customers who received benefit payments, but had no interactions with the service beyond this, are excluded. Interviews were conducted by telephone with customers who had contact with PDCS in the previous six months and fieldwork was completed in four sweeps between July 2009 and August 2010.

Overall performance

One of the key performance measures in the survey was overall customer satisfaction with the service and 92 per cent were satisfied with PDCS as a whole in 2009/10. Overall satisfaction was slightly higher for TPS customers than for DCS customers (94 per cent compared to 88 per cent). Only five per cent of TPS customers and ten per cent of DCS customers said that they were dissatisfied with the service.

While overall satisfaction is an important performance metric, the survey also included a number of other items that can be used as measures to evaluate the service as a whole. Customers were asked how much improvement the service needed to make and a no improvement response can be a good measure of differentiating high performance, 52 per cent TPS customers and 42 per cent DCS customers said the services needed no improvements at all.

In addition to this, it was also possible to look at customers' expectations alongside their satisfaction with the service. This again helps to differentiate performance at the high end; 32 per cent TPS customers and 24 per cent DCS customers were 'delighted'.

DWP has a Customer Charter which measures aspects of customer service. Four key drivers of satisfaction have been identified as important to customers against which the Department tracks its performance. Scores were highest for the Right Treatment driver at 86 per cent. Right Result scored 80 per cent with Easy Access and On Time scoring lower at 74 per cent and 73 per cent respectively.

The performance measure of staff behaviour achieved outstanding results, often exceeding the overall satisfaction results. In both services, around 98 per cent respondents stated staff were polite, respectful and listened to what customers had to say. The positive views of staff were also echoed when customers were asked to say what they felt was the best thing about the service. The staff were the number one area that was mentioned for both services, identified by twice as many customers as the next area.

When it came to areas for improvement, the two services differed. For DCS customers, the top area that needs improving was the quality of forms and paperwork – this was mentioned spontaneously by over a quarter of all customers. By contrast, the biggest improvement for TPS customers was providing information, mentioned by around one in five customers.

Enquiry types

The PDCS customer survey identified the customer's most recent contact with the service and then looked at all the interactions they had over the course of that enquiry. The most common enquiry type for TPS customers was to claim the State Pension (SP) (38 per cent). This was followed by claiming Pension Credit (PC) (20 per cent), notification of change of circumstances (17 per cent) and a query (18 per cent).

For DCS customers, the most common enquiry type was to claim Disability Living Allowance (DLA) (36 per cent). This was followed by claims for Attendance Allowance (AA) (19 per cent), Carer's Allowance (CA) (15 per cent), changes of circumstance (14 per cent) and general queries (11 per cent).

Customers were asked what contact channels they had used as part of their enquiry and telephone was the most common for both TPS (83 per cent) and DCS customers (63 per cent). DCS customers were, however, almost twice as likely to report having written to the service. For both services, the overwhelming majority of customers were happy with the contact channels they had used for their most recent enquiry. Further detailed questions were asked about their experiences with these channels over the course of their most recent enquiry.

Telephone communication

Around half of all customers said their most recent enquiry required two or more calls before it was resolved and the average number of telephone contacts was 2.4 for TPS customers and 2.3 for DCS customers. The number of calls varied by enquiry type with TPS customers claiming PC making an average of 3.2 calls and DCS customers claiming DLA making an average of 2.9 calls.

Three-quarters of PDCS customers reported that the first person they spoke to over the telephone was able to answer their query. For those who had to speak to a new person, eight in ten customers found it necessary to repeat some information, with over half finding that they had to repeat all information.

Overall satisfaction levels were higher for PDCS customers who felt that they were given enough time to explain their situation and for those who were told what would happen next with their enquiry.

Written communication

Written communication was less prevalent than telephone contact for the most recent enquiry that customers had made. A fifth of DCS customers (20 per cent) and one in eight TPS customers (12 per cent) wrote to PDCS as part of their most recent enquiry. The average number of contacts for customers who had written to the service was also lower than for telephone contacts at 1.6 for DCS customers and 1.8 for TPS customers. For TPS customers, the number of contacts varied significantly by enquiry type with, at one end, changes of circumstances incurring very little correspondence (on average 1.2 contacts) while at the other, general queries generated more than twice that amount (on average 2.7 contacts). For DCS customers, the average number of contacts did not vary as significantly by enquiry type ranging from 1.3 contacts for AA claims and 1.8 contacts for claims for other benefits.

The majority of customers who wrote to PDCS were expecting a reply of some kind (90 per cent), and while nine in ten DCS customers then received one (90 per cent), only three-quarters of TPS customers did (76 per cent). When customers received a reply, most found them easy to understand (89 per cent)

Three-quarters of DCS customers and three-fifths of TPS customers submitted a form as part of their most recent enquiry. Nine in ten TPS customers found the form easy to complete compared with half of DCS customers. Over half of DCS customers and two-fifths of TPS customers had received help when completing a form as part of their most recent enquiry.

Enquiry conclusion

Customers were asked whether their enquiry had taken longer than expected and around one in five (18 per cent) said that it had. In addition to this, customers were asked whether PDCS had done what they said they would over the course of their enquiry and the overwhelming majority said that they had (92 per cent).

Half of TPS (54 per cent) and three-quarters of DCS customers (73 per cent) said that their enquiry required the service to make a decision based on their personal circumstances. Nine in ten felt that the decision was clearly explained to them (90 per cent).

The survey also looked at issues around communication with the service over the course of the enquiry. Only a very small proportion of customers (seven per cent) said that they found it difficult to get in contact with either agency and nearly half said that it was very easy to get in contact with them (49 per cent). The picture was slightly less positive when it came to communication from the service to the customer in terms of the information they received. Around one in six customers (15 per cent) said that the service did not provide them with clear timings about what they would do and around a quarter (24 per cent) said that they were not kept up to date with the progress of their enquiry.

Customers were also asked how complex they had found the enquiry process and whether or not it was more or less complicated than they were expecting. Here there were marked differences between TPS and DCS customers, with the latter more likely to report additionally complex contacts, while nearly twice as many DCS customers as TPS customers said that their enquiry was more complicated than they had been expecting (14 per cent compared to eight per cent).

The Kano model of satisfaction

The use of statistical techniques when analysing customer surveys can serve to identify which factors above all others impact on how customers feel about the service. In analysing the data from the PDCS customer survey, the Kano model has been used to look at how different service elements interact with satisfaction identifying them as either, 'hygiene' factors, 'performance' factors or 'attractive' factors.

The 'hygiene' factors are those elements which might be taken for granted as part of the service and where they performed poorly, this led to dissatisfaction.

The 'performance' factors are the aspects of service where a poor performance results in dissatisfaction and good performance increases satisfaction.

The 'attractive' factors are those aspects that will increase satisfaction, but their absence doesn't lead directly to dissatisfaction.

The Kano model is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Notes on terminology

A large number of tables and figures appear in this report. The following conventions have been used:

0 = a 'true zero' (i.e. no responses in the category);

* = less than 0.5 per cent, but more than zero responses.

Significance testing has been carried out at the five per cent level, unless otherwise stated. All comparative data described in the report is significant, unless otherwise stated.

Throughout the report, percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number (figures are rounded up from .5, and rounded down below this).

Percentages in the tables do not always add to 100 per cent due to rounding. Where percentages in the text differ to the sum of percentages in the tables this too will be due to rounding. Also 'netted' (i.e. where a number of responses have been grouped together) responses may not always equal the sum of the individual responses, again due to rounding.

1   Introduction

1.1   Background

The Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS) is an executive agency of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) formed in April 2008 from the amalgamation of The Pension Service (TPS) and the Disability and Carers Service (DCS). The agency is responsible for delivering a range of age and disability-related benefits to around 15 million customers, and pays out nearly £85 billion annually.

Previously, both TPS and DCS had conducted customer research separately using different methodologies (face-to-face in home interviewing for TPS and postal questionnaires for DCS). With the creation of the new joint service the opportunity was taken to harmonise the two surveys into one quarterly monitor using the same methodology of telephone interviewing, the same questionnaire and sampling frame. Interviewing began in July 2009 and this report brings together the findings from the first four quarters of fieldwork for the first year of the PDCS customer survey.

1.2   Research objectives

The main objective of the PDCS customer survey is to monitor satisfaction with the service. The first quarter provided a benchmark and from then on performance has been monitored on a three monthly basis. Beyond this though, the research also aims to provide the 'customer voice' when it comes to operational and policy planning.

In particular, the research aims to establish what the main customer priorities are for the individual services and, as a result, identify what can be changed to improve satisfaction and reduce problems.

The survey also looks to provide findings that can be used to measure performance against the DWP customer charter standards of:

• Right treatment.

• Right result.

• On time.

• Easy access.

The research examines the views of customers from a range of demographic and social backgrounds who interact with PDCS through different service channels, so future design of services can be targeted most appropriately to suit the customers' needs.

1.3   Sample

The sample for the survey was generated from the PDCS database of customers. The target population for the research was customers who had recently completed a transaction with PDCS. This transaction may involve making a claim for various benefits on their own behalf, or on behalf of someone else, or notifying a change in circumstance. A sample was drawn each quarter based on customers who had made contact with PDCS within the last three months. It was felt the more recent the transaction the better as the customer would be able to recall the experience of the transaction. Customers may contact PDCS via the telephone, through Local Service, by letters and forms and by email. The survey included customers contacting via all these methods.

It should be noted that the approach described above means that the study is a survey of contacting customers rather than a survey of all customers receiving a benefit from one of the services. This approach was taken because the survey is intended to improve the service PDCS provides to its customers, therefore only customers who have had recent contact with the service were included.

1.4   Questionnaire design

The survey has been designed to capture the overall experience of the customer's most recent enquiry. The questionnaire traces the enquiry looking at all of the contact channels they have used, and maps their experiences against their overall ratings of the service as a whole.

The overall structure of the questionnaire is as follows:

- Most recent reason for contact with PDCS.
- Mode(s) of contact.
- Forms and submitting valuables.
- General enquiry experience.
- Enquiry conclusion.
- Non-enquiry contact.
- Problems and complaints.
- Overall satisfaction and statements.
- Demographics.

1.5   Fieldwork

Each quarter, all respondents were sent an advance letter two weeks before the start of fieldwork, which explained the purpose of the study, reasons for their inclusion in the research and the form that the survey would take. Respondents were invited to call a freephone number if they wished to opt-out of the survey or if they wished to enquire about further details of the research before deciding whether or not to participate. Contact details of those who opted out of the research were removed from the sample issued to interviewers.

There was a target of 1,500 interviews per quarter. The following numbers were achieved per quarter:

- Quarter 1 = 1,523 interviews (792 TPS, 731 DCS).
- Quarter 2 = 1,476 interviews (763 TPS, 713 DCS).
- Quarter 3 = 1,444 interviews (761 TPS, 683 DCS).
- Quarter 4 = 1,498 interviews (757 TPS, 741 DCS).

In total, 5,941 interviews were achieved across the first four quarters with 3,071 TPS interviews and 2,870 DCS interviews.

The fieldwork for each quarter took place across a four to five week time period. The fieldwork for Quarter 1 took place between 28 July 2009 and 31 August 2009, for Quarter 2 between 10 November 2009 and 10 December 2009, for Quarter 3 between 15 February 2010 and 23 March 2010 and for Quarter 4 between 8 July 2010 and 17 August 2010.

The average interview length was 17 minutes, with all interviews conducted over the telephone using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). For respondents who were unable to complete the interview by telephone, a postal option was available on request.

1.6 Report overview

The first section of this report looks at the survey findings for the PDCS as a whole and provides the topline figures for the organisation. The second section looks at the experiences of TPS customers and this is followed by the section which focuses on DCS customers. The fourth section then presents the findings of the statistical analysis that has been carried out to understand the 'Kano model' of key drivers of service performance from a customer's perspective for the two organisations. The final section then provides an overview of the customer characteristics of both the DCS and TPS.

1.6.1 Report structure

This report is divided into six main chapters covering the research findings:

Chapter 2: Pension, Disability and Carers Service.

Chapter 3: The Pension Service.

Chapter 4: The Disability and Carers Service.

Chapter 5: The Kano model of satisfaction.

Chapter 6: Customer Profile.

2   Pension, Disability and Carers Service

2.1   Enquiry types

In the Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS) customer survey the questionnaire establishes the subject of the respondent's most recent contact with the service and then follows this throughout its history.

This section discusses the types of enquiry customers were contacting the service about and the contact channels they were using. In addition to this, it also looks at whether customers would have preferred to use different contact channels for their enquiry (Sections 3.1 and 4.1 discuss these findings in relation to The Pension Service (TPS) and the Disability and Carers Service (DCS).

2.1.1   Main subject of enquiry

The sample for the PDCS customer survey is drawn from a list of contacts that have been made which result in a change to a customers' record. This will usually be either a change of circumstance or a claim. However, the survey itself focuses on the customers' most recent enquiry with the service and this may be a more recent incident. The survey also allows the customer to define the enquiry type in their own terms and this may also be slightly different to how they are classified on the records held by the PDCS.

There were a wide variety of enquiries that PDCS customers were contacting regarding, these are displayed in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1   Main reason contacted PDCS

	PDCS %
SP	27
Change of circumstance	16
A query	16
Pension Credit	15
Disability Living Allowance	10
Attendance Allowance	7
Carer's Allowance	5
Claiming other benefit	4

Base: All respondents (PDCS: 5,941).

Overall satisfaction was highest for PDCS customers contacting to claim the SP (96 per cent) or regarding a change of circumstance (96 per cent) and was lowest for PDCS customers contacting to claim another benefit (86 per cent).

2.1.2 Third party contact

The survey was intended to measure how PDCS dealt with the customers who contacted them. This meant that customers who were in receipt of a PDCS benefit, but who had not had occasion to contact them, were not included, but it also meant that if somebody had contacted on behalf of a customer it was this person that we wanted to interview. The one exception to this was for professional third parties. Given the case loads that these individuals may have had, it was felt that the PDCS customer survey was not the best vehicle to capture their experiences so they were excluded.

Around three-quarters (76 per cent) of PDCS customers were contacting for themselves, 14 per cent on behalf of someone else, nine per cent had a joint enquiry and one per cent were contacting to notify a death.

2.1.3 Contact channels used

All PDCS customers were asked which channels they had used during the course of their most recent enquiry. The results are displayed in Table 2.2. The most common contact channel used for PDCS customers was the telephone (78 per cent) followed by writing to PDCS (15 per cent).

Table 2.2 Channels used in enquiry PDCS

	PDCS %
Telephone	78
Customer writing to PDCS	15
In own home	11
At a government office	4
Online	4
Email	1
Other	2

Base: All respondents (PDCS: 5,941).

PDCS customers who wrote to the service were less likely to be satisfied overall (84 per cent) than those who had contact by telephone (93 per cent).

2.1.4 Preferred channels of contact

After saying what channels they had used as part of their most recent enquiry, customers were asked if these were actually how they would have wanted to have made contact given the choice and, if they were not, how they would have preferred to contact PDCS instead.

The overwhelming majority of customers were happy with the contact channels they used for their most recent enquiry (93 per cent PDCS). For those customers who would have preferred another channel of contact, a home visit was the most common choice (32 per cent), followed by electronic channels such as the internet or email (27 per cent), telephone contact (26 per cent) and in person at a government office (24 per cent).

2.2   Telephone communication

This section looks in more detail at customers' experiences of telephone contact with PDCS. Telephone communication was the most common method used to contact PDCS (Sections 3.2 and 4.2 discuss these findings in relation to TPS and DCS).

In particular in this section we explore:

• the frequency of telephone contact;

• whether respondents felt that the amount of time they waited for calls to be answered was reasonable;

• internal transfers;

• whether respondents felt that they were given enough time to explain their situation; and

• whether they were told what would happen next.

2.2.1   Frequency of contact

Figure 2.1 displays the number of times PDCS customers made contact by telephone for their most recent enquiry; this is discussed in more detail for TPS in Section 3.2.1 and for DCS in Section 4.2.1

Figure 2.1   How many times customers called PDCS

Base: All respondents who contacted by telephone (PDCS: 4,463, TPS: 2,626, DCS: 1,837).
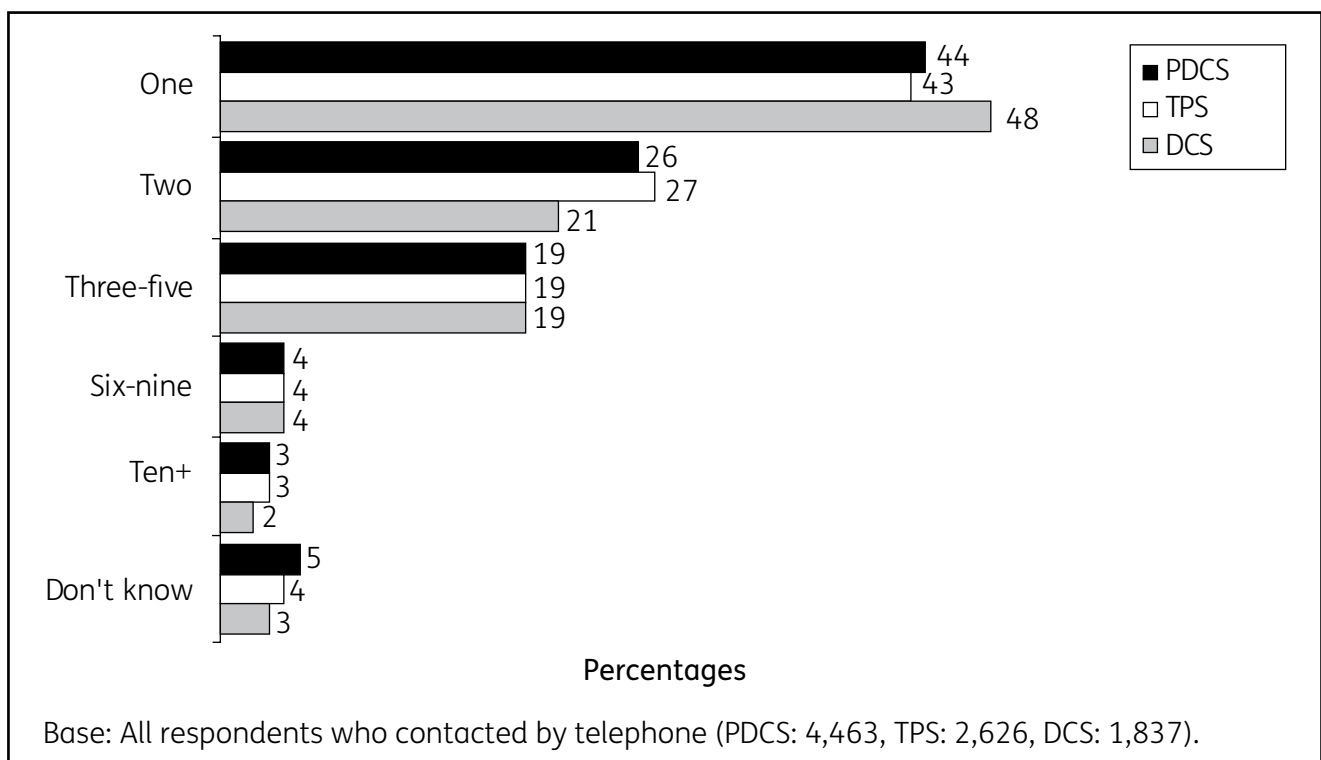
For PDCS customers the number of calls made appeared to impact on overall satisfaction. Overall satisfaction dropped significantly for PDCS customers who made six or more calls as part of their most recent enquiry (66 per cent).

2.2.2 Whether the amount of time waited for calls to be answered was reasonable

All customers who contacted PDCS by telephone were asked whether the amount of time they had to wait for calls to be answered was reasonable.

The majority (87 per cent) of PDCS customers felt that the amount of time they waited for their calls to be answered was reasonable.

2.2.3 Internal transfers

All customers who contacted PDCS by telephone for their most recent enquiry were asked whether the first person they spoke to was able to answer their query or whether they had to be passed on to somebody else. Customers who were transferred onwards were then asked further questions about how this happened.

Around three-quarters (76 per cent) of all PDCS customers had their enquiry answered by the first person they spoke to and this was consistent across both services. When customers did have their call answered by the first person they spoke to, overall satisfaction levels were extremely high (96 per cent). When the first person was not able to answer the customer's query satisfaction levels were on average lower (82 per cent), but there was significant variation depending on how they were treated. The findings for TPS (Section 3.2.2) and DCS (Section 4.2.2) indicate that while at the headline level transferals do lead to lower levels of satisfaction, this can be mitigated by the way in which they are managed and the level of information that it is necessary to repeat.

2.2.4 Time taken and next steps

All PDCS customers who contacted by telephone were asked whether they felt they were given enough time to explain their situation and whether they were told what would happen next.

The overwhelming majority of PDCS customers who contacted by telephone regarding their most recent enquiry felt that they were given enough time to explain their situation (95 per cent). This is important because customers who felt they were not given enough time on the telephone had significantly lower levels of satisfaction with the service overall (55 per cent compared to 94 per cent).

Slightly fewer customers reported that that they were told what would happen next with their enquiry, but it was still a significant majority (86 per cent). Not being told what would happen next with their enquiry did lead to lower levels of satisfaction (78 per cent compared to 95 per cent), but the difference was not as marked as it was for those customers who felt they were not given enough time to explain themselves.

2.3 Postal communication

Fifteen per cent of PDCS customers wrote to the service regarding their most recent enquiry and this section focuses on the experiences of these customers. More detailed discussion on TPS and DCS customers can be found in Section 3.3 and 4.3 respectively.

In particular this section explores:

- the frequency of postal contact;
- whether a reply was received;
- whether a form was submitted as part of their most recent enquiry and if so how easy this form was to complete;

- whether respondents received any help when completing the form; and

- whether any valuables were submitted as part of their most recent enquiry.

2.3.1   Frequency of postal contact

All customers who wrote to PDCS as part of their most recent enquiry were asked how many times they had done so. Figure 2.2 displays how many times customers wrote to TPS or DCS for their most recent enquiry.

Figure 2.2   How many times customers wrote to PDCS

Base: All respondents who wrote (PDCS: 989, TPS: 339, DCS: 650).
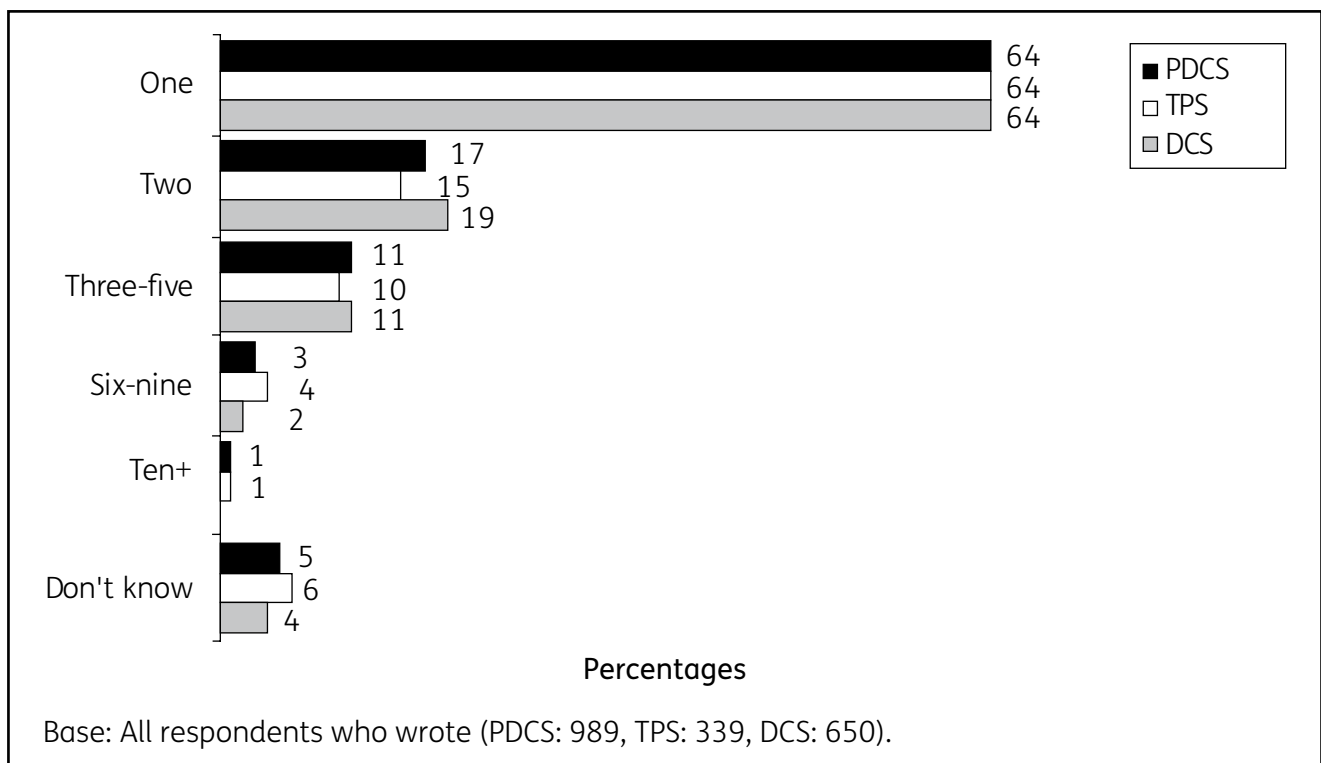
The number of times a PDCS customer wrote to the service influenced their overall satisfaction with the service, the greater the number of written contacts the less likely the customer was to report they were satisfied overall.

2.3.2   Whether received a reply

All customers who wrote to PDCS were asked whether they expected a reply, and if so, whether they had received a reply or acknowledgement. If a reply was received, customers were asked the length of time this took and whether the reply took longer or less time than expected. Customers who received a reply were also asked how easy the reply had been to understand.

Almost nine in ten (89 per cent) respondents who wrote to PDCS expected a reply.

PDCS customers who expected a reply yet did not receive one recorded significantly lower levels of overall satisfaction with the service than customers who received a reply (61 per cent compared with 87 per cent).

Whether a customer received a reply or not when they wrote to PDCS affected overall satisfaction. Receiving a reply itself is not enough to guarantee high levels of overall satisfaction. Overall

satisfaction with the service fell if the reply took over two weeks (80 per cent), the customer felt the reply took longer than expected (64 per cent) or when received the reply was not easy to understand (60 per cent).

2.3.3 Submitting forms

All PDCS customers were asked whether they had completed any forms as part of their most recent enquiry. Customers who had completed forms were then asked whether they had received a reply or acknowledgement and whether they had completed any forms over the telephone during the course of their enquiry.

Around three-fifths (62 per cent) of PDCS customers had completed a form as part of their most recent enquiry. As would be expected, PDCS customers contacting to claim a benefit were most likely to have completed a form as part of their most recent enquiry (77 per cent compared with 35 per cent for a query and 20 per cent for a change of circumstance).

2.3.4 Ease of completing forms

PDCS customers who had completed a form as part of their most recent enquiry were asked how easy the forms had been to complete.

Almost seven in ten (71 per cent) PDCS customers found the forms they completed, as part of their most recent enquiry, easy to complete. PDCS customers contacting to claim Disability Living Allowance (DLA) were most likely to report that the forms were difficult to complete (56 per cent).

PDCS customers who found the forms easy to complete, reported higher levels of overall satisfaction than customers who had found the forms difficult to complete (94 per cent compared with 82 per cent).

2.3.5 Whether received help completing forms

All PDCS customers who completed forms as part of their most recent enquiry were asked whether they had received help completing the form. If they had received help they were asked who had provided this help.

Forty-four per cent of PDCS customers reported they received help completing a form.

When asked who had given help when completing a form, the most common answers for PDCS customers were; The Pension Service (35 per cent), family and/or friends (28 per cent) and the Disability and Carers Service (eight per cent).

Overall satisfaction was lowest among those customers who did not ask for help but had required it (83 per cent). PDCS customers who had not required any help or who had received help when completing a form reported high levels of overall satisfaction with the service (94 and 91 per cent respectively).

2.3.6 Submitting valuables

All PDCS customers were asked whether they had to submit any valuables or documents as part of their most recent enquiry. Two examples of valuables were given in the question wording; birth certificates and saving books, although customers may have had their own opinions of what constitutes documents or valuables.

Almost three in ten (29 per cent) PDCS customers had submitted valuables as part of their most recent enquiry. The vast majority (95 per cent) of PDCS customers who had submitted valuables had received them back by the time they completed the survey.

2.4   Enquiry conclusion

Customers were asked whether their enquiry had concluded, whether a decision was required as part of their most recent enquiry, if they were kept informed during the course of their enquiry, how easy they had found it to get in contact with PDCS and the complexity of their enquiry. Customers were also asked if they had experienced any difficulties or problems when dealing with PDCS, whether they had made a formal complaint and if so how they felt their complaint had been handled. More detailed discussion for both TPS and DCS is provided in Sections 3.4 and 4.4 respectively.

2.4.1   Enquiry conclusion

Just under nine in ten PDCS customers (88 per cent) reported that their enquiry had concluded. This varied by enquiry type with customers contacting regarding a query or contacting to claim another benefit least likely to report their enquiry had concluded (83 and 64 per cent respectively)

The majority of customers (77 per cent) felt that their enquiry had taken less time than expected or about the same amount of time. However, 18 per cent of PDCS customers felt that their enquiry had/was taking longer than expected.

In regards to overall satisfaction, customers whose enquiry had concluded (95 per cent), customers who were satisfied with the time taken to deal with their enquiry (98 per cent) and customers who felt their enquiry took less time or about as long as expected, all reported higher levels of overall satisfaction (98 per cent).

2.4.2   Enquiry decision

All customers were asked whether their most recent enquiry required a decision being made based on their personal circumstances, to which 60 per cent of PDCS customers responded that it was. The majority (90 per cent) of PDCS customers whose enquiry required a decision being made agreed with this decision. Nine in ten (90 per cent) PDCS customers who received a decision felt that it was either very or fairly well explained.

Customers who felt that this decision was very or fairly well explained were more likely to be satisfied overall than customers who felt that the decision was not very well explained or not explained at all (97 per cent compared with 60 per cent).

Having an enquiry that required PDCS to make a decision did not seem to impact in itself on levels of satisfaction with service overall. However, whether a customer agreed with any decision made did influence overall satisfaction with customers who did not agree with the decision reporting significantly lower levels of overall satisfaction (97 per cent compared with 62 per cent). This, of course, is only to be expected and is something that would be very hard for PDCS to influence.

2.4.3   Being kept informed

All PDCS customers were asked whether they were given clear timings on what PDCS would do, whether they were kept up-to-date with the progress of their enquiry and whether PDCS did what they said they would do during the course of their enquiry. For the purposes of this section, all customers who responded that these measures did not apply to their most recent enquiry were excluded from the analysis.

Four-fifths (80 per cent) of PDCS customers reported that they were given clear timings, seven in ten (70 per cent) customers that they were kept up-to-date with their enquiry and nine in ten (92 per cent) customers responded that PDCS did what they said they would do.

Customers who responded positively to whether they were given clear timings, kept up-to date with enquiry and PDCS doing what they said they would reported higher levels of overall satisfaction than customers who responded negatively to the three measures. However, the largest influence on overall satisfaction was evident when customers did not feel that the service had done what they said they would do (56 per cent compared with 96 per cent).

2.4.4   Ease of contact and complexity of enquiry

All customers were asked how easy they had found it to get in contact with PDCS during the course of their most recent enquiry, they were asked how complicated they had found the enquiry process and their expectations of how complex the enquiry process would be.

When exploring customers' expectations and experiences of complexity we combined their responses and it was then possible to identify four distinct groups:

• relieved – customers who were expecting a complex process, but it turned out to be simpler than expected;

• smooth enquiry – customers who experienced the simple process that was expected;

• resigned to complexity – customers who subsequently experienced the complex process they had expected;

• extra complexity – customers who experienced a more complex process than they had expected.

Almost nine in ten (87 per cent) PDCS customers found it easy to get in contact during the course of their enquiry. A fifth (20 per cent) of PDCS customers found the enquiry process complicated. Almost two-thirds (65 per cent) of PDCS customers reported that the enquiry process was as complicated as they expected. Combining customers' expectations and experiences of complexity, it was found that around six in ten (61 per cent) PDCS customers experienced a 'smooth enquiry', 18 per cent were 'relieved', 12 per cent 'resigned to complexity' and ten per cent experienced 'extra complexity'.

PDCS customers who had an illness or disability were more likely to report they found the enquiry process difficult (26 per cent compared 15 with per cent).

Overall satisfaction was higher for customers who had found it easy to get in contact with PDCS during the course of their enquiry (97 per cent), or for customers who did not find the enquiry process complicated (97 per cent). In terms of experiences and expectation, customers who experienced 'extra complexity' reported the lowest levels of overall satisfaction (60 per cent).

2.4.5   Problems encountered

All customers were asked whether they had experienced any difficulties or problems when dealing with PDCS in the six months prior to conducting the interview. If a customer had experienced difficulties or problems they were asked what they were and whether the issue had since been resolved.

Seven per cent of PDCS customers reported that they had experienced difficulties or problems in the six months prior to the interview being conducted. Across PDCS, male customers were more likely than female customers to report they had experienced a difficulty or problem (eight per cent compared with six per cent).

A range of difficulties or problems were given by respondents, such as lack of communication or not being kept informed, delays in receiving benefit payments, staff were slow in dealing with my request or problem and the service made too many mistakes. Just over half (53 per cent) of customers who had experienced a difficulty or problem reported that this had since been resolved.

Customers who reported having a difficulty or problem were less likely to be satisfied than customers who had not (61 per cent compared with 95 per cent). However, customers who reported that their problem had since been resolved were more satisfied than customers who were still awaiting the resolution of their problem at the time of interviewing (78 per cent compared with 43 per cent).

2.4.6 Complaints

All customers who had experienced a difficulty or problem were asked whether they had made a formal complaint, and if not, why they did not go on to make a formal complaint.

Sixteen per cent of PDCS customers who had experienced a difficulty or problem in the six months prior to conducting the interview went on to make a complaint. However, this equated to only one per cent of all PDCS customers. Male customers were more likely than female customers to make a formal complaint (21 per cent compared with nine per cent).

The most common reasons given by customers who had experienced a difficulty or problem when dealing with PDCS but did not make a formal complaint were that the issue was resolved, thought nothing would happen as a result of complaint, did not know how to complain and decided the matter was not serious enough.

PDCS customers who made a formal complaint reported lower levels of overall satisfaction (42 per cent) than customers who experienced a problem but did not make a formal complaint (65 per cent).

2.4.7 Complaint handling

A low number of PDCS customers made a complaint (61 respondents in total). PDCS customers who made a complaint were asked which methods of communication they had used to make a complaint; respondents could give more than one answer. Written communication was the most common (61 per cent) method used for making a complaint, followed by telephone complaints (56 per cent) and five per cent chose to complain by email.

All customers who made a formal complaint were asked how long it took for them to receive an initial response to their complaint. Just over a fifth (22 per cent) received an initial response within a week, 45 per cent reported that it took longer than a week and 29 per cent had not received a response. Customers who received an initial response to their complaint were asked whether the amount of time they waited to receive the response was reasonable; 35 per cent felt the amount of time was reasonable and 63 per cent reported that the amount of time they waited for a response was not reasonable.

Almost a quarter of customers (24 per cent) were satisfied with the way their complaint was handled. Around seven in ten (71 per cent) customers were dissatisfied with the way their complaint was handled. Customers who were dissatisfied with the way in which their complaint was handled were asked why this was. The responses given were that they take too long, no response or acknowledgement, staff attitude and they don't ring you back.

There is no discussion of complaint handling for TPS customers and DCS customers due to the low base.

2.5 Overall performance

Towards the end of the survey all customers were presented with a series of questions which asked them to rate PDCS at an overall level on a number of measures. These included how satisfied they were with the service, whether the service they received was above or below what they expected

and how much improvement they think the service needs to make. This section details the results of these overall performance measures. The results for each agency are displayed separately.

In addition, this section also reports the results from a series of performance statements that look at staff behaviour from the customer perspective. Finally, this section concludes with the findings from two fully open questions where respondents were asked firstly what the best thing about the PDCS was, and secondly what areas it most needed to improve.

2.5.1   Overall satisfaction

The primary measure of performance used in the PDCS Customer Survey is a question capturing overall customer satisfaction. The question uses a four point scale running from very satisfied to very dissatisfied. Results for the year are displayed in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3   Overall satisfaction with the PDCS[1]

Base: All respondents (PDCS: 5,941, TPS: 3,071, DCS: 2,870).
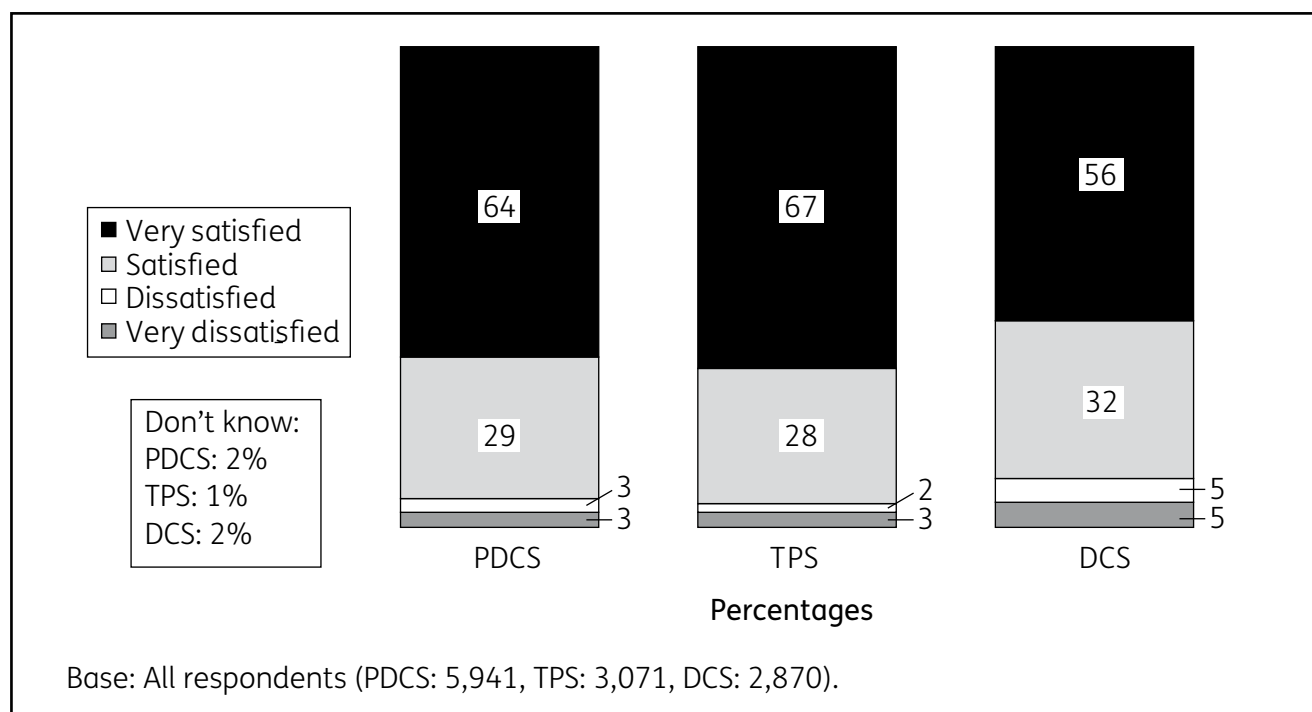
The first column in Figure 2.3 displays overall satisfaction with the PDCS. Combining very satisfied and fairly satisfied together gives an overall satisfaction score of 92 per cent for PDCS as a whole. This level of satisfaction has been consistently high across all four quarters of the year. Dissatisfaction across the year stood at six per cent with a small blip in quarter three when it increased to eight per cent. A number of factors influence satisfaction for both agencies, most of which are highlighted through this report, but a number of demographic characteristics also have an effect on satisfaction and these are explored in Sections 3.5.1 and 4.5.1.

---

[1]   As elsewhere in this report, percentages in Figure 2.3 have been rounded. For PDCS the proportion reporting they were very satisfied was 63.6 per cent (to one decimal place) and those reporting they were fairly satisfied was 28.8 per cent. For this reason, total satisfaction is in fact 92.4 per cent, rather than 93 per cent.

2.5.2   Expectations, improvements and advocacy

Although customer satisfaction levels are a common measure of service performance, there are a host of other measures that can also be used. The PDCS customer satisfaction survey was designed to capture a number of these items and each of these are looked at in turn.

Expectations

Expectations can give the satisfaction levels some context. If a customer is very satisfied, this might just be because they had such low expectations that it does not take much service performance to elicit a response of very satisfied.

As such customers were asked if all their dealings with PDCS went better or worse than expected. Results for PDCS as a whole are shown in the first column of Figure 2.4, with the DCS in the second column and TPS in the final column.

Figure 2.4   Performance and expectations[2]

Base: All respondents (PDCS: 5,941, TPS: 3,071, DCS: 2,870).
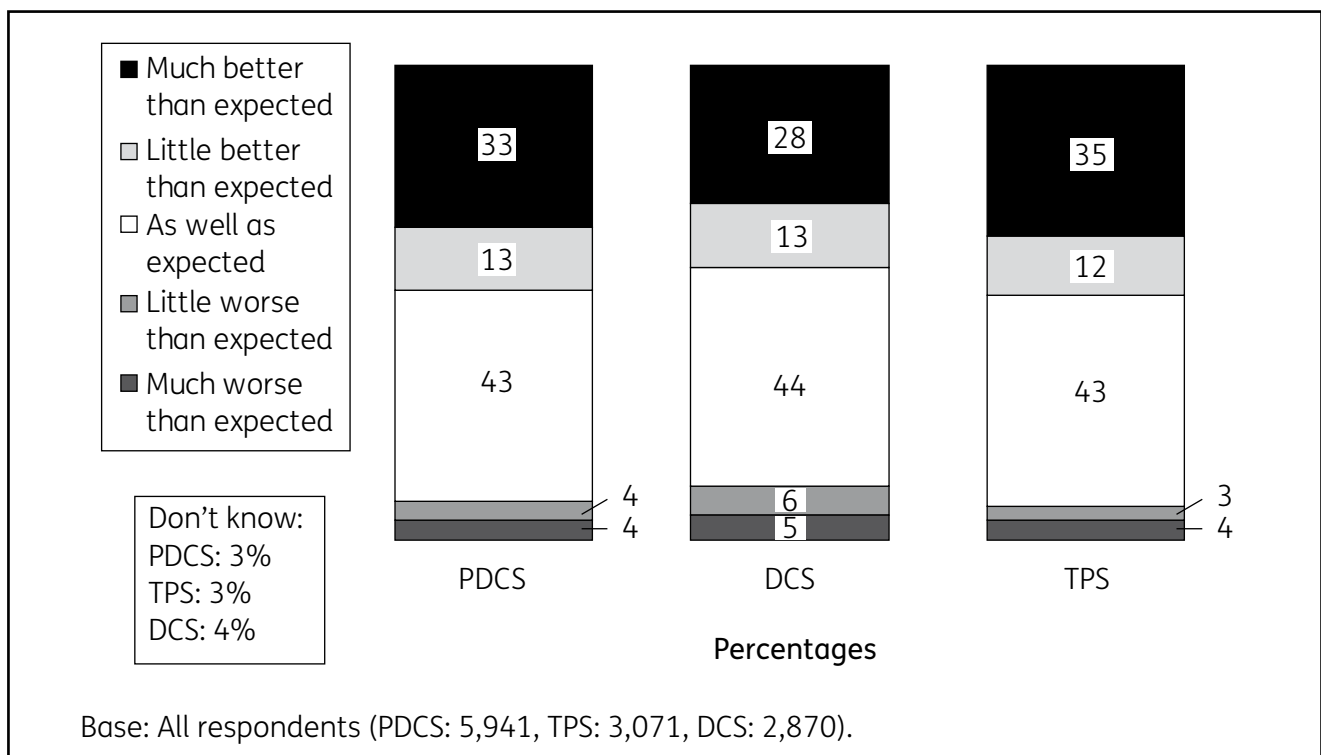
For PDCS overall, 46 per cent of customers reported that their dealings had gone better than expected while only eight per cent of customers felt that their dealings with PDCS had gone worse than expected. For the DCS, 41 per cent of customers said their dealings went better than expected and 11 per cent said they went worse than expected, while the respective figures for TPS were 48 per cent and seven per cent.

---

[2]   As elsewhere in this report, percentages in figure 2.4 have been rounded. For TPS the proportion reporting that their dealings had gone much better than expected was 35.3 per cent (to one decimal place) and those reporting it had gone a little better than expected was 12.3 per cent. For this reason, the total reporting it went better than expected is 47.6 per cent (and hence rounds to 48 per cent, rather than 47 per cent).

Knowing how satisfied customers were with the service and how this relates to their expectations allows customers to be grouped into five categories by combining their answers to the two questions. It is then possible to observe the proportion of customers who fall into each category and how this differs between the DCS and TPS as illustrated in Figure 2.5.

Figure 2.5   Customer feelings towards the service

Base: All respondents (DCS: 2,870, TPS: 3,071).
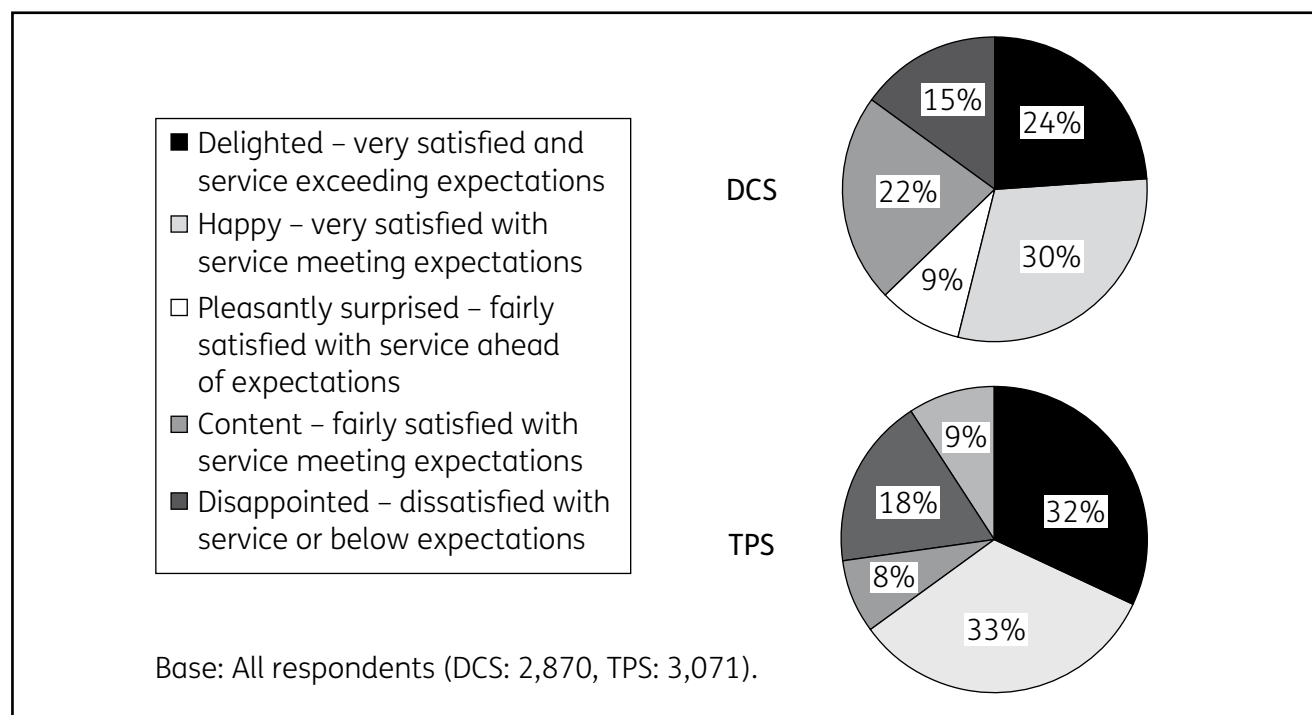
Firstly, customers who were very satisfied with the service and this exceeded their expectations were classified as 'delighted'. These customers made up almost a quarter (24 per cent) of DCS customers and almost one-third (32 per cent) of TPS customers. The second group were made of those customers who were very satisfied with the service and the service performance was as expected, labelled 'happy'. This was the biggest group for both DCS and TPS with three in ten (30 per cent) of DCS customers and one-third (33 per cent) of TPS customers.

'Pleasantly surprised' customers were those who were fairly satisfied with the service, but the service was above expectations, comprising just less than one in ten of both DCS (nine per cent) and TPS (eight per cent) customers.

Customers who were fairly satisfied with the service and felt the agency met their expectations comprised 22 per cent of DCS customers and 18 per cent of TPS customers, with this group being labelled as 'content'. The last group were labelled as 'disappointed' and these were customers who were either dissatisfied with the service or the service performed below their expectations. This group made up only nine per cent of TPS customers, but 15 per cent of DCS customers.

Improvements

For both satisfaction and expectations the PDCS scores highly with low proportions of customers saying they were dissatisfied, or the service was below their expectations. Another performance measure asked was how much improvement, if any, the service needed. This has the advantage of being able to provide more discrimination, as even customers who are satisfied with the service may still think further improvements are necessary. Customers were consequently asked what improvements could be made and Section 2.5.4 reports on the findings of the specific improvements, but this section focuses on the level of improvement needed.

Figure 2.6 shows that over half of TPS customers and around two-fifths of DCS customers said no improvement was needed to the service, while only four per cent of TPS and six per cent of DCS customers stated that a huge improvement was necessary.

Figure 2.6   How much improvement service needs

Base: All respondents (DCS: 2,870, TPS: 3,071).
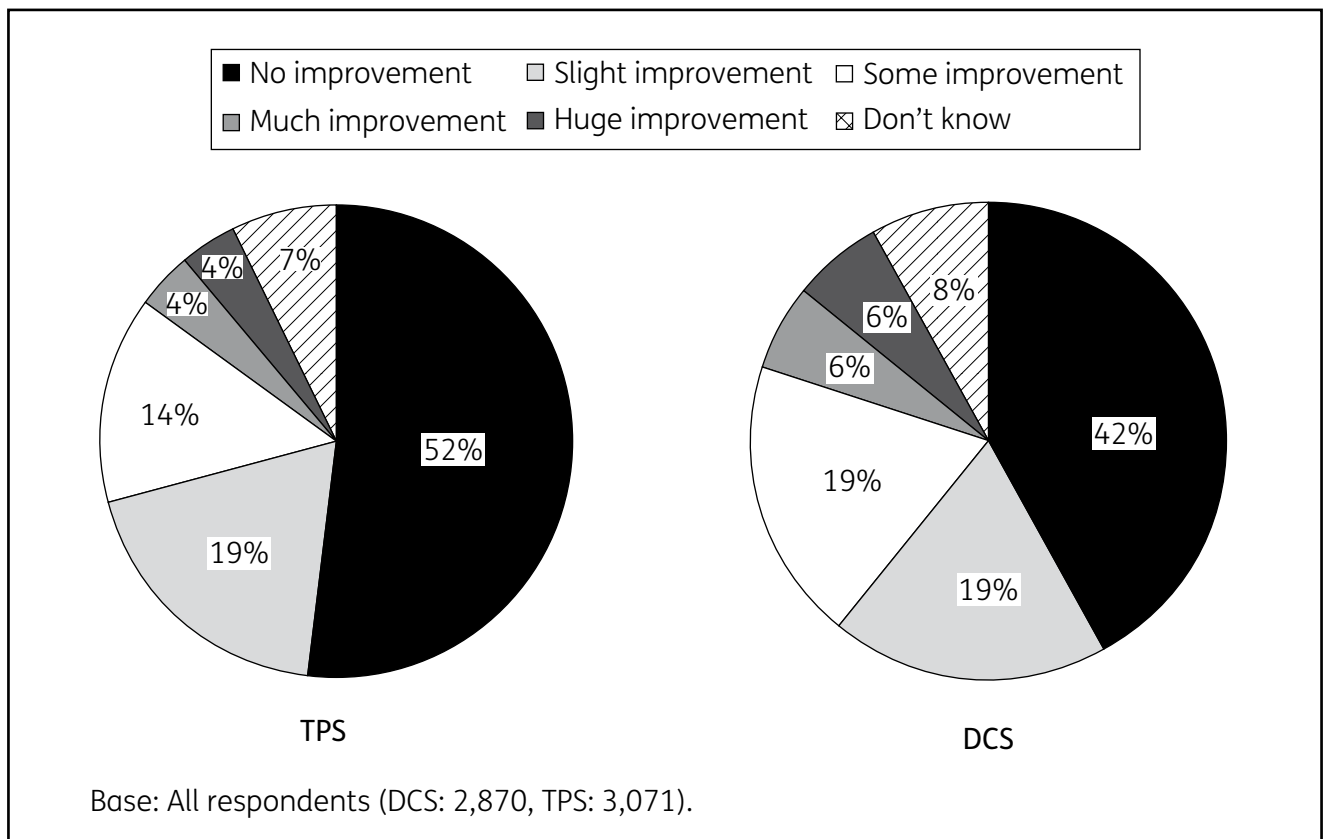
Advocacy

The final overall performance measure revolved around advocacy and whether the customer would recommend the service to someone else. This type of performance measure is widely used in the private sector where customers can choose between different organisations. For the PDCS where there is no alternative organisation to go to, rather than asking whether the customer would recommend the PDCS, we asked whether they would speak highly of the service or would criticise it. Customers were then asked a follow-up question to find out if they would speak highly/criticise only when asked, or if they would speak highly/criticise without being asked first.

For PDCS as a whole, six per cent of customers reported that they would criticise the service when speaking to someone else, split evenly between those that would criticise the service without being asked and those who would only criticise the service when asked. Around six in ten customers (60 per cent) mentioned that they would speak highly of the service, and again this was split evenly between those who would mention only when asked and those who would mention it spontaneously. The remaining third were those who had no thoughts either way. Figure 2.7 displays this information along with the results for the DCS and TPS separately.

Figure 2.7 Advocacy

Base: All respondents (DCS: 2,870, TPS: 3,071).
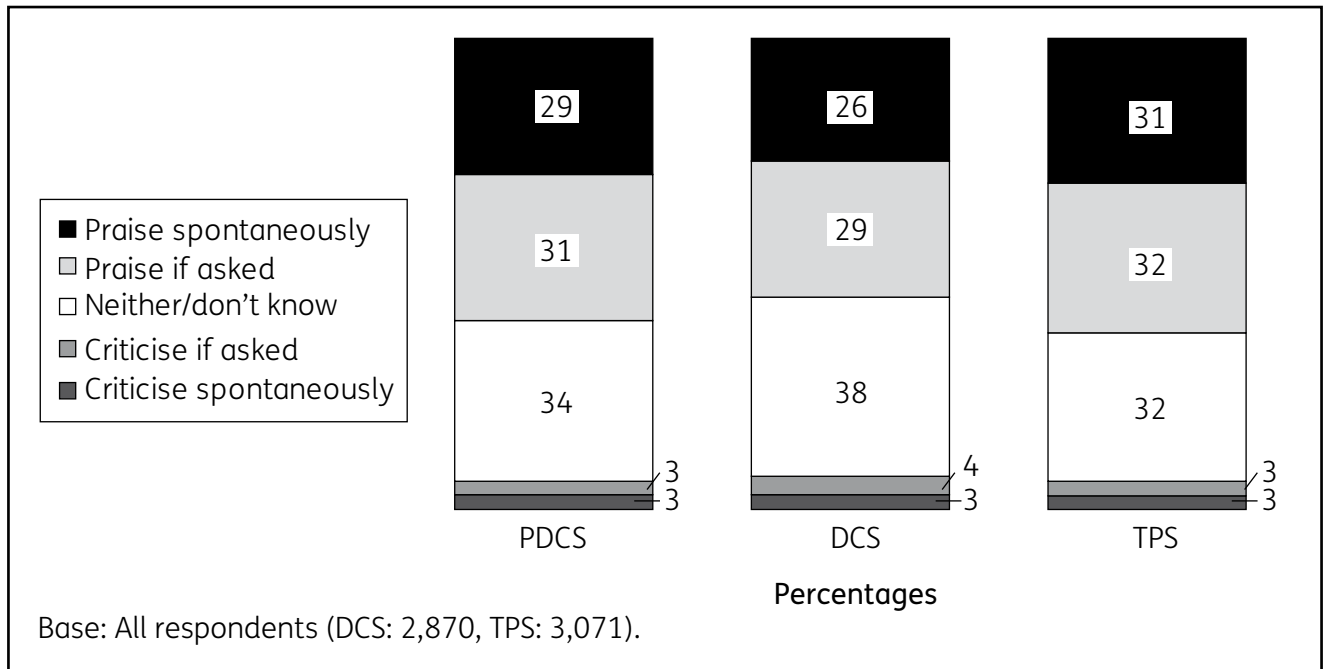
2.5.3 Staff treatment

Customers were asked whether the staff they had dealt with had demonstrated a number of positive customer service behaviours over the last six months. Results for both TPS and DCS customers are shown in Figure 2.8 excluding those behaviours that respondents said were not applicable in their situation.

Figure 2.8 Staff behaviour (TPS and DCS)

Base: All with an opinion.
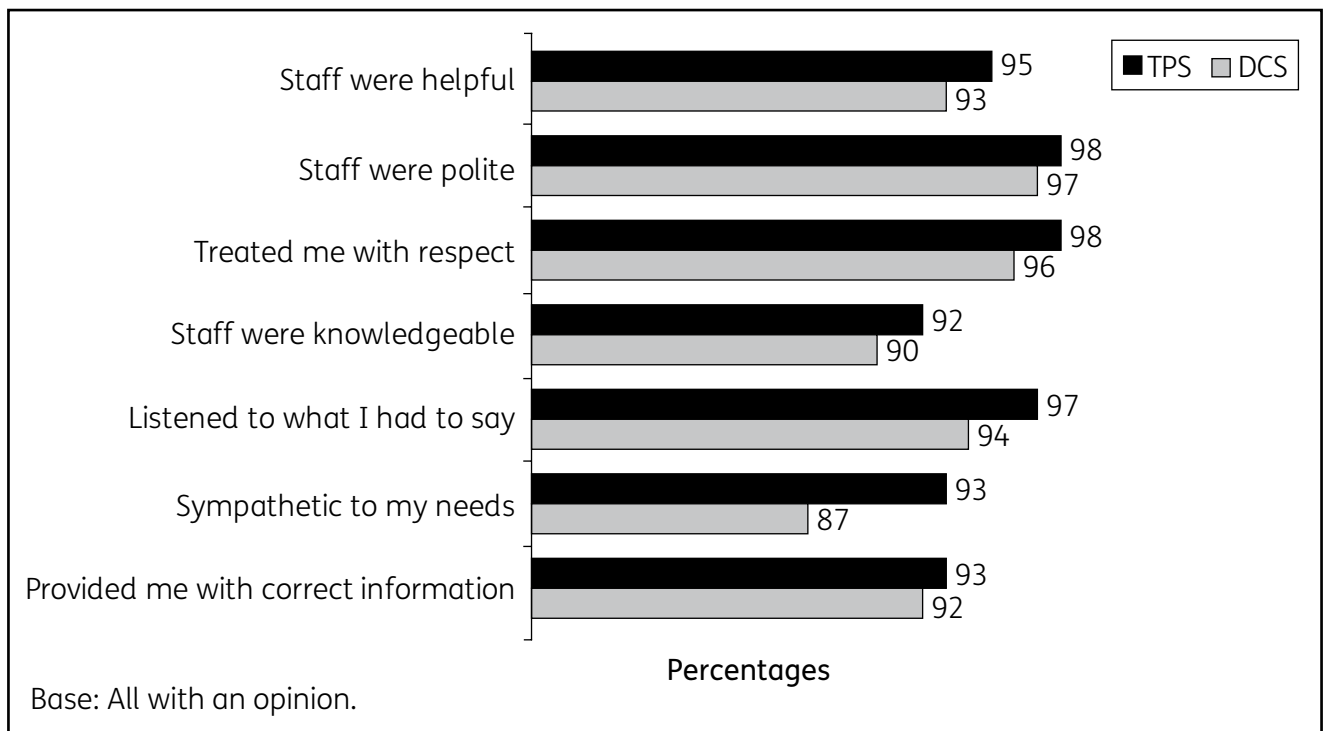
The first thing to state is that the vast majority of respondents said that staff displayed each of the positive customer service behaviours asked about. TPS customers had slightly higher levels for each of the behaviours although this was generally not statistically significant. The one exception was staff being sympathetic to the customer's needs, which was significantly lower for DCS customers than TPS customers (87 per cent compared with 93 per cent). These findings are discussed in more detail in Sections 3.5.3 and 4.5.3.

2.5.4   Improvements to the service

All customers were given the chance to make suggestions as to how PDCS could be improved. This was an open ended question, which meant that respondents gave an answer that was recorded verbatim and then coded at the end of the interview. These responses are very detailed and to help for analysis they have been grouped together for each service.

It should be noted that there were a significant proportion of customers of both services who did not have any suggestions for improvements (52 per cent of DCS customers and 65 per cent of TPS customers). These respondents have been excluded from the subsequent analysis.

The main areas for improvement to PDCS mentioned by respondents were in providing information (19 per cent), problems relating to telephone contact (15 per cent) and forms (15 per cent). The main areas for improvement varied significantly between the two services, this and further details of the customers' responses to this question are discussed in Section 3.5.4 and 4.5.4.

2.5.5   Best thing about the service

As well as being asked about any improvements they would make to the service, all PDCS customers were also asked what they thought the best thing about the service was. Again, this was an open ended question where respondents gave an answer verbatim and the responses were then coded separately later.

There were some respondents who were not able to come up with positive comments when asked this question (20 per cent DCS and 16 per cent TPS). It should be noted that this was not necessarily an indication that these customers were unhappy with the service as around two-thirds were saying 'don't know' to the question rather than making a specific negative comment. However, the respondents who did not have a positive comment in relation to this question have been excluded from the subsequent analysis in this section.

Almost two-fifths (39 per cent) of PDCS customers identified the staff as the best thing about the service. There were some differences between TPS and DCS customers in the areas that were identified as being the best things about the respective services, further details of customers' responses to this question are provided in Sections 3.5.5 and 4.5.5.

2.6   DWP Customer charter

The Department has identified a number of drivers of customer satisfaction and these are incorporated in the DWP customer charter. The charter sets out four broad areas of areas of customer service that it commits to delivering:

- right treatment;
- easy access;
- right result;
- on time.

Each of these areas gets a score based on the responses to a number of questions in the survey. For right treatment this was: whether they were told what would happen next, if the staff were helpful, polite and knowledgeable, whether they were treated with respect, whether staff listened to what they had to say and whether they were sympathetic to their needs.

The questions used to derive the easy access measure were: whether the mode of contact was the channel the customer wanted to use, whether they had to repeat information when transferred, whether replies to letters were easy to understand, ease of getting in contact with PDCS and the complexity of the enquiry process.

For right result the questions were: whether the service did what they said they would, whether valuables had been returned, whether their enquiry had concluded, whether decisions were explained clearly, and whether they were provided with correct information.

The questions used to derive the on time measure were: whether the amount of time they needed to wait for calls was reasonable, whether PDCS called back when they said they would, whether they replied to letters, whether they were given clear timings, whether they were kept up-to-date with progress and satisfaction with the time taken to deal with the enquiry.

Figure 2.9 displays overall PDCS scores for each of the four areas outlined in the charter. Generally, these are quite high across the board, but scores for easy access and on time are lower than for right treatment and right result.

Figure 2.9   Customer charter measures PDCS

Base: All with an opinion.
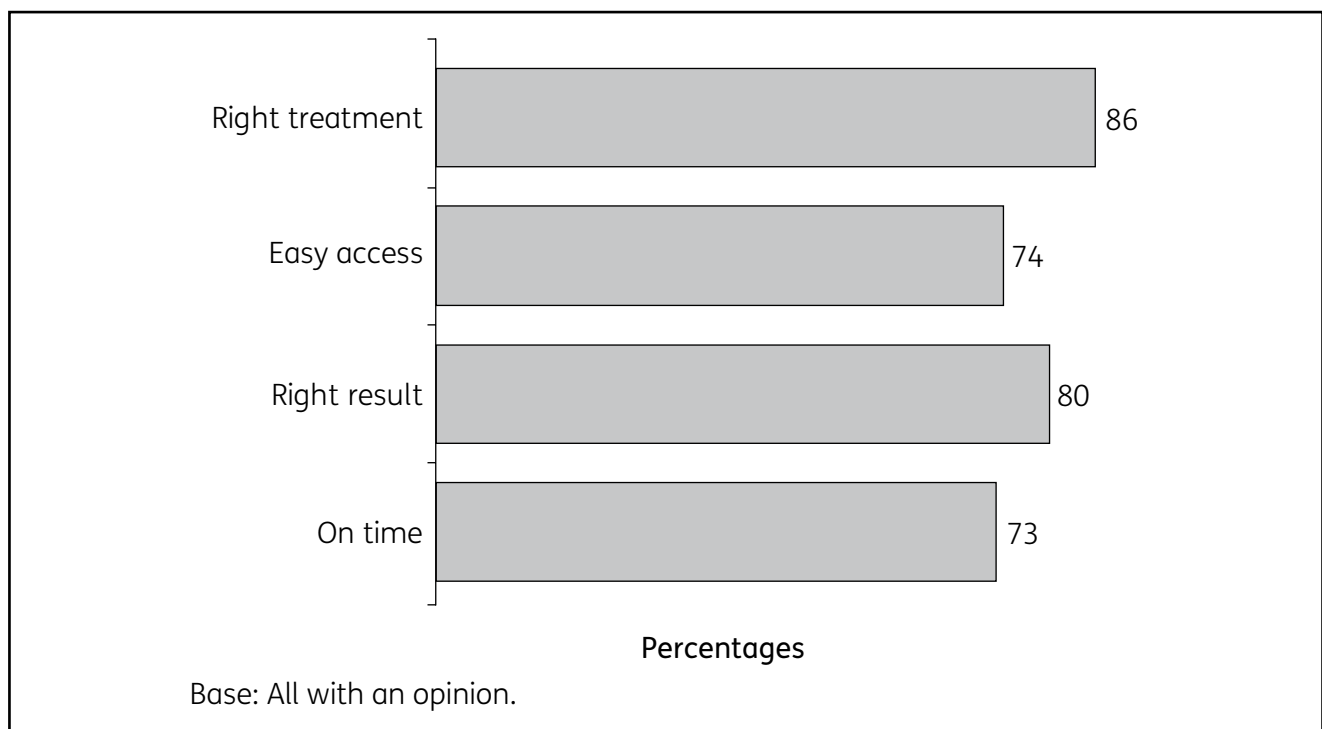
Figure 2.10 splits out these scores for TPS and DCS separately. For all measures, TPS scores slightly higher than DCS, but in particular easy access is considerably lower for DCS.

Figure 2.10 Customer charter measures TPS/DCS

Base: All with an opinion.
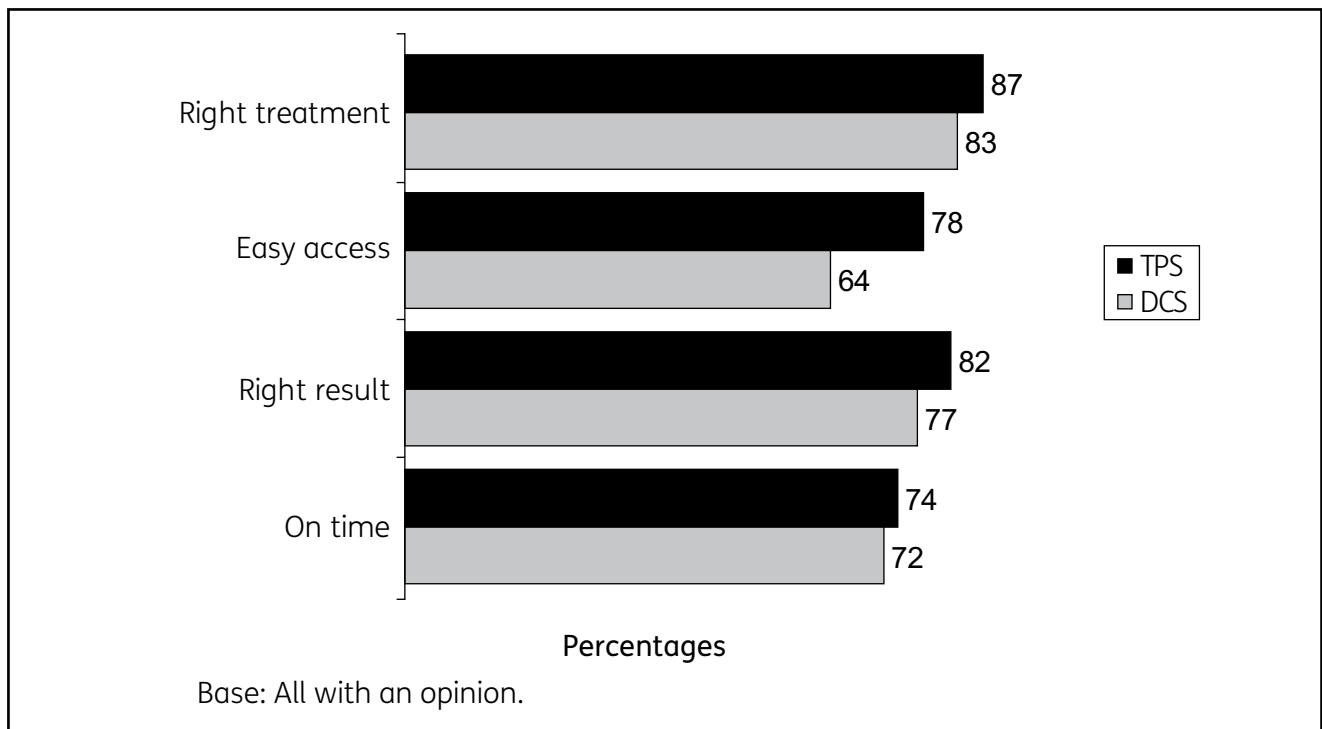
3 The Pension Service

This section looks at the experience of The Pension Service (TPS) customers when contacting the service. It begins by focusing on the customer's most recent enquiry with the service before moving on to look at wider perceptions of the service including overall satisfaction. In addition to this, it looks at the areas that customers think are strengths of the organisation as well as the issues that customers spontaneously identified as being the major priorities for improvement.

3.1   Enquiry types

3.1.1   Main subject of enquiry

There were a wide variety of enquiries that TPS customers contacted the service for but these can be summarised in to broad categories, which are summarised in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1   Main reason contacted – TPS

Base: All TPS respondents (3,071).
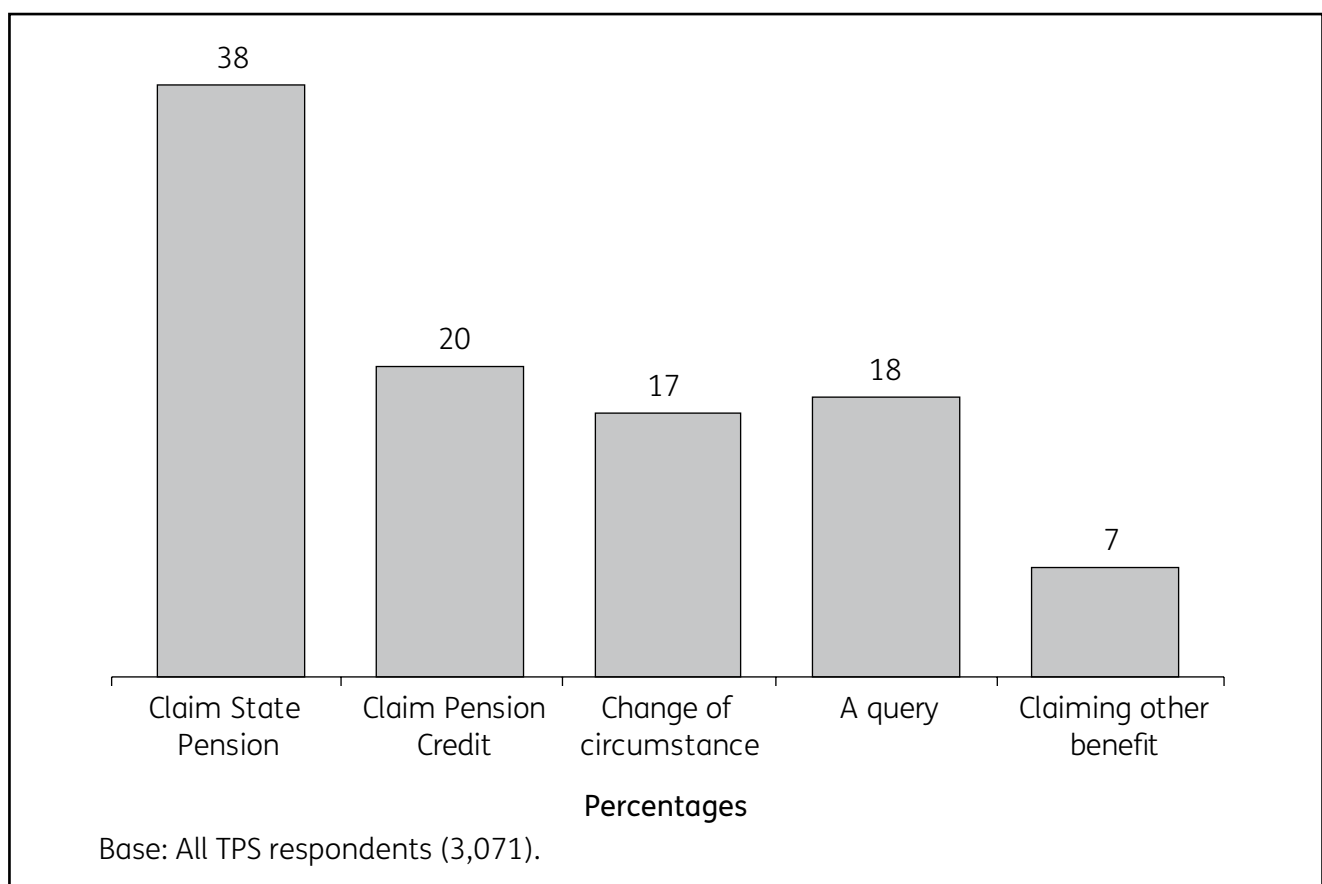
The most common enquiry was to claim the State Pension (SP) (37 per cent). As would be expected, the vast majority of these claimants were people at the SP ages of 60 or 65 (81 per cent). There were no significant variations by other demographic characteristics.

Around a fifth of TPS customers were contacting for each of the next three most common enquiry types – claiming Pension Credit (20 per cent); reporting a change of circumstance (17 per cent) and

making a query (18 per cent). These latter two categories included a wide variety of different enquiry types:

- change of circumstances – The two most common changes of circumstances that customers were reporting were a change of bank details (five per cent) and a change of address (five per cent). The next most common changes were notification of death (two per cent) and notification of movement into or out of hospital (one per cent). Beyond this, changes included moving into a residential institution; going back to work; changes in care needs and notification of divorce or marriage. Each of these changes was reported by less than one per cent of all TPS customers;

- queries – The most common query customers made was in relation to the amount they were being paid (five per cent). Customers receiving Attendance Allowance were significantly more likely to be querying the amount they were being paid than those receiving other benefits (12 per cent compared with five per cent).

- just over one in twenty customers (seven per cent) were contacting TPS to claim a benefit other than the SP or Pension Credit. The most common benefits they said they were trying to claim were Attendance Allowance (AA) (two per cent), the Winter Fuel Payment (one per cent), Disability Living Allowance (DLA) (one per cent) and Carer's Allowance (CA) (one per cent). Beyond these there were very small numbers claiming for a variety of benefits ranging from Industrial Injuries Disablement benefit through to Council Tax Benefit (CTB).

Enquiry type and satisfaction

Customers who were contacting to change their bank details had the highest levels of satisfaction of any enquiry type with nearly every customer saying they were satisfied with the service (99 per cent). However, this is a relatively straightforward transaction and some of the more complex enquiries were associated with lower levels of satisfaction. For example, around nine in ten customers claiming Pension Credit (91 per cent) were satisfied with TPS overall but this was significantly lower than for other enquiries (95 per cent).

3.1.2   Third party contact

Four in five TPS customers said that they were contacting solely for themselves (80 per cent) with the remainder split more or less equally between those who were making a joint enquiry (ten per cent) and those contacting on behalf of someone else (nine per cent)[3].

As might be expected, the majority of customers aged under 60 who were contacting TPS tended to be doing so on someone else's behalf (67 per cent). Customers with an Indian or Pakistani background were more likely to be contacting on someone else's behalf than those from other ethnic backgrounds (33 per cent compared with nine per cent). Language issues also featured with 15 per cent of those who did not speak English as their first language compared to just less than one in ten of those that did (nine per cent).

Whether or not a customer was contacting for themselves, for someone else or as part of a joint enquiry had no impact on levels of satisfaction with TPS.

3.1.3   Contact channels used

All customers were asked which channels they had used during the course of their most recent enquiry and the results are shown in Figure 3.2.

---

3   One per cent of TPS customers were not sure how to answer the question

Figure 3.2   Channels used in enquiry to TPS

Base: All TPS respondents (3,071).
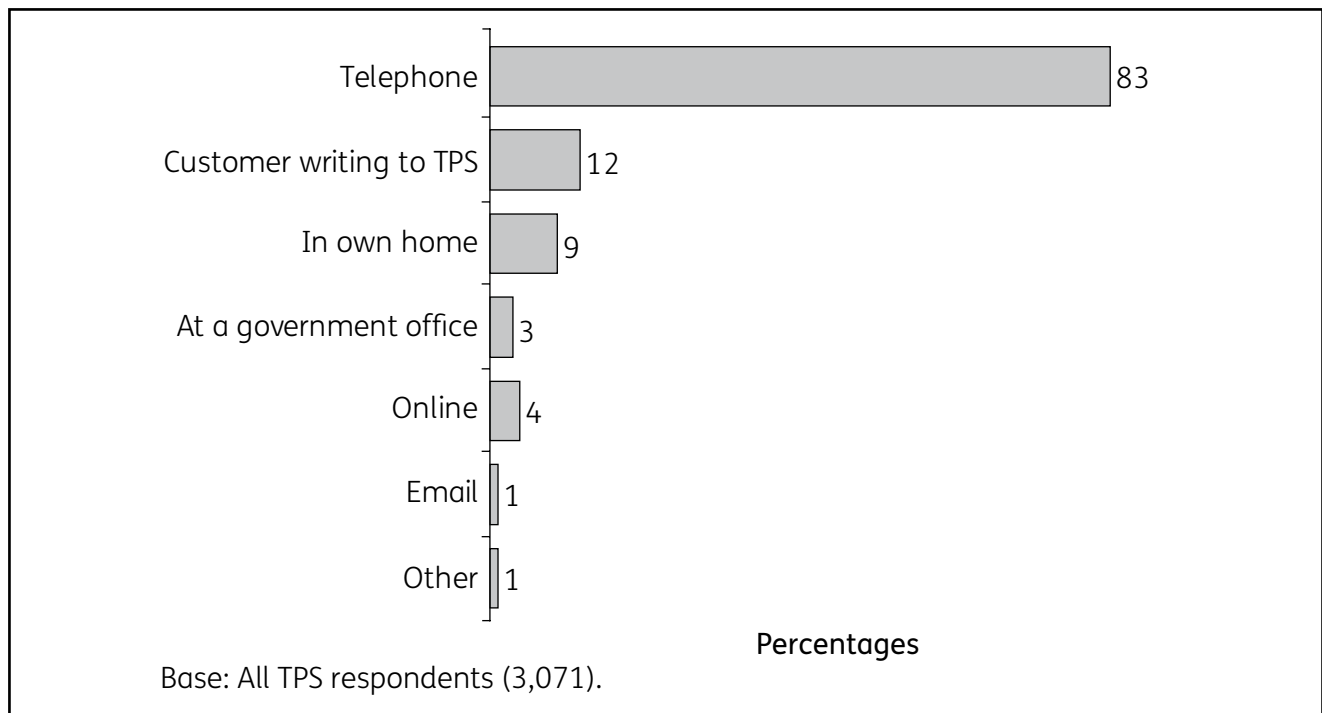
The telephone was the most commonly used channel for all enquiries but this was particularly marked for SP claims (90 per cent compared with 80 per cent of all other enquiry types). Older customers were less likely to use the telephone, just 68 per cent of those aged 75 or over compared to 86 per cent of those aged under 75. These older customers were significantly more likely to have received a home visit (21 per cent compared with seven per cent). This of course reflects the role that Local Service plays in helping the most vulnerable customers. Also reflective of this is the very high proportion of home visits that are to claim Pension Credit. Over half of all home visits were for a claim for Pension Credit (54 per cent.)

Satisfaction did not vary significantly by the contact channel used – with one exception. Customers who wrote to TPS for their enquiry had significantly lower levels of satisfaction than those who had not (85 per cent compared with 96 per cent). Particular problems relating to postal contact for TPS are covered in Section 3.3.

3.1.4   Preferred channels of contact

The overwhelming majority of all TPS customers were happy with the channels used for their most recent enquiry (94 per cent), with only a very small proportion saying they definitely did not want to use the channels they did (four per cent).

There was no one preferred channel of contact for TPS customers who were unhappy with the channels they used for their more recent enquiry. A home visit was the most common preference (29 per cent) but this was closely followed by telephone contact (25 per cent), visiting an office (25 per cent) and written contact (22 per cent). In addition to this, nearly one in five TPS customers (19 per cent) said they would have preferred to use electronic channels such as the internet or e-mail.

3.2 Telephone communication

3.2.1 Frequency of contact

The mean number of calls customers made to TPS for their most recent enquiry was 2.41, however, this number varied by enquiry type. The mean for customers contacting to claim Pension Credit (3.17) was higher than those calling to claim SP (2.19), or those calling regarding a change of circumstance (1.79). Customers who were calling to claim another benefit also reported a higher than average number of calls (2.63).

How many times a TPS customer called impacted overall satisfaction, Table 3.1 displays the results.

Table 3.1 How many times a customer called and satisfaction with TPS

	%
Overall	94
One	98
Two	97
Three-five	92
Six-nine	81
Ten +	49

Base: All TPS customers who had telephone contact (2,626).

As might be expected, satisfaction with the service declines as customers have to make more contacts to progress their enquiry. The 'tipping point' for telephone contact seems to occur once customers find themselves having to call the service over five times in order to progress their enquiry.

3.2.2 Internal transfers

Three-quarters of TPS customers (75 per cent) reported the first person they spoke to over the telephone was able to answer their query. In relation to enquiry type, customers who contacted by telephone to claim SP were significantly more likely than those contacting to claim Pension Credit to find that the first person they spoke to was able to answer their query (80 compared with 67 per cent). This is perhaps not unexpected as Pension Credit involves a more complex claim process than the SP.

TPS customers whose enquiry was not answered by the first person they spoke to were asked what had happened next. The results are shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 When the first person spoke to was unable to answer the customer's query (TPS)

	%
Transferred to someone else	58
Called back another time	14
Told TPS would call back	12
Told to call someone else	10
Don't know	6

Base: All TPS customers who contacted by telephone and query was not answered by first person (502).

Of the TPS customers who were able to speak to a new person straightaway, four-fifths (80 per cent) found that this new person was able to help. These customers who were able to speak to a new person straightaway were asked how much information, if any, they had to repeat. The results are shown in Table 3.3. Over eight in ten (85 per cent) TPS customers had to repeat some information to the new person they spoke to, with over half finding that they had to repeat all information.

Table 3.3   When the customer spoke to a new person (TPS)

	%
Repeated all information	53
Repeated only basic details	32
Did not repeat any information	11

Base: All TPS customers who contacted by telephone and spoke to a new person (438).

TPS customers who found that the first person they spoke to was able to help displayed greater levels of overall satisfaction with the service than those who found that the first person they spoke to was unable to answer their query (97 compared with 85 per cent).

In terms of transferral, customers who were able to speak to someone else straightaway displayed higher levels of overall satisfaction with the service. Customers who were transferred to someone else or who were told to call someone else were more likely to be satisfied overall (89 and 88 per cent respectively) than those customers who called back another time (76 per cent) or who were told that TPS would call them back (74 per cent).

Repeating information can cause customers added frustration when being passed between individuals or organisations and it was found that the amount of information customers repeated impacted on overall satisfaction. Customers who repeated all information were significantly less likely to be satisfied overall (78 per cent) than those who repeated only basic details (94 per cent) or customers who did not repeat any information at all (98 per cent).

3.2.3   Time taken and next steps

The vast majority (96 per cent) of customers who contacted TPS by telephone felt that they were given enough time to explain their situation. Eighty-six per cent of TPS customers who had contact by telephone reported that they were told what would happen next with their enquiry.

Customers contacting to claim the SP were most likely to report that they were told what would happen next with their enquiry (94 per cent). When analysing by age, customers aged 60 or 65 (SP claiming age) were most likely to report that they were told what would happen next (93 per cent and 90 per cent respectively), with customers aged 75 and over being least likely to report that they were told what would happen next (69 per cent).

Customers who felt that they were not given enough time to explain their situation reported lower levels of overall satisfaction than customers who felt they were given enough time (58 per cent compared with 95 per cent). This was also the case for customers who were not told what would happen next compared with those customers who were told what would happen next (79 versus 96 per cent).

3.3   Postal communication

3.3.1   Frequency of postal contact

Only a small number of customers wrote to TPS as part of their most recent enquiry (12 per cent). For those customers who did write, the mean number of contacts was 1.8 but this varied significantly by enquiry type, as shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4   Mean number of contacts and enquiry type (TPS)

	%
All enquiries	1.8
Query	2.7
Claiming Pension Credit	2.2
Claiming SP	1.8
Claiming other benefit	1.3
Change of circumstance	1.2

Base: All TPS customers who contacted by post (339).

Change of circumstance enquiries generated relatively few written contacts on average, just 1.2 per enquiry. In contrast to this, customers who had a query for the service reported that they needed almost three contacts (2.7) before their enquiry was resolved.

TPS respondents aged 60-65 years old were least likely to write to TPS only once at 54 per cent compared with 88 per cent of TPS respondents aged under 60 and 69 per cent of those aged 66 and over.

The number of times a customer wrote to TPS impacted their overall satisfaction with the service. Table 3.5 displays the results for how many times a TPS customer wrote and their overall satisfaction

Table 3.5   How many times a TPS customer wrote and their overall satisfaction (TPS)

	%
All who wrote	85
One	95
Two	71
Three-five	57
Six+	39

Base: All TPS customers who contacted by post (339).

As shown in Table 3.5, the greater the number of times a TPS customer wrote the less likely they were to be satisfied overall.

3.3.2   Whether received a reply

Most customers who wrote to TPS expected a reply (88 per cent). But among those customers who expected a reply, only around three-quarters (76 per cent) actually received one.

In regards to enquiry type, customers whose most recent enquiry was to claim SP or to claim another benefit were most likely to have received a reply. In contrast to this, customers whose most recent enquiry was a query of some sort were much less likely to report that they had received a reply (55 per cent). This lack of acknowledgment may well explain the higher levels of contacts that customers making a query also reported (Section 3.3.1).

All TPS customers who received a reply were asked how long the reply had taken, whether it took longer/less time than expected and whether the replies were easy to understand. The results are shown in Table 3.6 alongside overall satisfaction for the various responses.

Table 3.6   Reply received and satisfaction (TPS)

	%	% satisfied
Received a reply	76	87
Reply within two weeks	50	92
Reply more than two weeks	39	74
Reply took longer than expected	21	66
Reply took less time than expected	12	87
Replies easy to understand	90	89
Replies not easy to understand	7	70

Base: All TPS customers who received a reply (245).

Overall satisfaction with TPS was affected by whether a reply was received when a respondent expected to receive one; 89 per cent who expected and received a reply were satisfied compared with 64 per cent of customers who did not receive a reply but had expected to.

3.3.3   Submitting forms

Almost three-fifths (57 per cent) of customers reported that they had completed a form as part of their most recent enquiry with TPS. Of these customers, around four-fifths (82 per cent) responded that they had received a reply.

As might be expected, customers who were contacting to claim a benefit were more likely than average to have completed a form as part of their enquiry. Customers contacting to claim Pension Credit (80 per cent), to claim the SP (70 per cent) or those contacting to claim another benefit (69 per cent) had completed a form as part of their enquiry.

3.3.4   Ease of completing forms

Almost nine in ten (87 per cent) TPS customers found the forms they completed as part of their enquiry easy to complete, with 36 per cent reporting that they were very easy and 50 per cent fairly easy. One in eight customers (13 per cent) reported that the forms had been difficult to complete.

Focusing on customers who found it difficult to complete the forms and enquiry type, there is a marked difference for customers contacting regarding a claim. Only five per cent of customers contacting to claim the SP who completed a form found it difficult to complete, compared with 18 per cent of those claiming Pension Credit and 42 per cent who were claiming another benefit.

3.3.5   Whether received help completing forms

Almost two-fifths (38 per cent) of TPS customers reported receiving help when completing a form. Of the remaining TPS customers who had not received help around half (51 per cent) stated that they did not need any help, with ten per cent reporting they required help but did not ask for any help.

As would be expected, TPS customers who had not asked for any help were less likely to find the forms difficult to complete (six per cent) than customers who received help completing the forms (20 per cent) or those who did not ask for help but needed it (26 per cent).

TPS customers who had received help when completing forms as part of their most recent enquiry were asked who had given the help. The most common sources were from TPS (60 per cent) and from family or friends (25 per cent). Other answers given included from a local authority (four per cent), a charity (four per cent), hospital/NHS/other medical staff (two per cent) or from a carer/social worker/home-help (one per cent).

3.3.6   Submitting valuables

Around a third of all TPS customers (32 per cent) submitted valuables as part of their most recent enquiry and the vast majority (95 per cent) said they had received them back by the time they completed the survey.

TPS customers who submitted valuables as part of their most recent enquiry were slightly less likely to be satisfied overall (91 versus 95 per cent).

3.4   Enquiry conclusion

3.4.1   Enquiry conclusion

All customers were asked whether their enquiry had concluded and almost nine in ten (88 per cent) said that it had. The proportion of customers who responded their enquiry had concluded varied by enquiry type, as shown in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7   Enquiry conclusion and enquiry type (TPS)

	%
All enquiries	88
Claiming SP	95
Change of circumstance	89
Claiming Pension Credit	85
Query	84
Claiming other benefit	67

Base – All TPS respondents (3,071).

All customers were also asked how satisfied they were with the time it took/was taking for TPS to deal with their enquiry; 86 per cent were satisfied (63 per cent very satisfied and 23 per cent fairly satisfied) and eight per cent were dissatisfied (three per cent fairly dissatisfied and five per cent very dissatisfied). Table 3.8 displays TPS customers' satisfaction with the time taken by enquiry type.

Table 3.8   Satisfaction with time taken and enquiry type (TPS)

	%
All enquiries	86
Claiming SP	94
Change of circumstance	88
Query	83
Claiming Pension Credit	80
Claiming other benefit	72

Base – All TPS respondents (3,071).

As shown in Table 3.7 and Table 3.8, TPS customers who were contacting to claim SP were significantly more likely than all other enquiry types to respond that their enquiry had concluded (95 per cent) as well as being most likely to be satisfied with the time taken to deal with their enquiry (94 per cent). Whereas customers contacting to claim another benefit were least likely to respond that their enquiry had concluded (67 per cent) and least likely to report that they were satisfied with the time taken to deal with their enquiry (72 per cent).

Whether a customer's enquiry had concluded at the time of interviewing affected their satisfaction with the time it took/was taking for TPS to deal with their enquiry. Around nine in ten customers (91 per cent) whose enquiry had concluded were satisfied with the time it took for TPS to deal with their enquiry compared with half (50 per cent) of customers whose enquiry had not concluded at the time of interviewing.

All customers were asked their expectations of the time it took/was taking to deal with their enquiry. Almost half (49 per cent) of customers felt that their enquiry took/was taking as long as expected, 28 per cent felt it took/was taking less time than expected and 16 per cent that it took/was taking longer than expected. Customers who were still awaiting the conclusion of the enquiry at the time of the interview were more likely to report their enquiry was taking longer than expected than customers whose enquiry had already concluded (49 per cent compared with 13 per cent).

TPS customers whose enquiry had concluded reported higher levels of satisfaction overall than customers who were still awaiting the conclusion of their enquiry (96 versus 78 per cent). As might be expected, customers who were dissatisfied with the amount of time it took/was taking for TPS to deal with their enquiry were less likely to be satisfied overall than customers who were satisfied with the time it took/was taking (99 per cent compared with 57 per cent).

Nearly all customers who felt that their enquiry took less time than expected or about as long as expected reported they were satisfied with the service overall (99 per cent for both). Whereas, almost three-quarters (74 per cent) of customers who felt that their enquiry took/was taking more time than was expected were satisfied overall with the service.

3.4.2   Enquiry decision

All customers were asked whether their most recent enquiry involved a decision being made based on their circumstances, to which over half (56 per cent) responded that it was. Just over a third (34 per cent) of customers whose enquiry had not yet concluded reported that a decision had already been made based on their circumstances.

Table 3.9 displays the proportion of customers whose most recent enquiry involved a decision being made by enquiry type.

Table 3.9   Enquiry required a decision and enquiry type (TPS)

	%
All enquiries	56
Claiming Pension Credit	86
Claiming other benefit	74
Claiming SP	55
Query	42
Change of circumstance	28

Base – All TPS respondents (3,071).

Customers whose most recent enquiry was to claim Pension Credit were significantly more likely than all other enquiry types to report that their enquiry required a decision to be made.

In the majority of cases where a decision was made, customers actually agreed with the decision (93 per cent). The proportion who agreed by enquiry type is shown in Table 3.10.

Table 3.10   Agreed with decision and enquiry type (TPS)

	%
All enquiries	93
Claiming SP	95
Claiming Pension Credit	94
Change of circumstance	93
Query	90
Claiming other benefit	79

Base – All TPS respondents (3,071).

As might be expected, customers who agreed with the decision reported higher levels of overall satisfaction than customers who did not agree with the decision (97 per cent compared with 68 per cent).

Almost two-thirds of customers who received a decision (64 per cent) felt that it was very clearly explained, with 27 per cent reporting that the decision was fairly clearly explained, four per cent that it was not clearly explained and three per cent that it was not explained at all. Customers who felt that the decision had been very clearly explained or fairly clearly explained reported high levels of overall satisfaction with the service (99 per cent and 95 per cent respectively).

Interestingly, customers who felt that the decision had not been clearly explained reported lower levels of overall satisfaction than customers who stated that the decision had not been explained to them at all (60 per cent and 73 per cent respectively). This highlights the importance of ensuring that decisions are clearly explained and that confusing explanations can actually do more harm than not explaining a decision at all.

3.4.3   Being kept informed

Four-fifths of customers (80 per cent) felt that they were given clear timings on what TPS would do, 69 per cent reported that they were kept up-to-date with the progress of their enquiry and the majority (92 per cent) felt that TPS did what they said they would do during the course of their enquiry.

Customers who were contacting to claim the SP were more likely than all other enquiry types to report that they were given clear timings (88 per cent), kept up-to-date with the progress of their enquiry (75 per cent) and to feel that TPS did what they said they would do (95 per cent).

Whether customers were given clear timings, kept up-to-date or felt that TPS did what they said they would do influenced overall satisfaction. Customers who reported positively on these measures recorded higher levels of overall satisfaction than customers who did not.

Overall satisfaction for customers who were given clear timings was 97 per cent compared with 78 per cent for those who were not, for customers who were kept up-to-date with the progress of their enquiry overall satisfaction was 98 per cent compared with 78 per cent for those that were not.

Finally, when customers felt that TPS did what they said they would do overall satisfaction was 97 per cent compared with 62 per cent of those customers who did not feel this was the case.

3.4.4   Ease of contact and complexity of enquiry

Almost nine in ten (89 per cent) customers reported they had found it easy to get in contact with TPS during the course of their enquiry, with over half (52 per cent) reporting it was very easy and 37 per cent fairly easy. Seven per cent of customers stated that they had found it difficult to get in contact with TPS, five per cent reporting it was fairly difficult and three per cent very difficult. The responses given varied by enquiry type, displayed in Table 3.11.

Table 3.11 Ease of contact and enquiry type (TPS)

	%
All enquiries	89
Claiming SP	93
Change of circumstance	90
Claiming Pension Credit	86
Claiming other benefit	83
Query	82

Base: All TPS respondents (3,071).

All customers were asked how complicated they had found the enquiry process. Seventeen per cent of customers found the enquiry process complicated (five per cent very complicated and 12 per cent fairly complicated) with over four-fifths (83 per cent) reporting that they did not find the enquiry process complicated (24 per cent not very complicated and 59 per cent not at all complicated).

Figure 3.3, displays the results for complexity (very and fairly complicated) by enquiry type. Customers who were contacting to claim another benefit (31 per cent) and those claiming Pension Credit (27 per cent) were most likely to find the enquiry process complicated.

Figure 3.3 Complexity and enquiry type (TPS)
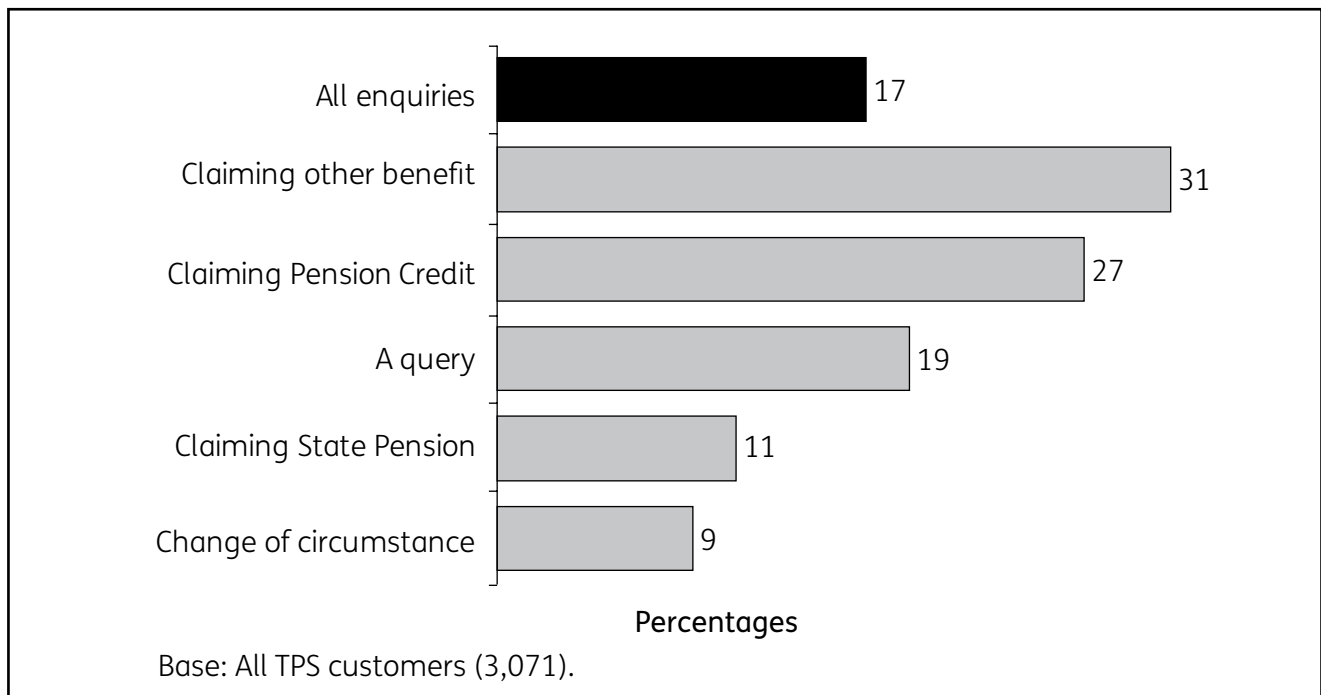
Base: All TPS customers (3,071).

Customers were also asked whether the complexity of their enquiry was greater or smaller than what they had been expecting and two-thirds (66 per cent) said that it was what they were anticipating. Combining customers' expectations and experiences of complexity it is possible to further categorise the customer's experience. A fifth of customers were 'relieved' – they had been expecting a complex process which in reality proved to be relatively straightforward. In contrast to this almost one in ten customers (nine per cent) were 'resigned to complexity' in that they were expecting the process to be complicated and it was, while eight per cent experienced 'extra complexity' beyond anything they were anticipating.

Customers contacting to claim another benefit were both the most likely to be 'resigned to complexity' (15 per cent) and to experience 'extra complexity' (17 per cent). Encouragingly, customers contacting to claim the SP were most likely to be 'relieved' (26 per cent).

Overall satisfaction was higher for customers who had found it easy (97 per cent) to get in contact with TPS during the course of their enquiry than for customers who had found it difficult (66 per cent). Overall satisfaction varied by enquiry complexity, with customers who had not found the enquiry process complicated more likely to be satisfied overall (98 per cent) than customers who had found the process complicated (77 per cent). As might be expected, customers who experienced 'extra complexity' reported lower levels of overall satisfaction (61 per cent) than customers who were 'resigned to complexity' (91 per cent), 'relieved' (98 per cent) or had a 'smooth enquiry' (98 per cent).

3.4.5   Problems encountered

Seven per cent of customers reported they had difficulties or problems when dealing with TPS in the previous six months. Male customers were more likely to report they had experienced a problem than female customers (eight per cent compared with six per cent).

The difficulties or problems customers reported experiencing were (customers could report more than one problem or difficulty):

- lack of communication or not being kept informed (44 per cent);
- staff were slow in dealing with my request or problem (27 per cent);
- delays in receiving benefit payments (26 per cent);
- the service made too many mistakes (24 per cent);
- getting through on the phone (24 per cent);
- staff lacked knowledge or were not helpful (21 per cent); and
- being given different answers to the same question by different people (17 per cent).

Over half of customers who had a difficulty or problem (54 per cent) reported this had since been resolved, with a further four per cent stating that some of their problems had been resolved. Two-fifths (40 per cent) of customers stated that their problems had not been resolved.

Customers who reported having a difficulty or problem when dealing with TPS were less likely to be satisfied overall than customers who did not experience any difficulties (66 per cent compared with 96 per cent). However, simply experiencing a problem did not necessarily lead directly to lower levels of satisfaction. Overall satisfaction for customers whose problem was resolved was higher (80 per cent) than customers whose problem had not been resolved (50 per cent).

3.4.6   Complaints

Customers who had experienced a difficulty or problem when dealing with the TPS in the last six months were asked whether they had made a formal complaint. Only one-sixth (17 per cent) of customers who had a problem or difficulty, reported that they had done so.

Male customers were more likely than female customers to have experienced a problem or difficulty when dealing with TPS. They were also more likely than female customers to have made a formal complaint (21 per cent compared with 11 per cent).

Customers who had experienced a difficulty or problem when dealing with TPS but did not make a formal complaint were asked why this was. The most common answers given were:

- thought nothing would happen as result of the complaint (19 per cent);
- the issue was resolved (18 per cent);
- give longer before complaining/waiting for the outcome (eight per cent);
- decided matter was not serious enough (six per cent);
- the time the complaint takes (five per cent);
- I never/don't complain (four per cent);
- did not know who to complain to (four per cent); and
- other priorities (four per cent).

3.5   Overall performance

3.5.1   Overall satisfaction

Satisfaction for TPS stands high at 94 per cent across the year, while only one in twenty (five per cent) of customers were dissatisfied. This satisfaction level has also remained consistent throughout the quarters of the year.

Satisfaction was analysed by a number of different demographics such as the gender of the customer, their age, their ethnicity, their marital and economic status, whether they had a disability and whether English was their first language. Of all these factors only age had any statistically significant affect on overall satisfaction, while ethnicity had some effect on the proportions mentioning that they were very satisfied.

For TPS, the levels of dissatisfaction increased slightly as age increased, but dropped off for those customers aged over 75 (see Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4   Overall satisfaction for TPS by age

Base: All TPS respondents (3,071).
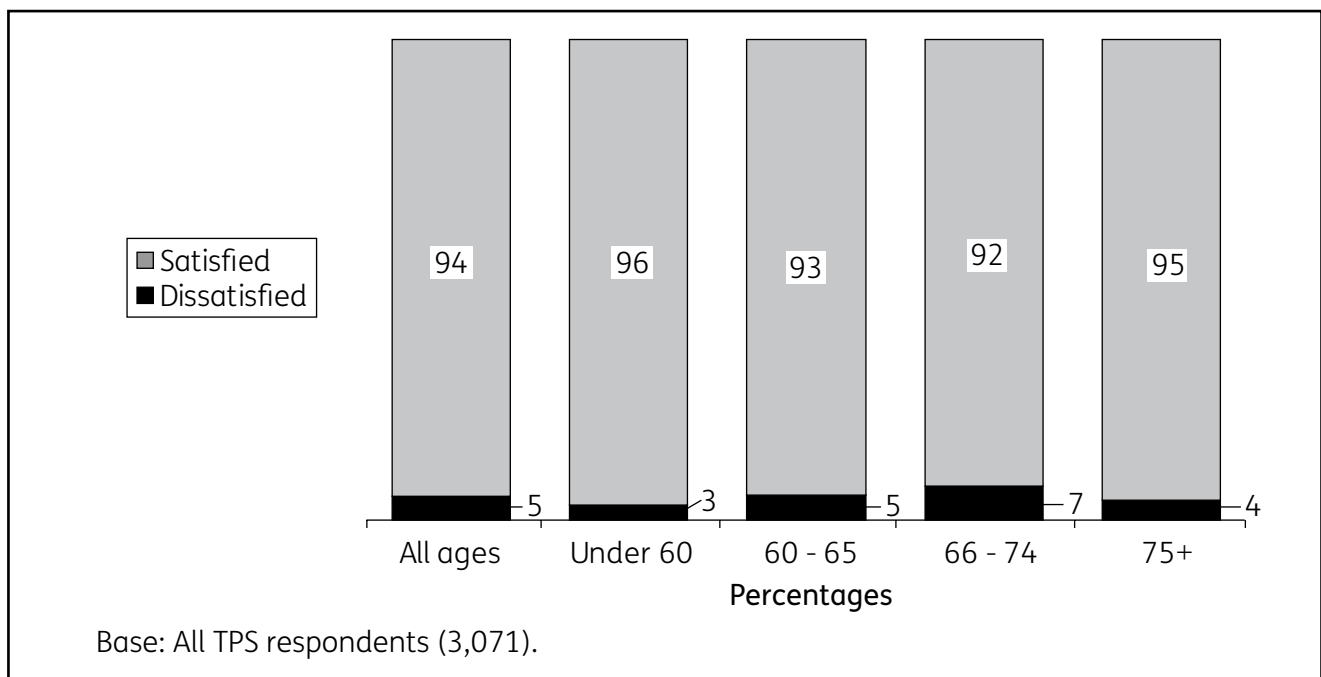
Although the difference in the level of overall satisfaction between white and non-white customers was very marginal, there was a fairly substantial difference in the proportion who reported that they were very satisfied (68 per cent of white customers were very satisfied compared with 50 per cent of non-white customers).

3.5.2   Expectations, improvements and advocacy

Improvements

Over half of all customers (52 per cent) said that TPS did not need to make any improvements. A third (33 per cent) reported that either a slight improvement or some improvement was needed. Four per cent mentioned that much improvement was needed and a further four per cent mentioned that a huge improvement was needed.

However, the type of enquiry had a bearing on the level of improvement suggested. While only four per cent of customers contacting to claim the SP said TPS needed much improvement or huge improvement, 12 per cent of those claiming Pension Credit and 13 per cent of those claiming another benefit reported the same.

Figure 3.5   How much improvement TPS needs and enquiry type

Base: All TPS respondents (3,071).
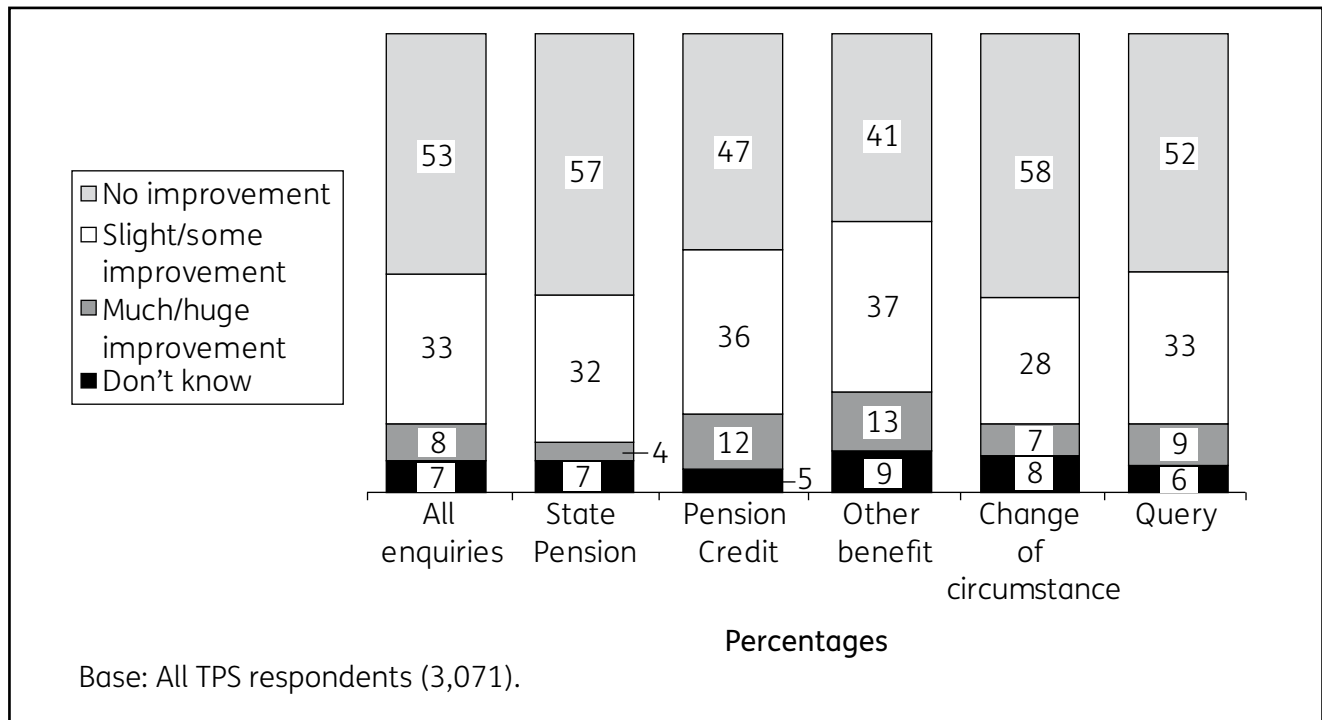
There was also some difference between white and non-white customers. Non-white customers were twice as likely to say that the service needed much or a huge improvement and less likely to mention that it needed no improvement at all (14 per cent compared to seven per cent of white customers).

Advocacy

TPS customers were also asked about their potential advocacy of the service. This type of performance measure is widely used in the private sector where customers can choose between different organisations. For TPS, where there is no alternative organisation to go to, rather than asking whether the customer would recommend the TPS, we asked whether they would speak highly of the service or would criticise it. Customers were then asked a follow-up question to find out if they would speak highly/criticise only when asked, or if they would speak highly/criticise without being asked first.

Over six in ten customers (62 per cent) reported that they would praise TPS, while six per cent of customers said they would criticise the service when speaking to someone else.

Customers whose enquiry was to claim Pension Credit or other benefits, or who had a query were more likely to state that they would criticise TPS if speaking to someone else. Figure 3.6 shows that just four per cent of customers claiming their SP and reporting a change of circumstance mentioned that they would criticise TPS compared with eight per cent claiming Pension Credit or with a query, and 11 per cent who were claiming another benefit.

Figure 3.6   Advocacy and enquiry (TPS)

Base: All TPS respondents (3,071).
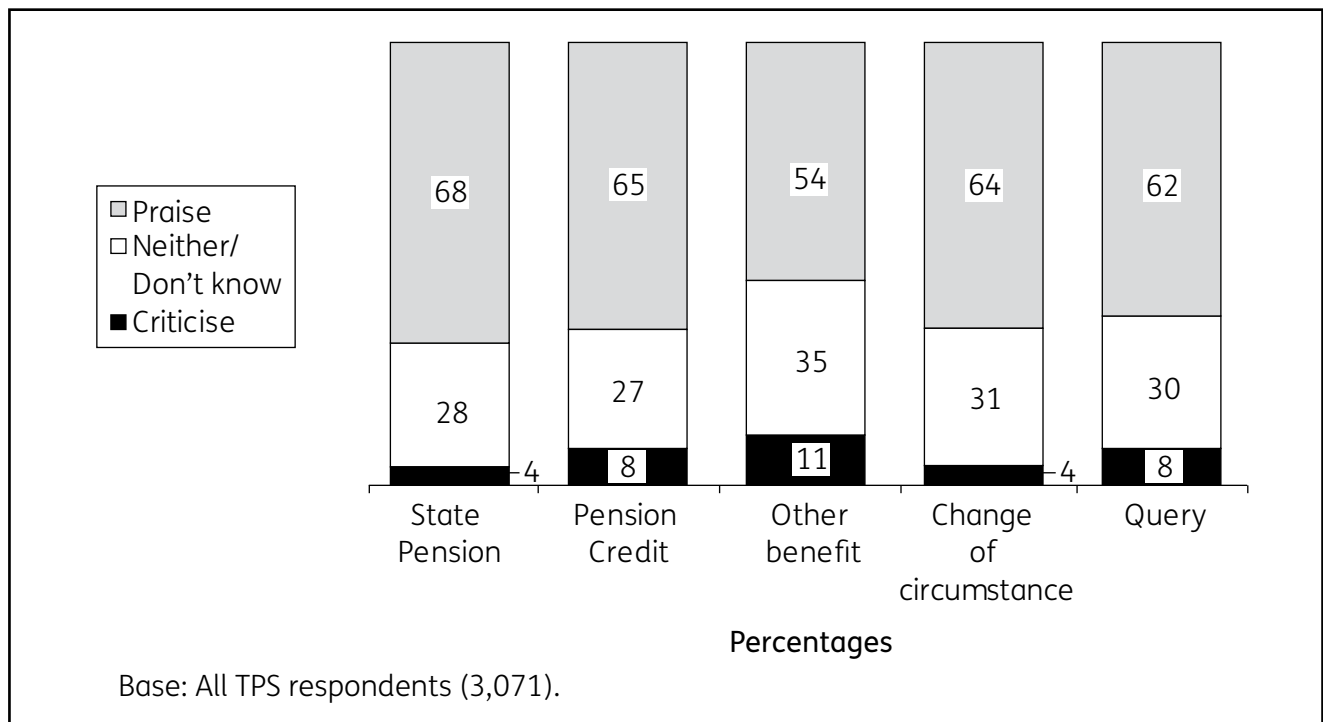
Men were also slightly more likely to mention that they would criticise TPS (seven per cent of men mentioned they would criticise the service to someone else compared with five per cent of women).

3.5.3   Staff treatment

TPS customers were very positive about their interactions with staff. In particular, nearly all respondents reported that staff had shown the skills that are important when dealing with customers such as being polite (98 per cent), showing respect (98 per cent) and listening to what they have to say (97 per cent). Staff being knowledgeable had the lowest proportion of customers saying they had exhibited this behaviour, but this was still well over nine out of ten customers (92 per cent).

While the numbers of customers reporting positive behaviour was generally very high, there were some customers where this was lower for particular service elements – at least relatively speaking. In particular, customers who did not speak English as their first language were less likely to say that staff had exhibited some of the positive behaviours than customers who did speak English as their first language. These behaviours included the following:

- staff being helpful (85 per cent of customers not speaking English as their first language compared to 96 per cent of those who did);

- staff being polite (90 per cent compared with 99 per cent);

- staff being knowledgeable (84 per cent compared with 93 per cent);

- staff listening to what they had to say (91 per cent compared with 97 per cent);

- staff being sympathetic to their needs (87 per cent compared with 94 per cent).

One thing to note is that there were no differences for staff showing respect and also for providing the customer with the correct information between white and non-white customers.

3.5.4 Improvements to the service

Figure 3.7 shows customers suggestions for improvements to TPS once they have been banded together for ease of analysis. A further breakdown of the individual components for each of these categories is provided in the subsequent sections.

Figure 3.7 Improvements – TPS

Base: All with a suggestion for improvement (1,082).
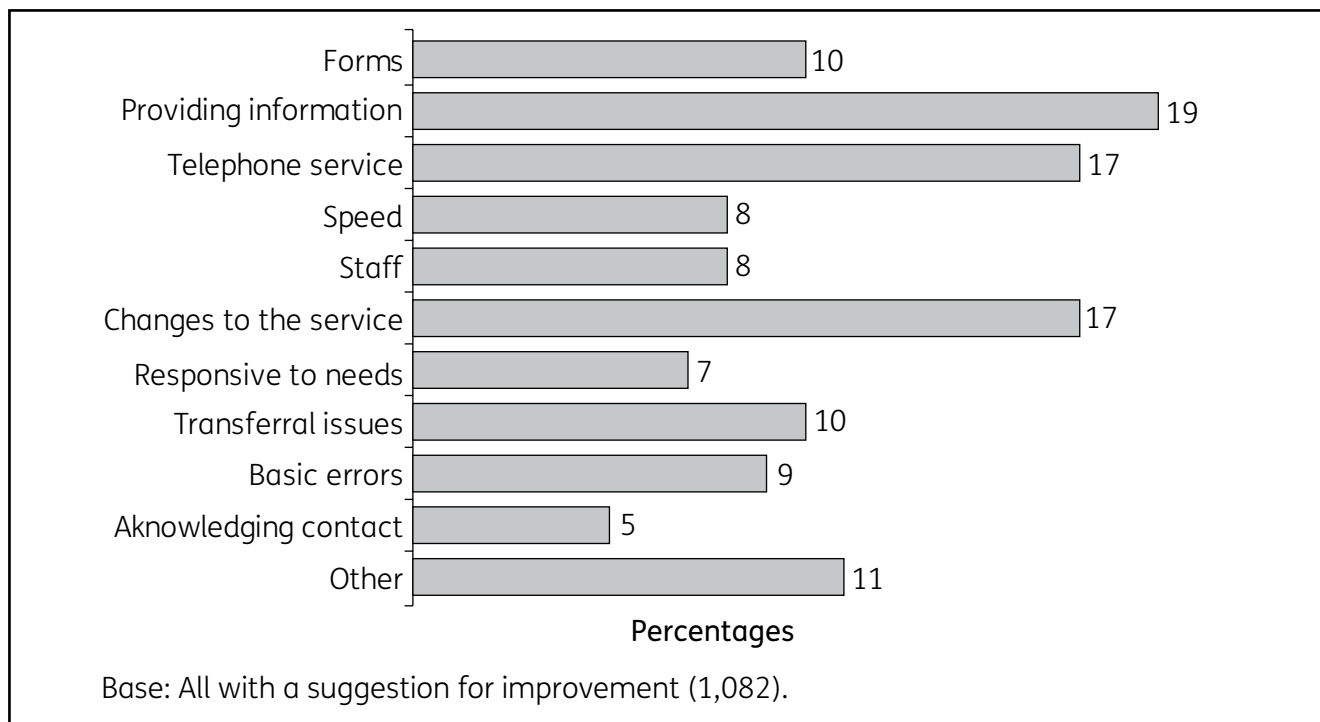
Providing information

Providing information was the most commonly suggested improvement by TPS customers, mentioned by just under one in five who had a suggestion for improvement (19 per cent). Women were significantly more likely than men to mention problems with information (23 per cent compared with 16 per cent). This could potentially be a reflection of the fact that greater confusion exists about the amount of pension women are due to receive in terms of how their National Insurance Contribution is calculated based on contributions.

The improvements to the information provided by TPS that customers mentioned included – 'Provide simpler information that is easy to understand' (nine per cent), 'Make sure people know what they are entitled to' (four per cent), 'Better advertisement of services provided' (three per cent), 'Contact people more/be more proactive' (three per cent) and 'Improve website/make more use of technology' (two per cent). In addition to this, customers also mentioned 'Better communication in letters' (two per cent) and 'Notify of changes to benefit or eligibility' (one per cent). Verbatim quotes from customers for all of these issues are included below:

> *'Instead of me having to get in touch with them I would have expected them to get in touch with me.'*

> *'They need to tell you more about what you can claim and how you go about claiming it.'*

> *'They need clearer explanations of how they determine how much you are entitled to.'*

Changes to the service

The second most common group of suggestions for improvement from TPS customers involved changes to the service and benefit administration. The single change that was mentioned by most customers was to increase the amount of money they receive (12 per cent). Other changes included – 'Increase face-to-face contact' (two per cent), 'Provide a local office to visit' (two per cent) and 'Provide more home visits' (one per cent). A very small number of customers also mentioned that they would like the return of the Pension book rather than having their money paid directly into their bank account.

Changes to the service were a much higher priority for older customers. Nearly one in four of those aged over 65 wanted changes to the service (24 per cent), compared to just one in seven of those aged 65 or under (14 per cent). Potentially related to this, customers with a long-term health problem or disability were also more likely to suggest changes to the service as a whole (22 per cent compared with 14 per cent). For both older customers and those with a health problem or disability, the amount of money they received was the key change they wanted to see.

Examples of some of the things customers were saying are included below.

> *'The pension could be increased.'*

> *'They could give more money for the retired. Be slightly more generous.'*

> *'It would be better if you could have face-to-face contact instead because it is much easier when you can see the person'*

3.5.5   Best thing about the service

The main top level areas of strength identified by TPS customers are shown in Figure 3.8. A further breakdown of the individual components for each of these categories is provided in the subsequent sections.

Figure 3.8   Best thing – TPS

Base: All with a positive comment (2,581).
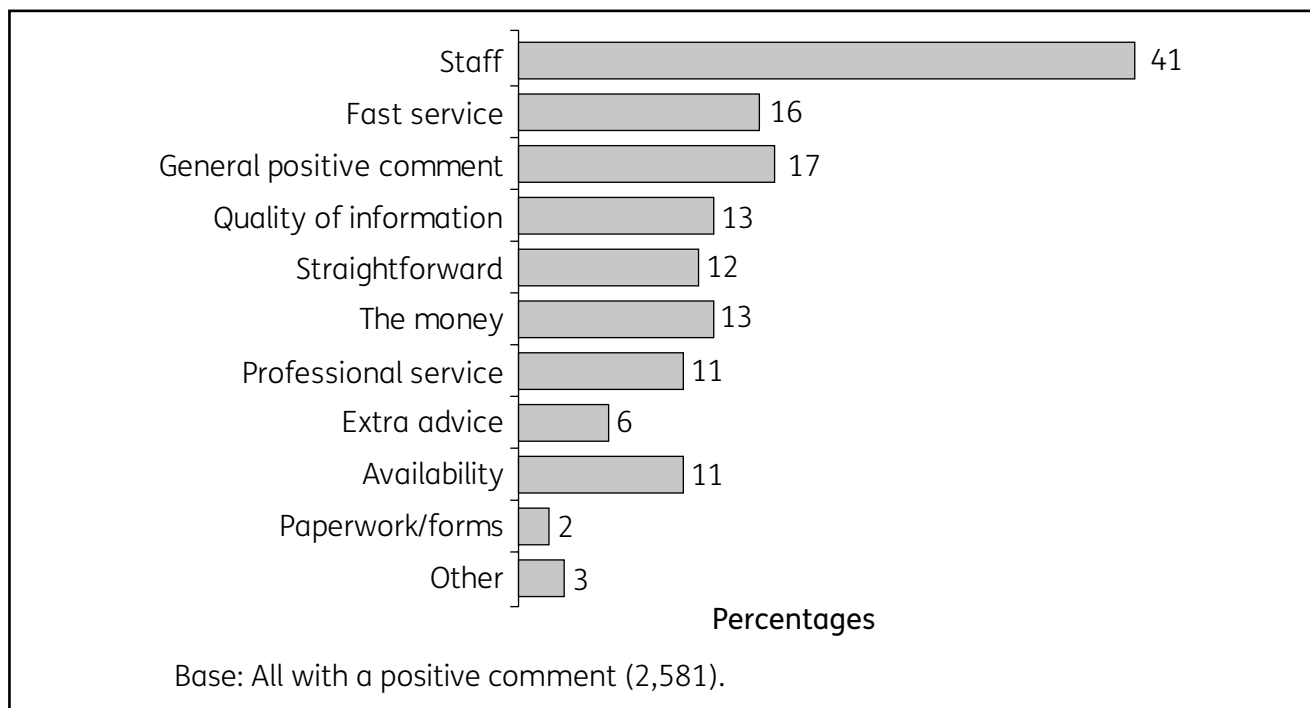
Staff

Just over two in five TPS customers (41%) spontaneously mentioned the staff as being the best thing about the service and this was significantly more than any other aspect. Women were significantly more likely than men to make positive comments about the staff (45 per cent compared to 37 per cent). In addition to this, white customers were also more likely to nominate the staff as being the best thing about the service (42 per cent compared to 32 per cent). However, it should be noted that the staff were still rated as being the best thing about TPS by the highest proportion of non-white customers.

The particular characteristics of the staff that respondents mentioned included – 'Being helpful' (20 per cent), 'Politeness' (13 per cent), 'Staff were knowledgeable' (eight per cent), 'Staff were friendly and easy to talk to' (seven per cent), 'Staff listen to your queries and answer questions' (five per cent) and 'Staff were sympathetic/sensitive' (five per cent). A smaller number of customers also mentioned that the staff showed them respect and some made reference to individuals within the service. Examples of some of the things that respondents were saying in relation to staff is included below.

> *'The way I dealt with them and how they dealt with me. I thought they very helpful.'*

> *'The way they treat you is good. They don't patronise you like some companies do. I am sometimes nervous talking over the phone but they know how to talk to you.'*

> *'They were knowledgeable. They seem to know what they are talking about.'*

> *'They way I was treated with respect, like a human and not an object or a number.'*

General positive comments

Some TPS customers talked more generally about how positively they felt about the service without highlighting specific aspects. Comments could be grouped into – 'Being satisfied with the service' (seven per cent), 'Thinking the service is brilliant/fantastic etc.' (four per cent), 'Being happy with outcome' (two per cent) and 'The service sorted everything out'.

The oldest TPS customers were the most likely to give these answers. Just under three in ten customers who were aged 75 or over gave general positive comments (28 per cent) compared to around one in six those who were aged under 75 (15 per cent). Examples of some of the positive comments customers made are included below.

> *'Convenient, perfectly right and very satisfactory. They did the job perfectly well.'*

> *'Simply there were no problems at all, they did what I asked and everything was satisfactory.'*

> *'I am very happy in what they have done helping me out.'*

4   The Disability and Carers Service

This section looks at the experience of Disability and Carers Service (DCS) customers when contacting the service. It begins by focusing on the customer's most recent enquiry with the service before moving on to look at wider perceptions of the service, including overall satisfaction. In addition to this it looks at those areas which customers think are strengths of the organisation, as well as the areas which customers spontaneously identified as being the major priorities for improvement.

4.1   Enquiry types

4.1.1   Main subject of enquiry

The types of contacts that DCS customers were enquiring about are summarised in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1   Main reason contacted – DCS

Base: All DCS respondents (2,870).
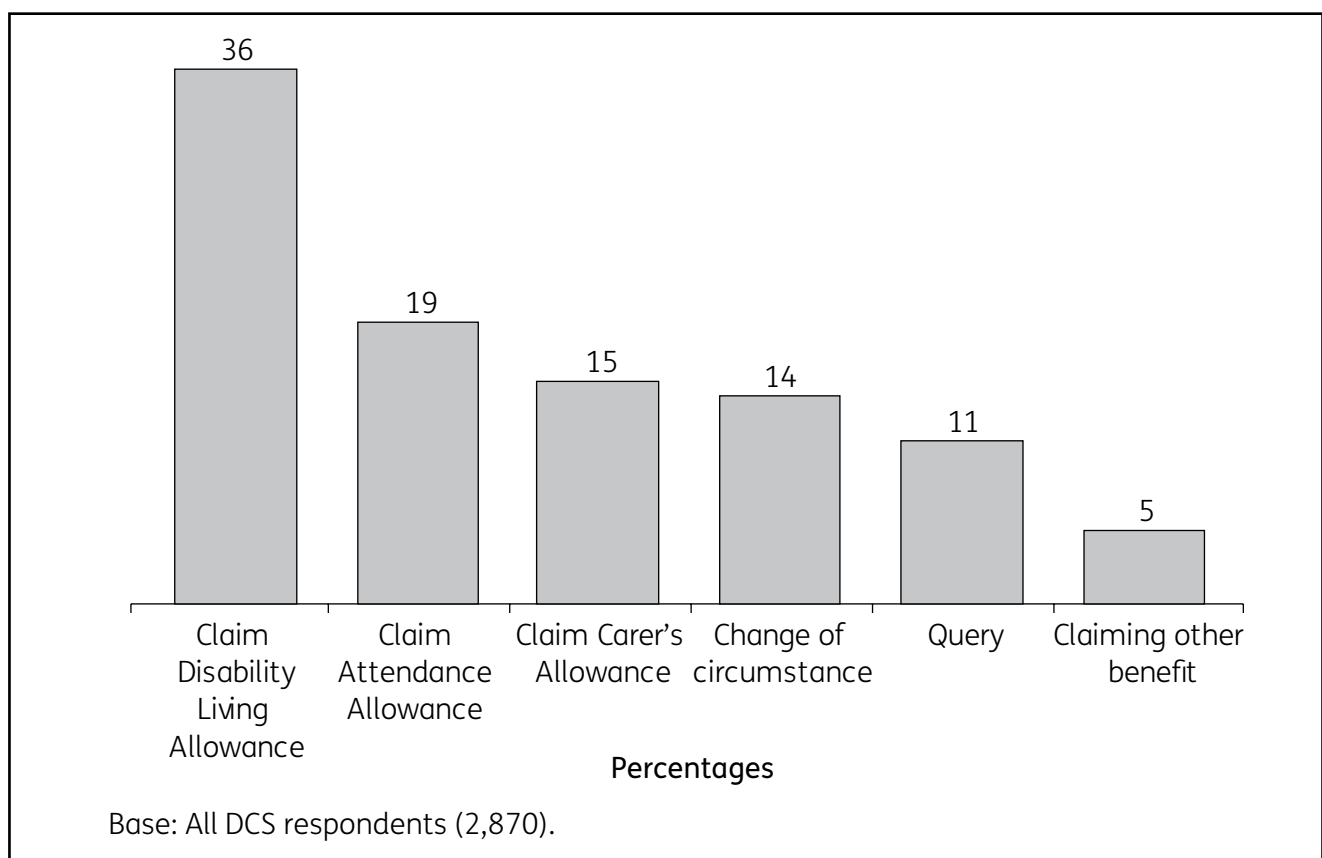
Claiming Disability Living Allowance (DLA) was the most common enquiry for DCS customers (36 per cent). This was followed by claims for the other two DCS administered benefits Attendance Allowance (AA) (19 per cent) and Carer's Allowance (CA) (15 per cent). The next two most common contacts were in relation to a change of circumstance (14 per cent) or a query (11 per cent):

- **Change of circumstances** – The most common changes reported were to address details (six per cent) and moving into or out of hospital (three per cent). Other changes included changing bank details (two per cent) and reporting a change in care needs (one per cent).

- **Queries** – There was no one type of query that was generating a much larger number of contacts from DCS customers than the others. Queries that were being made included general requests for information (two per cent); entitlement for benefits (two per cent); the amount they were being paid (one per cent); Delayed or missing payments (one per cent); query about renewal of benefits (one per cent) and about notification of increase in benefits (one per cent).

A small proportion of customers (five per cent) were also contacting the service in relation to claiming non-DCS administered benefits. While The pension Service (TPS) customers were contacting about DCS administered benefits (four per cent were claiming DLA, AA or CA) the reverse was not as strong. Less than one per cent of DCS customers were contacting to claim the State Pension (SP) or Pension Credit. Instead DCS customers reporting claims for 'other' benefits mentioned a variety including Incapacity Benefit, Bereavement Benefit, Housing Benefit and Child Benefit amongst others. However it should be noted that the actual number of customers claiming any of these benefits was very low and all were below one per cent.

Enquiry type and satisfaction

Customers contacting the DCS to change their address details had significantly higher levels of satisfaction than those contacting for other reasons (98 per cent compared with 87 per cent) and this enquiry had the highest level of satisfaction for all DCS customers. The major enquiry with the lowest level of satisfaction was claiming for DLA (83 per cent). Unfortunately, as the previous section showed, this was also the most common enquiry the DCS received by a wide margin, so the impact on the overall satisfaction for the DCS is quite significant. In fact, if customers claiming DLA were removed from the base the overall satisfaction score for the DCS would rise from 88 per cent to 91 per cent.

4.1.2   Third party contact

Just under two-thirds of DCS customers (65 per cent) said they were contacting the service solely on their own behalf and just over a quarter were contacting on someone else's behalf (28 per cent) – the remainder were making a joint enquiry (six per cent).

Women were more likely than men to say they were contacting on someone else's behalf (34 per cent compared with 19 per cent) as were people aged 25-44 (39 per cent compared with 24 per cent of those aged over 44). This probably reflects the fact that when a child is receiving DLA it tends to be the mother who deals with the DCS.

Indian and Pakistani customers were also more likely to be contacting on behalf of someone else than those from other ethnic backgrounds (51 per cent compared with 27 per cent). Alongside this, customers whose first language is not English were also more likely to be contacting on someone else's behalf (41 per cent compared with 27 per cent). This could indicate that the higher proportion of Asian customers contacting on someone else's behalf is a result of them performing a translation function for friends and relatives who do not feel their English is at a level to deal with the service.

4.1.3   Contact channels used

Figure 4.2 shows the contact channels that were used by DCS customer over the course of their most recent enquiry.

Figure 4.2   Channels used in enquiry – DCS

Base: All DCS respondents (2,870).
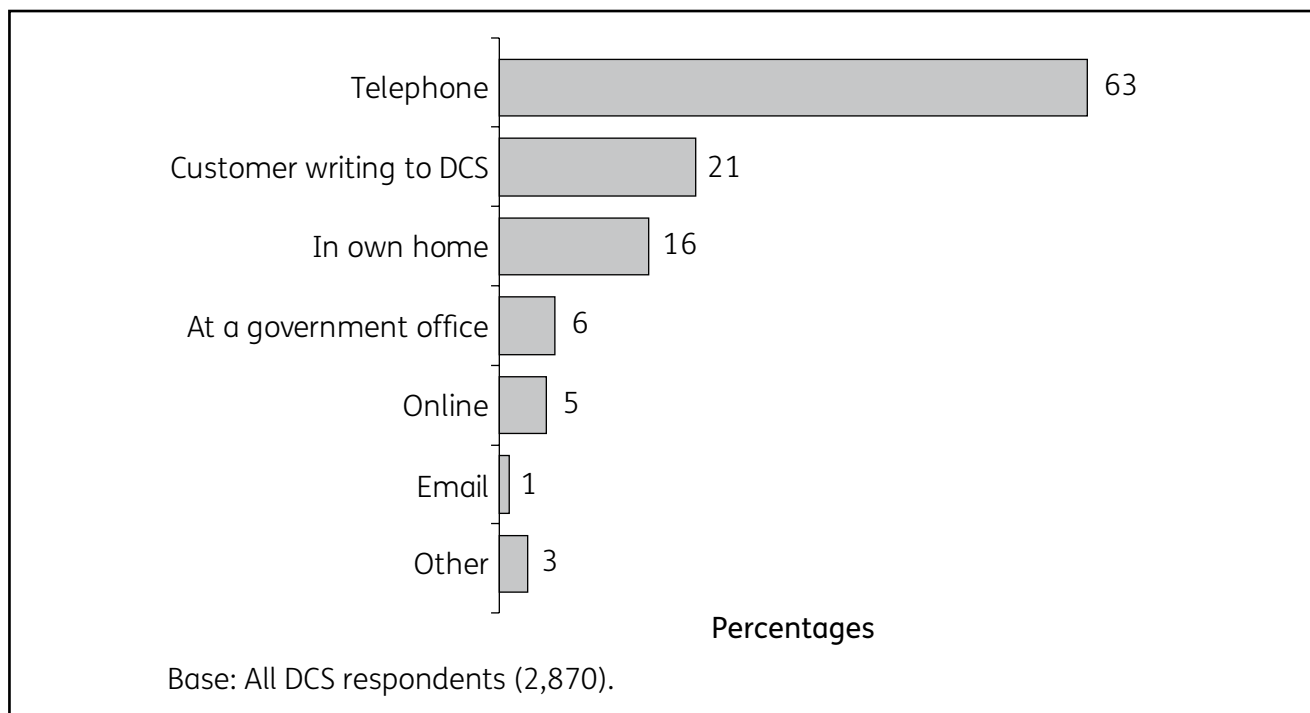
Just under two-thirds of all DCS customers (63 per cent) had used the telephone for their most recent enquiry. The next most common channels used were customers writing to the DCS (21 per cent) and being visited in the customer's own home (16 per cent). The proportion of people receiving a home visit may seem surprising given that DCS staff do not normally make home visits to their customers. However, Local Service staff who are formally part of TPS do make visits to DCS customers and can help customers with DCS claims and benefits.

Overall satisfaction with the DCS did vary significantly depending on the channels that the customer had used for their most recent enquiry. Customers who received a home visit or used the telephone had the highest levels of overall satisfaction (93 per cent and 89 per cent respectively). In contrast to this, customers who wrote as part of their most recent enquiry or who used online channels had much lower levels of overall satisfaction (82 per cent and 80 per cent). The lowest levels of satisfaction though were among those customers who had visited a government office as part of their most recent enquiry (78 per cent).

4.1.4   Preferred channels of contact

Only around one in twenty DCS customers (five per cent) said that the contact channels they used for their most recent enquiry were not what they wanted. Among these customers a home visit was the most common preferred choice (38 per cent), but this was closely followed by the internet or e-mail (31 per cent).

4.2   Telephone communication

4.2.1   Frequency of contact

Customers contacting DCS made, on average, 2.31 calls for their most recent enquiry. There was variation by enquiry type, with customers contacting to claim DLA reporting a higher mean number

of calls at 2.88, than customers who were contacting to claim CA (2.12) and those contacting to claim AA (1.81). DCS customers whose most recent enquiry was to claim another benefit displayed a higher than average mean number of calls at 2.57.

The mean number of calls female DCS customers made during their most recent enquiry was 2.49, while the mean number of calls male DCS customers made was 2.18. This may be as female customers contacting the DCS were significantly more likely than male customers to be contacting on someone else's behalf (34 per cent compared with 19 per cent).

Table 4.1 displays the cross-tabulation results for the number of times DCS customers called and overall satisfaction.

Table 4.1   How many times customers called and overall satisfaction (DCS)

	%
Overall	**88**
One	94
Two	89
Three-five	85
Six-nine	57
Ten +	55

Base: All DCS customers who had telephone contact (1,837).

A significant fall occurs in customers overall satisfaction when they report calling DCS six or more times. DCS customers overall satisfaction score remains relatively high for those reporting they contacted DCS up to five times over the telephone.

4.2.2   Internal transfers

Three-quarters (77 per cent) of DCS customers stated that the first person they spoke to over the telephone was able to answer their query. In terms of enquiry type, DCS customers who were contacting regarding a query (70 per cent) or to claim another benefit (67 per cent) were least likely to find that the first person they spoke to was able to answer their query.

DCS customers whose query was not answered by the first person they spoke to were asked what had happened next, results are shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2   When the first person the customer spoke to was unable to answer the query (DCS)

	%
Transferred to someone else	58
Called back another time	17
Told DCS would call back	11
Told to call someone else	8
Don't know	7

Base: All DCS customers who contacted by telephone and query was not answered by first person (346).

Almost four-fifths (78 per cent) of customers that spoke to a new person straightaway found that this person could help. Table 4.3 displays the proportions for the amount of information it was necessary to repeat when a DCS customer spoke to a new person. Just over eight in ten (83 per cent) DCS customers found they had to repeat some information, with over half needing to repeat all information.

Table 4.3   When the customer spoke to a new person (DCS)

	%
Repeated all information	55
Repeated only basic details	28
Did not repeat any information	9

Base: All DCS customers who contacted by telephone and spoke to a new person (302).

Overall satisfaction with the service was influenced by the internal transfer process. DCS customers who found the first person they spoke to was able to answer their query reported higher levels of overall satisfaction than customers who found that the first person they spoke to was unable to answer their query (93 compared with 72 per cent).

Overall satisfaction was also influenced by the amount of information that customers had to repeat. Customers who did not repeat any information and those who repeated only basic details were more likely to be satisfied overall (88 and 81 per cent respectively) than customers who had to repeat all information.

4.2.3   Time taken and next steps

Around nine in ten (91 per cent) customers who contacted DCS by telephone felt that they were given enough time to explain their situation.

Customers who were contacting to claim Disability Living Allowance and those contacting to claim Attendance Allowance were least likely to say they felt that they were given enough time to explain their situation (88 per cent for both). However, it is worth noting that this is still a high proportion.

Customers who felt that they were given enough time to explain their situation and those who were told what would happen next displayed higher levels of satisfaction with the service overall (91 per cent for both) than customers who did not feel that they were given enough time to explain their situation (48 per cent) or those who were not told what would happen next (78 per cent).

4.3   Postal communication

4.3.1   Frequency of postal contact

For customers who wrote to the DCS in relation to their most recent enquiry the mean number of times they wrote was 1.6. The mean number of written contacts and enquiry type is shown in Table 4.4. Around a third of DCS (32 per cent) customers' most recent enquiry required them to write two or more times.

Table 4.4 Mean number of contacts and enquiry type (DCS)

	%
All enquiries	1.6
Claiming other benefit	1.8
Query	1.7
Claiming DLA	1.7
Claiming CA	1.6
Change of circumstance	1.4
Claiming AA	1.3

Base: All DCS customers who contacted by post (650).

As shown in Table 4.4 there is some degree of variation in the number of times a DCS customer wrote and their most recent enquiry.

The numbers of times a customer wrote to the DCS regarding their most recent enquiry influenced the level of overall satisfaction with the service. Table 4.5 displays overall satisfaction with the number of times a DCS customer wrote to the service.

Table 4.5 How many times the customer wrote and their satisfaction with DCS

	%
All who wrote	83
One	88
Two	75
Three-five	68
Six+	58

Base: All DCS customers who contacted by post (650).

Overall levels of satisfaction decline as the number of times a DCS customer wrote increased.

4.3.2 Whether the customer received a reply

The majority of DCS customers who wrote to DCS regarding their most recent enquiry expected a reply (91 per cent) and nine in ten (90 per cent) of these customers received one. Customers who were contacting regarding a change of circumstance were less likely than other enquiry types to expect a reply when they wrote (68 per cent).

Customers whose most recent contact was to claim a benefit were more likely to have received a reply when they had written to DCS. All customers whose most recent enquiry was to claim AA had received a reply when they had written to the DCS (100 per cent). The majority of customers contacting to claim CA (95 per cent) or DLA (92 per cent) had received a reply, with four-fifths of customers who were contacting to claim another benefit also receiving a reply (83 per cent). Customers who were contacting regarding a change of circumstance or a query were less likely to have received a reply when they had written to DCS (72 per cent and 71 per cent respectively).

Customers who expected a reply yet did not receive one were asked whether they had received an acknowledgement when they had written to DCS; 11 out of 48 DCS customers had received an acknowledgement.

Table 4.6 displays the proportions of DCS customers who received a reply, the time this took, whether they felt this took longer/less time than expected and the ease of understanding replies. Table 4.6 also shows the influence their answers had on overall satisfaction.

Table 4.6   Reply received and satisfaction (DCS)

	%	% satisfied
Received a reply	90	84
Reply within two weeks	41	91
Reply more than two weeks	49	77
Reply took longer than expected	20	63
Reply took less time than expected	17	93
Replies easy to understand	89	88
Replies not easy to understand	9	51

Base: All DCS customers who received a reply (545).

As might be expected, customers who expected a reply and did not receive one reported lower levels of satisfaction with the service overall than those customers who had both expected and received a reply (53 per cent compared with 85 per cent respectively).

As shown in Table 4.6, customers' level of satisfaction was lower if the reply they received took longer than two weeks, if they felt that the reply took longer than expected or that the replies received were not easy to understand.

4.3.3   Submitting forms

Almost three-quarters (74 per cent) of DCS customers stated they had completed a form(s) as part of their most recent enquiry, with nearly nine in ten (88 per cent) of these customers reporting that they received a reply or acknowledgement when they submitted a form.

As might be expected, DCS customers whose most recent contact was to claim a benefit were more likely than average to have completed a form as part of their enquiry. Customers who were contacting to claim DLA were most likely to have done so (91 per cent), followed by customers claiming AA (87 per cent), CA (82 per cent) and those claiming another benefit (77 per cent).

4.3.4   Ease of completing forms

Almost half (48 per cent) of DCS customers who had completed forms as part of their most recent enquiry stated that they had been difficult to complete. The remainder (52 per cent) of DCS customers stated that the forms had been easy to complete with one in seven (15 per cent) stating they were very easy.

The proportion of customers reporting difficulty with forms varied by enquiry type. Three-fifths (60 per cent) of customers contacting to claim DLA felt that the form(s) had been difficult to complete, compared with 44 per cent of those claiming another benefit, 37 per cent of customers claiming AA and 36 per cent of customers claiming CA.

4.3.5   Whether received help completing forms

Over half of DCS customers (56 per cent) had received help when completing a form as part of their most recent enquiry. Three in ten customers (30 per cent) reported that they did not need any help with one in seven (14 per cent) reporting that they required help but did not ask for any.

DCS customers who did not require any help were less likely to find the forms difficult to complete (27 per cent) than DCS customers who received help completing the forms (54 per cent). Customers who required help but did not ask for any were the most likely to report difficulty with the forms (65 per cent).

When asked who they had received help from the most common sources given were:

- family or friends (33 per cent);
- a charity (25 per cent);
- DCS (21 per cent);
- a carer/social worker/home-help (ten per cent);
- Hospital/NHS/other medical staff (five per cent); or
- from a Local Authority (five per cent).

4.3.6   Submitting valuables

A fifth of all DCS customers (20 per cent) had submitted valuables as part of their most recent enquiry and the overwhelming majority (92 per cent) had received them back at the time of interview.

For DCS customers there was no difference in overall satisfaction for customers who submitted valuables compared with those who did not submit valuables.

4.4   Enquiry conclusion

4.4.1   Enquiry conclusion

Almost nine in ten (87 per cent) DCS customers stated that their enquiry had concluded. As shown in Table 4.7, this varied by enquiry type.

Table 4.7   Enquiry conclusion and enquiry type (DCS)

	%
All enquiries	87
Claiming AA	95
Change of circumstance	91
Claiming CA	89
Claiming DLA	85
Query	80
Claiming other benefit	62

Base: All DCS customers (2,870).

Customers contacting to claim AA were most likely to report their enquiry had concluded (95 per cent), while customers contacting to claim another benefit were least likely (62 per cent).

All customers were asked about their satisfaction with the time it took/was taking to deal with their enquiry and whether this was less, about the same or longer than they expected. Just over four-fifths (82 per cent) of customers were satisfied (51 per cent very satisfied and 31 per cent fairly satisfied) with the time it took/was taking to deal with their enquiry and about one in ten (11 per cent) were dissatisfied (five per cent fairly satisfied and six per cent very dissatisfied).

Table 4.8 displays the satisfaction with time taken by enquiry type. The same pattern is evident for enquiry type as was found for enquiry conclusion with customers contacting to claim AA most likely to be satisfied with the time taken to deal with the their enquiry and customers claiming another benefit least likely to be satisfied.

Table 4.8   Satisfaction with time taken and enquiry type (DCS)

	%
All enquiries	82
Claiming AA	93
Change of circumstance	90
Claiming CA	86
Claiming DLA	75
Query	80
Claiming other benefit	66

Base: All DCS customers (2,870).

The variation in satisfaction with time taken and enquiry type is perhaps unsurprising as DCS customers whose enquiry had concluded were more likely to be satisfied with the time taken to deal with their enquiry than customers whose enquiry was yet to conclude at the time of interviewing (88 per cent compared with 46 per cent).

In regards to their expectations; around quarter (26 per cent) of customers felt their enquiry had taken/was taking less time than expected, 48 per cent about as long as expected and just over a fifth (21 per cent) longer than expected. Customers who were contacting to claim another benefit and those claiming DLA were most likely to state they felt their enquiry had taken/was taking longer than expected (36 per cent and 30 per cent respectively).

As might be expected, customers whose enquiry had concluded were more likely to be satisfied overall than customers who were still waiting for their enquiry to conclude at the time of interviewing (91 per cent compared with 68 per cent).

4.4.2   Enquiry decision

About three-quarters (73 per cent) of customers reported that their most recent enquiry involved a decision being made. Of the customers whose enquiry had not concluded but whose enquiry required a decision, just under two-fifths (38 per cent) reported that a decision had already been made.

For customers where a decision had been made over four-fifths (83 per cent) agreed with the decision. In regards to how clearly this decision was explained; over half (53 per cent) of customers felt that the decision was very clearly explained, just over a third (34 per cent) fairly clearly explained, six per cent not clearly explained and five per cent claimed that the decision was not explained at all.

As shown in Table 4.9, customers contacting to make a claim for a benefit were most likely to report that their enquiry required a decision to be made.

Table 4.9   Enquiry required a decision and enquiry type (DCS)

	%
All enquiries	73
Claiming DLA	86
Claiming CA	82
Claiming AA	79
Claiming other benefit	71
Query	51
Change of circumstance	35

Base: All DCS customers (2,870).

Table 4.10 shows the variation in the proportion of respondents who agreed with the decision by enquiry type. Customers who were contacting to claim DLA were least likely to agree with the decision that was made.

Table 4.10 Agreed with decision and enquiry type (DCS)

	%
All enquiries	83
Claiming AA	92
Change of circumstance	91
Claiming CA	86
Query	82
Claiming other benefit	78
Claiming DLA	75

Base: All DCS customers who had received a decision (1,954).

Overall satisfaction with the service was not influenced by whether the customers' most recent enquiry required a decision or not, however, whether a customer agreed with the decision that was made or not did influence overall satisfaction.

Customers who agreed with the decision that was made reported higher levels of overall satisfaction with the service than customers who did not (97 per cent compared with 58 per cent).

As might be expected customers who felt that the decision was very clearly explained (97 per cent) or fairly clearly explained (92 per cent) displayed higher levels of overall satisfaction with the service than customers who felt that the decision was not very clearly explained (56 per cent) or not explained at all (52 per cent).

4.4.3   Being kept informed

About four-fifths of customers (78 per cent) responded they were given clear timings on what DCS would do, just under three-quarters (74 per cent) that they were kept up-to-date with their enquiry and around nine in ten (92 per cent) reported that DCS did what they said they would do during the course of their enquiry.

The response given for whether clear timings were received remained relatively consistent across the different enquiry types. However, customers were more likely to report they were kept up-to-date with the progress of their enquiry when they were contacting to claim DLA (77 per cent), AA (76 per cent) or CA (75 per cent) than customers who were contacting regarding a query or a change of circumstance (both 68 per cent).

Customers who were given clear timings reported higher levels of overall satisfaction than those who were not (91 per cent compared with 69 per cent). Customers who were kept up-to-date with the progress of their enquiry were more likely to be satisfied overall than those who felt that they were not kept up-to-date (93 per cent compared with 64 per cent). The most marked difference in overall satisfaction, however, was between customers who felt that DCS did what they said they would do and those who did not (93 per cent compared with 39 per cent).

4.4.4   Ease of contact and complexity of enquiry

Customers were asked how easy they had found it to get in contact with DCS during the course of their enquiry. Over four-fifths (84 per cent) of customers responded they had found it easy (40 per cent very easy and 44 per cent fairly easy) to get in contact, eight per cent of customers found it difficult (five per cent fairly difficult and three per cent very difficult).

How easy customers found it to get in contact with DCS varied by enquiry type, as shown in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11   Ease of contact and enquiry type (DCS)

	%
All enquiries	84
Change of circumstance	88
Claiming AA	86
Query	85
Claiming DLA	83
Claiming CA	82
Claiming other benefit	72

Base: All DCS customers (2,870).

All customers were asked how complicated they had found the enquiry process. A third (33 per cent) of customers found the process complicated; with ten per cent finding it very complicated and 23 per cent fairly complicated. About two-thirds (67 per cent) of customers did not find the enquiry process complicated; with 27 per cent reporting it was not very complicated and 40 per cent that it was not at all complicated.

Figure 4.3 displays the proportion of customers by enquiry type that found the enquiry process complicated (very and fairly complicated). Customers who were contacting to claim DLA (45 per cent) or claiming another benefit (43 per cent) were most likely to report they found the enquiry process complicated. Whereas customers contacting regarding a change of circumstance were significantly less likely than all enquiry types to report that they found the enquiry process complicated (17 per cent).

Figure 4.3 Complexity and enquiry type (DCS)

Base: All DCS respondents (2,870).
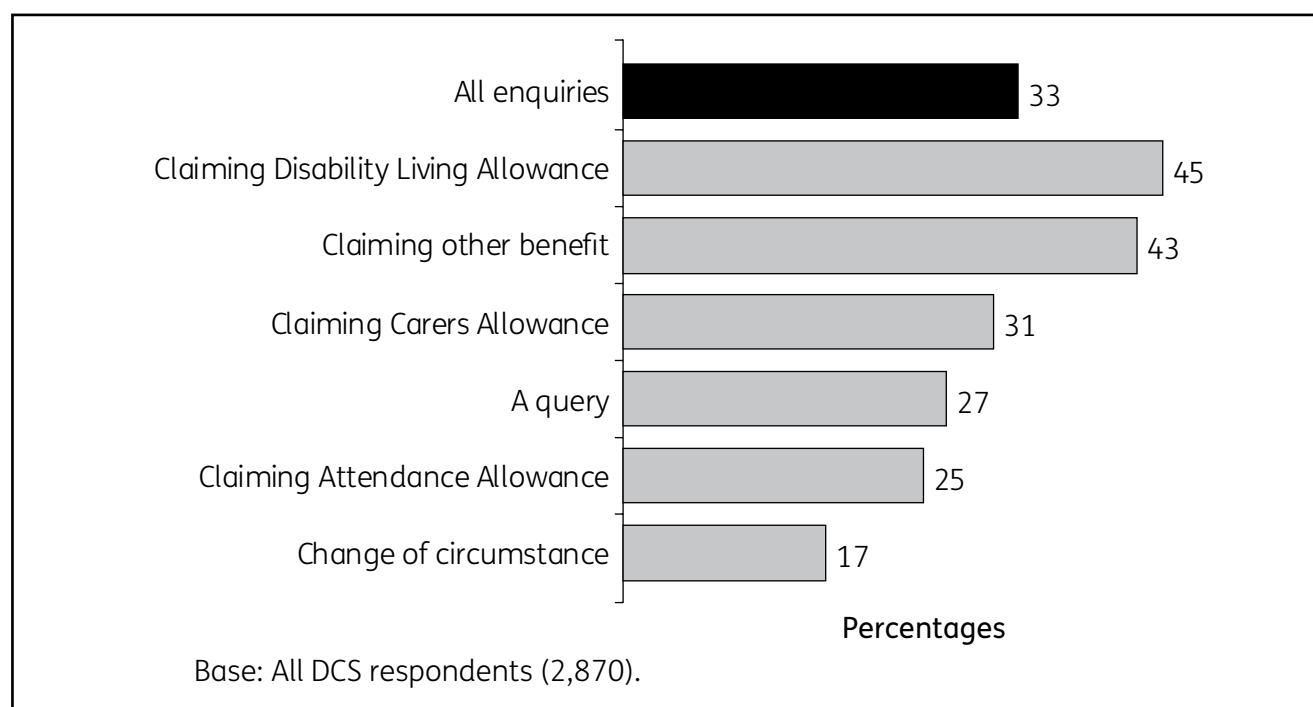
Customers who reported they had a long-term illness or disability were more likely to find the enquiry process complicated than those customers who did not have a long-term illness or disability (35 per cent compared with 28 per cent).

Customers were also asked whether the complexity of their enquiry was greater or smaller than what they had been expecting and just under two-thirds (63 per cent) said that it was what they were anticipating. Combining customers' expectations and experiences of complexity it is possible to further categorise the customer's experience. One in seven customers (14 per cent) were 'relieved' – they had been expecting a complex process which in reality proved to be relatively straightforward. In contrast to this, one in five customers (19 per cent) were 'resigned to complexity' in that they were expecting the process to be complicated and it was, while one in seven (14 per cent) experienced 'extra complexity' beyond anything they were anticipating.

In relation to enquiry type customers contacting to claim AA were most likely to be 'relieved' (21 per cent), customers contacting about a change of circumstance were most likely to have had a 'smooth enquiry', customers claiming DLA were most likely to be 'resigned to complexity' (25 per

cent) and experience 'extra complexity' (20 per cent) along with customers contacting to claim another benefit (21 per cent).

Customers who found it easy to get in contact with DCS during the course of their enquiry were more likely to be satisfied overall than customers who had found it difficult (92 per cent compared with 59 per cent).

As might be expected, customers who found the enquiry process complicated were less likely to be satisfied overall than customers who did not find the process complicated (76 per cent compared with 94 per cent). Customers who experienced 'extra complexity' above what they had expected reported lower levels of overall satisfaction (59 per cent) than customers who were 'resigned to complexity (88 per cent), 'relieved' (89 per cent) or who experienced a 'smooth enquiry' (96 per cent).

4.4.5   Problems encountered

All customers were asked whether they had experienced any difficulties or problems when dealing with DCS in the six months prior to conducting the interview, seven per cent of customers reported that they had. Male customers were more likely to report they had experienced a difficulty or problem than female customers (eight per cent compared with six per cent).

Customers who had experienced a problem were asked what difficulties or problems they had. The most common answers given were:

* Lack of communication or not being kept informed (29 per cent).

* Challenging the decision on my claim (23 per cent).

* Delays in receiving benefit payments (22 per cent).

* The service made too many mistakes (19 per cent).

* Staff were slow in dealing with my request or problem (17 per cent).

* Getting through on the phone (12 per cent).

* Being given different answers to the same question by different people (11 per cent).

Customers who experienced a difficulty or problem when dealing with DCS were asked whether their problems were resolved. Half of customers (50 per cent) reported their problems had been resolved, a further two per cent reported that some of them had and 46 per cent reported that their problems had not been resolved.

Customers who experienced a problem when dealing with DCS reported lower levels of satisfaction overall (50 per cent) than customers who had not (91 per cent). Customers who experienced a problem that had since been resolved were significantly more likely to be satisfied overall (72 per cent) than customers whose problem was not resolved (28 per cent).

4.4.6   Complaints

Twelve per cent of customers who had experienced a difficulty or problem when dealing with DCS in the six months prior to interviewing went on to make a formal complaint.

Male customers, who had difficulties or problems when dealing with DCS, were more likely than female customers to have made a formal complaint (20 per cent compared with six per cent).

Customers who did not make a formal complaint following difficulties or problems with the service were asked why this was. The reasons given were:

- Issue was resolved (13 per cent).

- Thought nothing would happen as a result of complaint (12 per cent).

- Did not know how to complain (eight per cent).

- Due to illness (seven per cent).

- The process is too difficult (seven per cent).

- Decided matter was not serious enough (six per cent).

- Other priorities (six per cent).

4.5   Overall performance

4.5.1   Overall satisfaction

The overall satisfaction score for the DCS was 88 per cent with 56 per cent of customers reporting that they were very satisfied with the service. As was the case for TPS, examining the various demographic factors reveals that only the age of the customer had a statistically significant effect on satisfaction.

As age increased there was a steady downward trend in the proportion of customers reporting that they were dissatisfied. This fell from nearly one in eight customers (13 per cent) aged under 60 reporting dissatisfaction, down to only three per cent aged over 75 (see Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4   Overall satisfaction for DCS by age

Base: All DCS respondents (2,870).
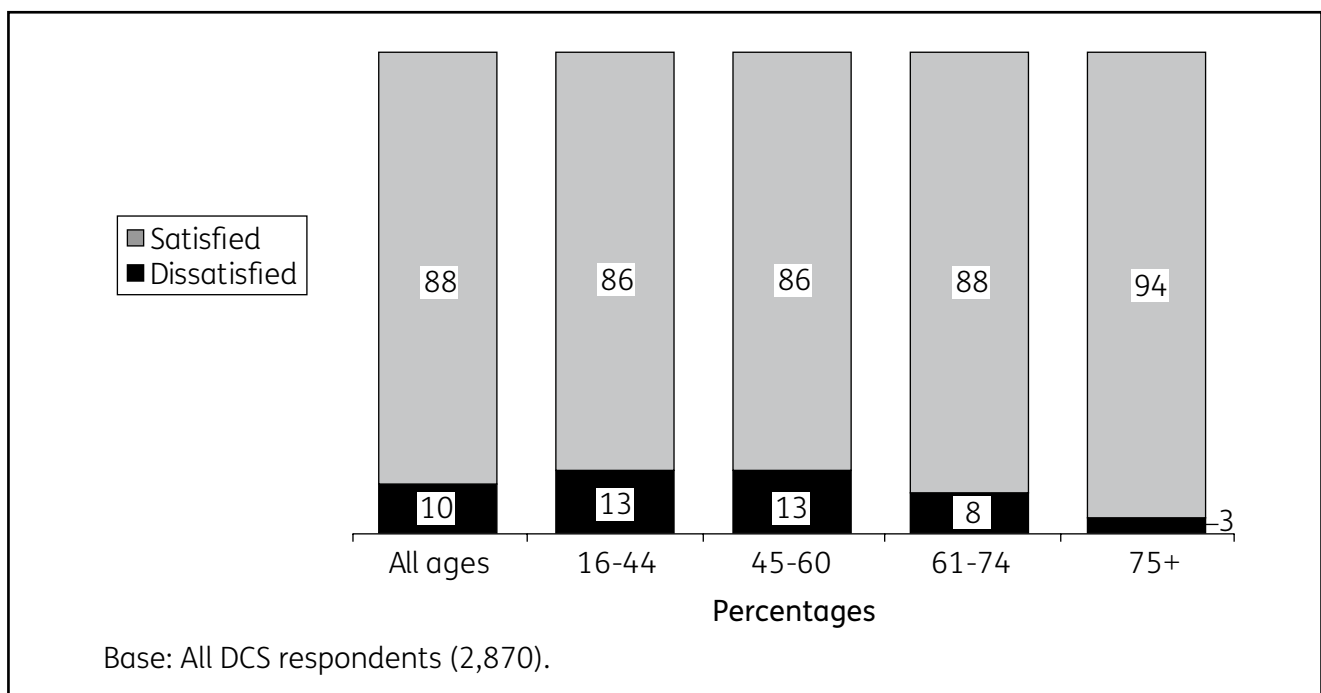
While satisfaction did not vary by whether the customer was white or non-white, as TPS there was some variation in the proportion of customers reporting that they were very satisfied (57 per cent of white customers were very satisfied compared with 41 per cent of non-white customers).

4.5.2   Expectations, improvements and advocacy

Improvements

Around four in ten (42 per cent) DCS customers mentioned that the service did not need to make any improvements and a similar proportion (38 per cent) mentioned that only a slight or some improvement was necessary. Proportions mentioning that much improvement or a huge improvement was required were slightly higher for DCS customers than TPS with six per cent mentioning each.

As is the case across all overall performance measures, the data suggests that there is some variation by the type of enquiry the customer had. Focusing on the proportions reporting that much or a huge improvement was needed, 17 per cent of customers contacting to claim DLA and 16 per cent claiming other benefits reported this compared with the average for all enquiries of 11 per cent.

Figure 4.5   How much improvement DCS needs and enquiry type

Base: All DCS respondents (2,870).
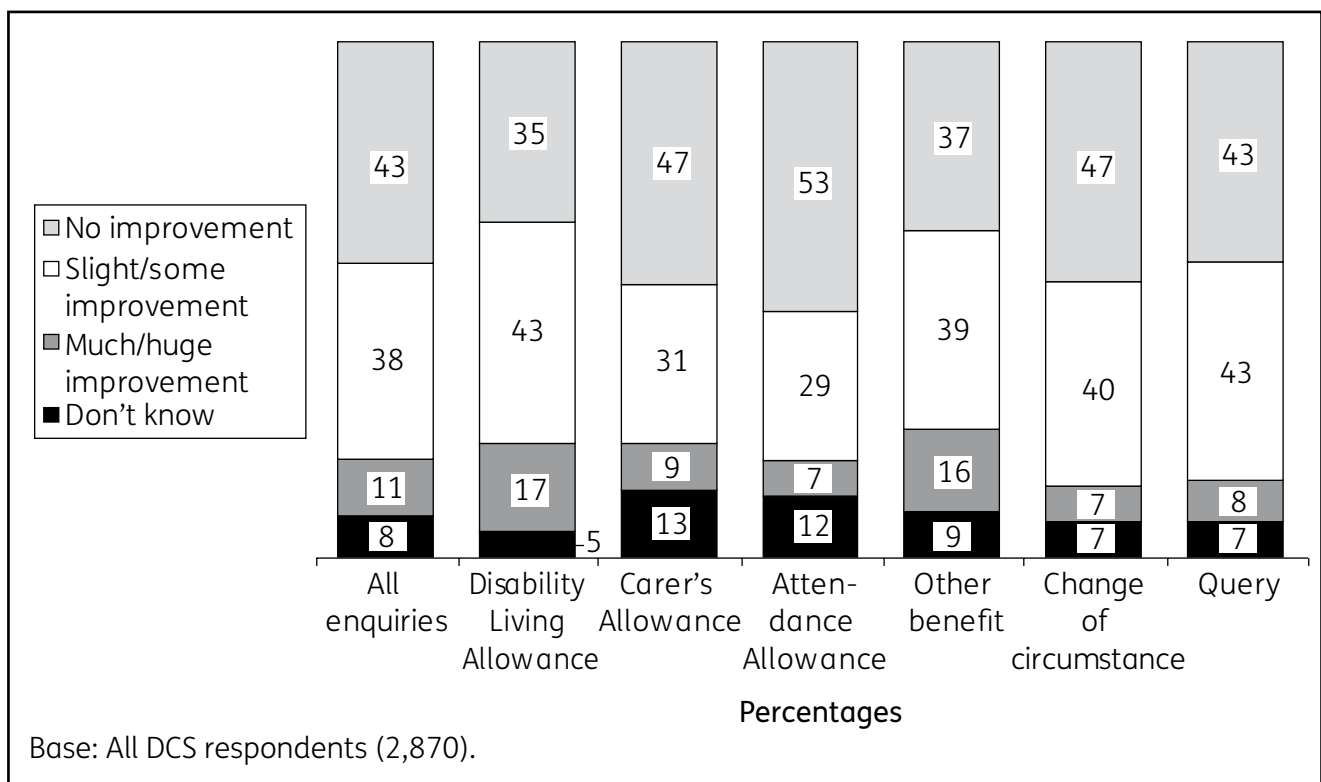
Advocacy

DCS customers were also asked about their potential advocacy of the service. This type of performance measure is widely used in the private sector where customers can choose between different organisations. For DCS where there is no alternative organisation to go to, rather than asking whether the customer would recommend the DCS, we asked whether they would speak highly of the service or would criticise it. Customers were then asked a follow-up question to find out if they would speak highly/criticise only when asked, or if they would speak highly/criticise without being asked first. Seven per cent of DCS customers said that they would criticise the DCS while 55 per cent said that they would praise the DCS when speaking to someone else.

There was a great deal of variation by the type of enquiry the customer had. Customers contacting to claim DLA were the most likely to mention that they would criticise the DCS (12 per cent of DLA customers mentioned this). This is compared to six per cent of those with queries or those claiming CA, four per cent of customers claiming AA and only three per cent of those reporting a change of circumstance said they would criticise the DCS when speaking to someone else (see Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6   Advocacy and enquiry (DCS)

Base: All DCS respondents (2,870).
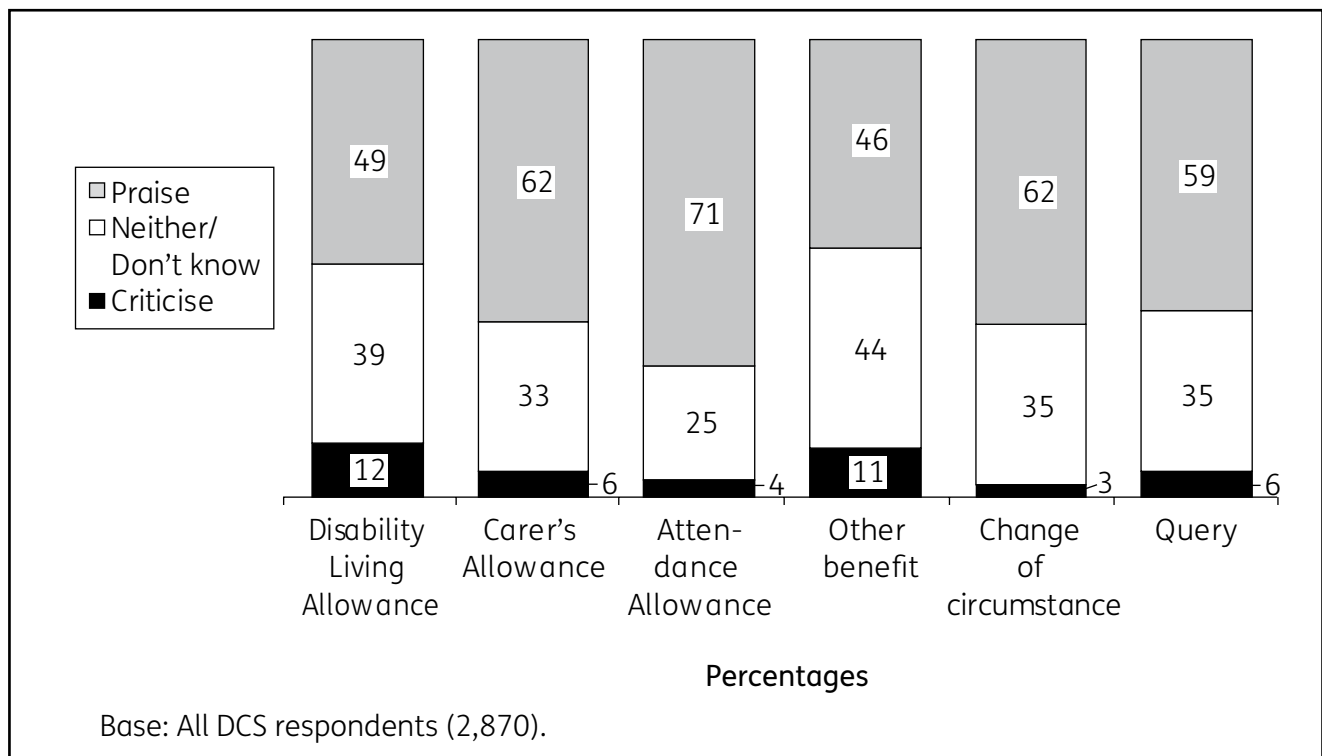
4.5.3   Staff treatment

A high proportion of DCS customers said that the staff had displayed each of the positive behaviours in the last six months with the highest scores for staff being polite (97 per cent) and staff showing respect (96 per cent). The service element which had the fewest customers saying that staff had behaved in this way was being sympathetic to the customer's needs (87 per cent), and this was significantly lower than for any of the other six elements.

The lower score for staff sympathy may well be a by product of the interactions that customers were having with the DCS. This is best shown by the differences by enquiry type for DCS customers on this measure. Customers who had claimed DLA were significantly less likely to say that staff had been sympathetic (80 per cent) than customers claiming either CA (92 per cent) or AA (95 per cent). It may well be that the nature of the application process for DLA is such that staff may appear as less sympathetic than when dealing with other enquiries.

4.5.4   Improvements to the service

Figure 4.7 shows a top level breakdown of suggestions that were made as to how the DCS could be improved.

Figure 4.7 Improvements – DCS

Base: All with a suggestion for improvement (1,371).
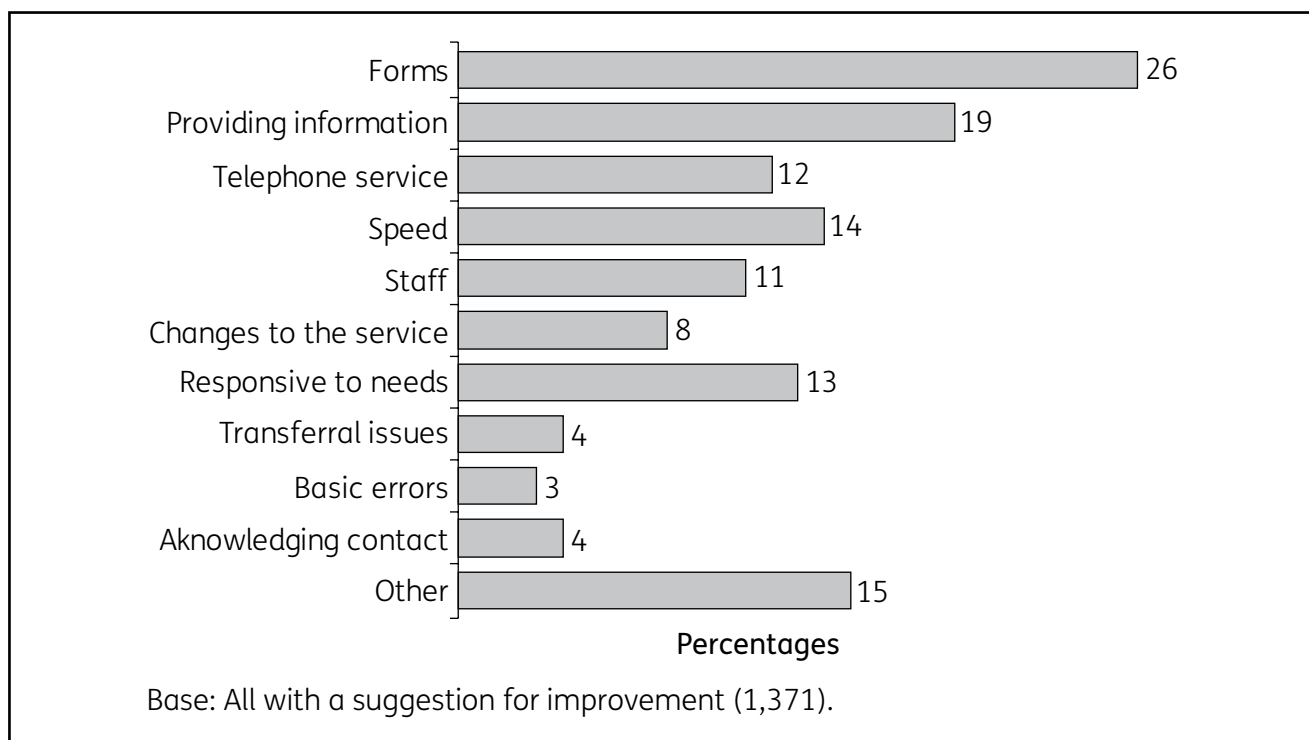
This figure shows customers' responses banded together, the following sections detail the answers that have been grouped together to form this top level analysis.

Forms

Forms were the number one source of suggestions for improvements for DCS customers (26 per cent). Customers who had been applying for DLA were the most likely to say this (31 per cent), although it was also mentioned by significant numbers of those claiming AA (26 per cent) and CA (24 per cent). As well as benefit type, there were also differences by age and gender. Women were significantly more likely to spontaneously mention problems with the forms as the main thing the DCS should improve (30 per cent compared with 20 per cent). Customers who were aged over 65 were significantly less likely to say there is a problem with the forms than those aged 65 or under (14 per cent compared with 29 per cent).

There were three individual elements that fed in to the category for forms. These were – 'Make the forms simpler' (21 per cent), 'Reduce the repetition of the forms/questions' (six per cent) and 'Provide help with filling in the forms'. Verbatim quotes from customers illustrating these concerns are included below.

> *'The forms that are sent out to you could be much more simple. They are very complicated.'*

> *'The forms could be minimised, there are a lot of questions which keep repeating themselves which are not necessary.'*

> *'The wording on the forms. A few of the questions on the questionnaire are ambiguous, just to use clear English.'*

'Sometimes people can find form filling very intimidating, they should make it clear that help is available to help people fill in forms.'

Providing information

The quality of the information that DCS provides to its customers was mentioned by around one in five (19 per cent) of those respondents who had a suggestion for improvement. Older customers and those claiming CA were the most likely to say that the quality of information provided needed to be improved. A quarter of customers aged over 65 who made a suggestion for improvements identified information (26 per cent) compared to around one in six of those aged under 65 (17 per cent). A similar proportion of customers claiming CA also mentioned the quality of the information provided (26 per cent) and this was significantly higher than for those contacting for other enquiries (18 per cent).

The main elements that customers mentioned in relation to information were:

• Provide simpler information that is easy to understand (eight per cent);

• Make sure people know what they are entitled to (four per cent);

• Better advertisement of services provided (three per cent);

• Improve website/make more use of technology (two per cent); and

• Contact people more/be more proactive (two per cent).

In addition to this, customers also mentioned 'Better communication in letters' (two per cent) and 'Notify of changes to benefit or eligibility' (one per cent). Verbatim quotes from customers for these issues are included below:

'By providing more information in detail so people can understand.'

'The internet side of things could be improved it is very hard to find the information you want. The links are very poor on the internet.'

'There must be more people out there who don't know what they are entitled to, so they could be more informative.'

4.5.5   Best thing about the service

The main top level areas of strength identified by DCS customers are shown in Figure 4.8. A further breakdown of the individual components for each of these categories is provided in the subsequent sections.

Figure 4.8 Best thing – DCS

Base: All with a positive comment (2,298).
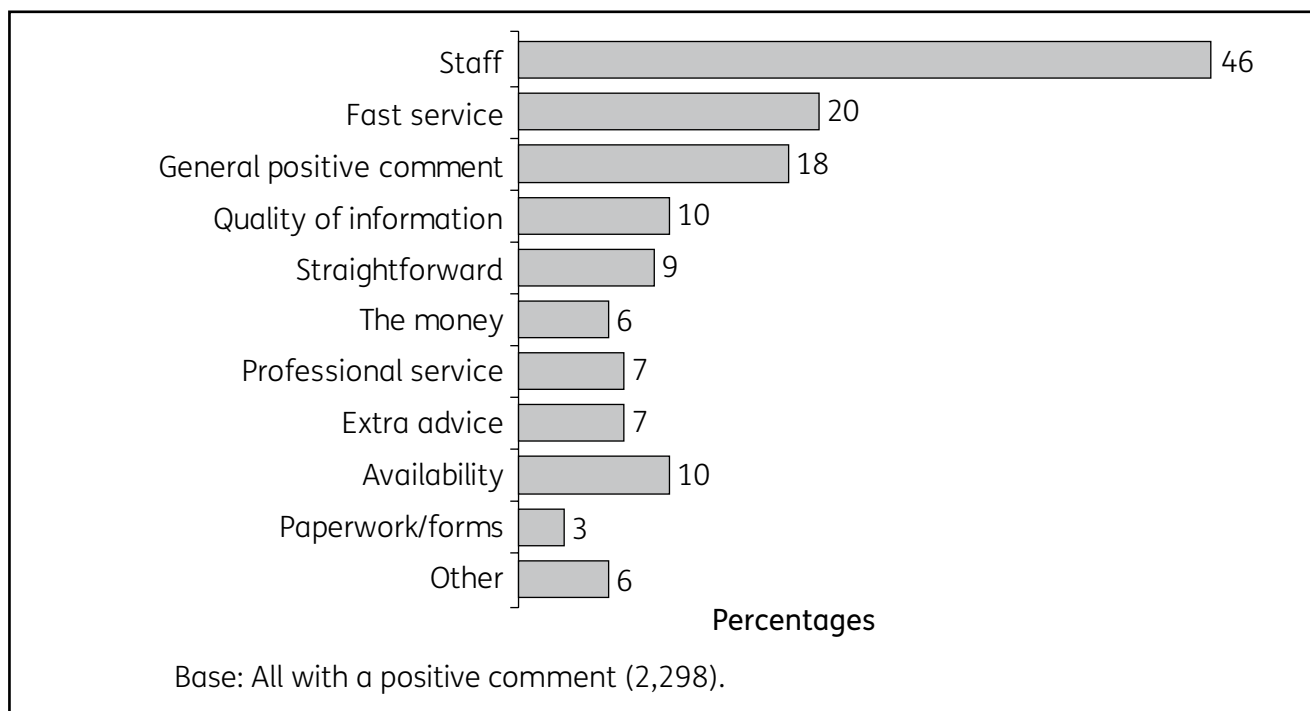
Staff

The quality of the people was mentioned by the largest proportion of DCS customers who provided a positive comment (46 per cent). In fact, there were more than twice as many people mentioning the staff as mentioning any other area. Women were slightly more likely than men to identify the staff as being the best thing about the service (48 per cent compared with 43 per cent), but there were no other significant differences and the staff was the number one area of strength across all customer groups.

The points that respondents brought out in relation to staff were – 'Being helpful' (24 per cent), 'Politeness' (ten per cent), 'Staff were sympathetic/sensitive' (eight per cent), 'Staff were friendly and easy to talk to' (six per cent), 'Staff listen to your queries and answer questions' (five per cent) and 'Staff were knowledgeable' (five per cent). A smaller number of customers also mentioned that the staff showed them respect and some made reference to individuals within the service. Examples of some of the things that respondents were saying in relation to staff are included below.

> *'All the people that I have spoken to have been helpful, I am just glad that they are there to help me.'*

> *'People listen to you and understand what you're saying.'*

> *'The politeness when dealing with them.'*

> *'The staff are very friendly and helpful. They do not rush you off the phone at all.'*

Fast service

One in five customers (20 per cent) said that the best thing about the DCS was the speed of service and that their enquiries were dealt with promptly. This was the area with the second highest proportion of customers referencing it. There were no significant variations with the speed of the service being mentioned by around one in five respondents in all customers groups and for all enquiry type. Verbatim quotes relating the speed of the service are included below.

'I like how quick and direct they are. I like how they get things done quickly.'

'The speediness to help, in general they have been excellent.'

'The application was dealt with quickly and I didn't have to chase them up.'

5   Understanding the key drivers of satisfaction

Throughout this report a multitude of factors and service elements are reported as having significant effects on satisfaction with Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS). In order to better understand what factors had the most impact on satisfaction with PDCS and to disentangle the effects of various service elements, four logistic regression models were created; two for each agency.

The first section in this chapter explains the different factors that arose from these models as key drivers of disappointment and satisfaction.

The second section in this chapter combines these two models to create a Kano model, which categorises the different factors according to how they drive satisfaction.

5.1   The Kano model of satisfaction

Logistic regression is a widely used and well established technique for advanced statistical analysis, which comprehensively searches to identify relationships within the data. It works by examining the relationships between 'dependent variables' (key issues such as customer satisfaction) and 'independent variables' (factors that might influence the dependent variable, such as number of contacts made or the length of time it took to resolve an enquiry).

The first model looked at drivers of 'disappointment' with the service. 'Disappointed' customers were defined as those that were dissatisfied with the agency or the performance of the service was below their expectations (see Section 2.5, 3.5 and 4.5 for details). The second model looked at those customers who were very satisfied with the service.

5.1.1   The Pension Service

The factors discussed in Chapter 3 and throughout the report were entered into a logistic regression model to see which continued to have a significant effect on dissatisfaction, while controlling for all other variables. Although the factors discussed in Chapter 3 and elsewhere in the report seem to have an effect on satisfaction when looking at each factor individually, it could be the case that other factors not accounted for are having larger influence. The logistic regression model allows us to really determine what the underlying reasons for dissatisfaction/disappointment are.

Drivers of disappointment

The following variables were all found to have a significant impact on dissatisfaction, even when controlling for other factors:

• whether the customer felt the enquiry took longer than expected;

• how well the customer felt any decisions were explained by The Pension Service (TPS);

• whether the customer agreed that TPS provided the customer with correct information;

• whether the customer agreed that TPS did what it said it would;

• whether the customer agreed that TPS were sympathetic to their needs;

• whether the customer had any problems or difficulties when dealing with TPS;

- how easy the customer found it to get in contact with TPS;

- whether the customer found the enquiry complex;

- whether the customer agreed that TPS staff were helpful;

- whether the customer agreed that TPS staff were polite and treated them with respect.

Of all the factors examined, whether or not the customer felt that their enquiry took longer than expected was the most strongly related to overall satisfaction by some margin. Customers whose enquiry took longer than expected were nearly seven times more likely to be disappointed than those whose enquiry took less time than expected or as long as expected.

Customers who felt that TPS did not do what they said they would were also much more likely to be disappointed than those who felt they did do what they said they would (in fact three times more likely).

Customers who reported that any decision required was badly explained were also three times more likely to be disappointed than those that received a well explained decision. Customers who reported that they had a problem in the last six months were nearly three times more likely to be disappointed than those that did not have any problems.

Customers who found TPS difficult to contact were more than two and a half times more likely to be disappointed, as were those that felt the staff were not respectful or polite. Customers who felt that TPS had not provided them with correct information were just over twice as likely to be disappointed, as were those that felt the staff were not sympathetic to their needs.

Whether the customer found their enquiry complicated and whether they found the staff helpful both had a smaller explanatory factor in the level of disappointment. Customers who found the enquiry complicated and those that found staff unhelpful were around twice as likely to be disappointed.

Drivers of satisfaction

The second model looks at factors that were driving customers to be **very** satisfied. The usefulness of the approach of looking at drivers for both ends of the scale (very satisfied and disappointment) will become evident in the creation of the Kano model (see Section 5.2).

The following factors did have a significant effect on the likelihood of a customer being **very** satisfied with TPS:

- whether the customer felt the enquiry took less time than expected;

- whether the customer felt that TPS gave them enough time to explain their situation on the telephone;

- whether the customer agreed that TPS did what it said it would;

- whether the customer agreed that TPS gave them clear timings for what they would do;

- whether the customer had any problems or difficulties when dealing with TPS;

- how easy the customer found it to get in contact with TPS;

- whether the customer found the enquiry complex;

- whether the customer agreed that TPS staff were knowledgeable;

- whether the customer was kept up-to-date with the progress of their enquiry;

- the total number of times the customer contacted TPS about their most recent enquiry;

- whether they received a reply to any forms sent.

Many of the factors were weaker at explaining satisfaction than disappointment, and in particular those that were very satisfied. The strongest two factors were customers being given enough time to explain their situation on the telephone and whether they felt that their enquiry was complicated or not. Both customers who felt their enquiry was not complicated and those that felt they were given enough time on the telephone were nearly three times more likely to be very satisfied.

Whether or not the customer felt that staff were knowledgeable had reasonable explanatory power on the likelihood of being very satisfied with the service. Customers who felt that the staff were knowledgeable were two and a half times more likely to be very satisfied than those who felt the staff were not knowledgeable. Similarly, those that didn't have a problem with their enquiry were two and a half times more likely to be very satisfied than those that did have a problem, as were those whose enquiry was shorter than expected compared with those who enquiry was longer than expected.

Customers who found it easy to get in contact with TPS were just over twice more likely to be very satisfied than those that found it difficult. Whether the customer felt that TPS did what it said it would also increased the likelihood of being very satisfied. Customers who felt TPS did do what it said it would were also twice more likely to be very satisfied.

Customers who were given progress updates were again twice as likely to be very satisfied as those that were not given progress updates. Even those that felt they did not need progress updates were 60 per cent more likely to be very satisfied than those that felt progress updates were applicable but did not receive them.

There were a number of other factors that had a lesser, but still statistically significant, effect on customers being very satisfied. Customers who felt they were given clear timings were 80 per cent more likely to be very satisfied, while customers who received a reply to forms they sent were 60 per cent more likely to be very satisfied. Customers who felt they were provided with correct information were 50 per cent more likely to be very satisfied than those that were not provided with correct information, and customers who only needed one or two contacts in total for their enquiry were 30 per cent more likely to be satisfied than those that needed at least three contacts.

5.1.2   The Disability and Carers Service

The same two models were set up for the Disability and Carers Service (DCS); one examining drivers of disappointment and another examining the factors driving customers to be very satisfied. As well as similarities between the factors appearing in the models for both services there are also a number of differences, and these will be highlighted throughout the section and in the Kano model.

Drivers of disappointment

The following factors had a significant effect on the likelihood of a customer being disappointed with the DCS:

- whether the customer felt the enquiry took longer than expected;

- how well the customer felt any decisions were explained by the DCS;

- whether the customer agreed that the DCS provided the customer with correct information;

- whether the customer agreed that the DCS did what it said it would;

- whether the customer agreed that the DCS were sympathetic to their needs;

- whether the customer had any problems or difficulties when dealing with the DCS;

- whether the customer was kept up-to-date with the progress of their enquiry;

- whether the customer found the enquiry complex;

- whether the customer felt that the DCS staff gave them enough time on the telephone to explain their situation;

- whether the customer agreed that the DCS staff were polite and treated them with respect;

- how quickly the DCS replied to letters.

How well any decisions were explained had a large effect on customers' level of disappointment. Customers who reported that any decision was badly explained were nearly four times more likely to be disappointed than those that had a well explained decision.

Whether or not the customer felt that the DCS were sympathetic to their needs also had a great deal of explanatory power in determining whether the customer was disappointed. Customers who felt that the DCS were not sympathetic to their needs were over three and a half times more likely to be disappointed.

Customers who reported that they had a problem in the last six months were nearly three and a half times more likely to be disappointed, while customers who reported that the DCS did not do what they said they would were around three times more likely to be disappointed.

Customers whose enquiry took longer than expected were also around three times more likely to be disappointed than those whose enquiry took as long as expected or was quicker than expected. Customers who found the enquiry complicated were over two and a half times more likely to be disappointed as were those that were not given progress updates or those that felt they were not given enough time on the telephone.

Not being provided with correct information resulted in customers being twice as likely to be disappointed compared with those customers who felt they were provided with correct information. Customers who had to wait more than two weeks for a reply to letters were twice as likely to be disappointed, as were those that felt the staff were not respectful or polite.

Drivers of satisfaction

The final model looked at factors that did have a significant effect on the likelihood of a customer being **very** satisfied with the DCS. These were:

- whether the customer felt the enquiry took less time than expected;

- whether the customer agreed that the DCS did what it said it would;

- whether the customer had any problems or difficulties when dealing with the DCS;

- how easy the customer found it to get in contact with the DCS;

- whether the customer found the enquiry complex;

- whether the customer agreed that the DCS staff were knowledgeable;

- whether the customer was kept up-to-date with the progress of their enquiry;

- the total number of times the customer contacted the DCS about their most recent enquiry;

- whether the customer agreed that the DCS were sympathetic to their needs;

- how well the customer felt any decisions were explained by the DCS;

- whether the customer felt that the staff listened to what they had to say;

- whether the first person they spoke to was able to answer their query;

- how much information customers had to repeat when transferred.

As with the very satisfied model for TPS, in the DCS satisfaction model many factors are not as influential as in the disappointed model.

However, customers who felt that the staff listened to what they had to say and customers whose enquiry could be answered by the first person they spoke to were over two and a half times more likely to be very satisfied.

Customers who were given progress updates, customers who did not feel their enquiry was complicated and customers whose enquiry took less time than expected were all nearly two and a half times more likely to be very satisfied.

Customers who did not have any problems in the last six months were just over twice as likely to be very satisfied as those who did have problems. The DCS doing what it said it would resulted in customers being twice as likely to be very satisfied.

When staff were sympathetic to customers needs the likelihood of being very satisfied also doubled. Customers who found the DCS easy to contact were also twice as likely to be very satisfied.

Customers were twice as likely to be very satisfied when they only had to repeat a little information, compared with customers who had to repeat a lot of information.

5.2   The Kano model

The Kano model was developed in the 1980's by Professor Noriaki Kano, as a way of categorising factors or elements of a service that effect customer satisfaction. One way of interpreting the drivers from the logistic regression in the previous section is to put them into the Kano model framework, but firstly a short explanation of how the Kano model works. The Kano model essentially splits the drivers into three distinct groups, the:

- 'must-be' or 'hygiene' factors;

- 'performance' factors; and

- 'attractive' factors.

Must-be factors are those that are crucial to deliver or customers will be dissatisfied, but delivering them, or doing them well, will not increase satisfaction beyond a basic point. This is captured by the red line in Figure 5.1.

Performance factors are those that when delivered well increase satisfaction, and when delivered badly decrease satisfaction. These factors follow a pattern similar to the blue line in Figure 5.1.

Attractive factors are those that customers do not necessarily expect, (so not having them wouldn't lead to dissatisfaction), but when they are done/done well, they do increase customer satisfaction. This is represented by the green line in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 The Kano model
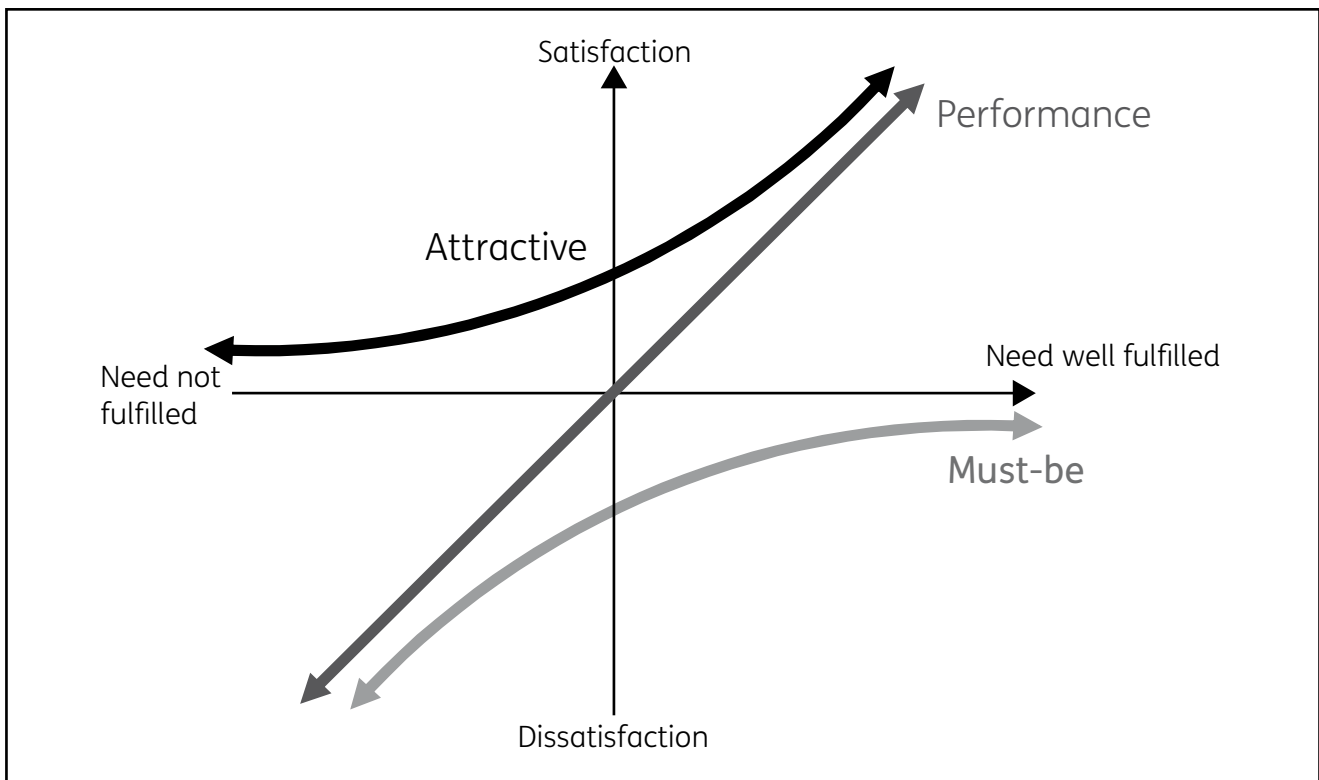
An example can be used to make the model clearer. If you are going on a beach holiday in Greece, when you turn up at your hotel you would expect to have clean linen. If your linen was not clean you would probably be dissatisfied, but having clean linen is not something that would make you more satisfied. As such for a hotel, having clean linen would be a 'must-be' factor.

If however, when you arrived you were given a free room upgrade, this would certainly increase satisfaction, but had you not been given a free room upgrade would not make you dissatisfied. As such, this factor could be considered an 'attractive' factor.

Lastly, distance from the beach is a likely performance factor. Many people will want to be as close to the beach as possible so being further from the beach decreases satisfaction, while being closer increases satisfaction, so the effect on satisfaction can move in both directions.

The Kano model can be applied to TPS and the DCS by using the two logistic regression models described above in Section 5.1. Must-be factors are established by looking at factors that enter the disappoint model, but not the very satisfied model, as these are drivers of disappointment, but not satisfaction.

Attractive factors are the opposite; those that enter the very satisfied model, but not the disappoint model. In this case, these will be factors that drive satisfaction but not disappointment. Finally, factors that fall into both models will make up the performance factors as they drive both satisfaction and disappointment. As such all the factors from the logistic regression models can be placed into one of the three groupings.

5.2.1   The Pension Service

Firstly, looking at TPS:

Figure 5.2   TPS Kano model – Must-be elements
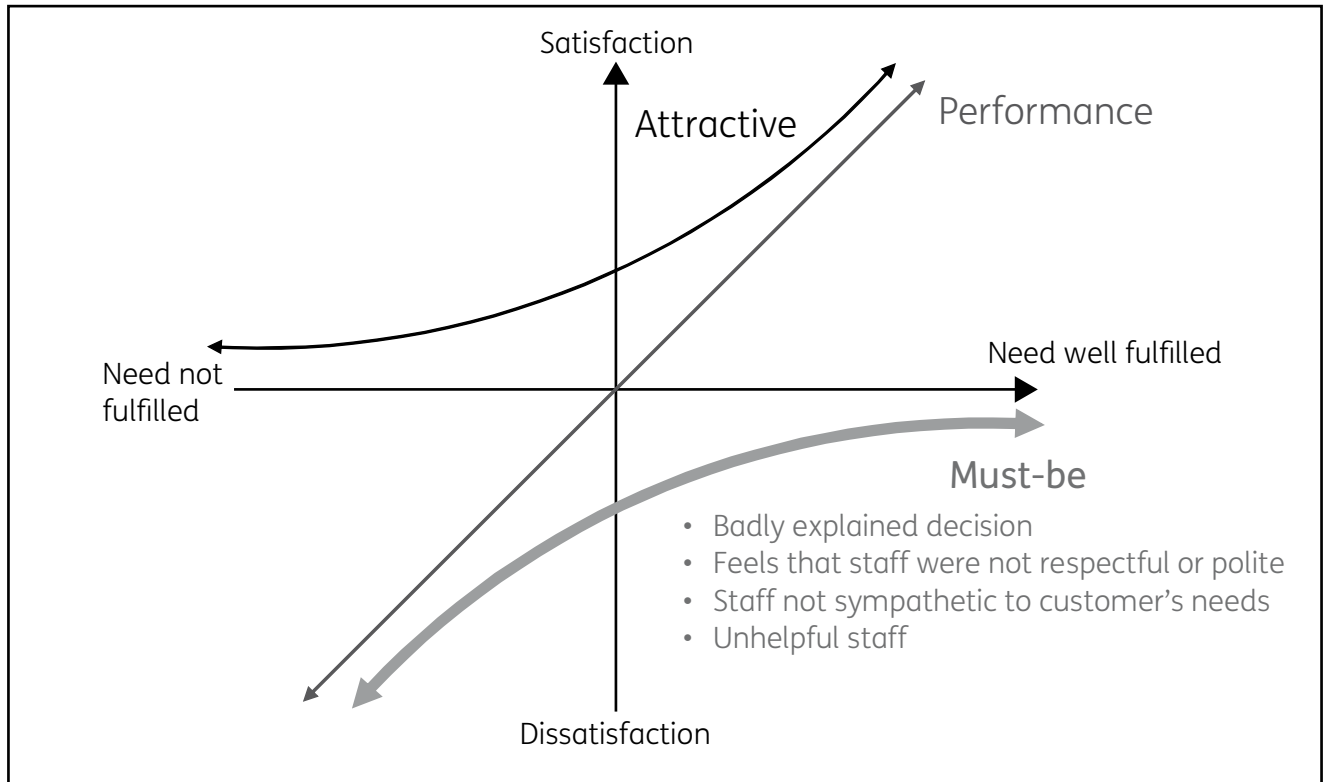
There were four must-be factors for TPS; badly explained decisions, staff not being respectful and polite, staff not being sympathetic to the customer's needs and unhelpful staff. These are factors that might be taken for granted when fulfilled, but if TPS performs badly in any of these factors will result in dissatisfied customers.

Figure 5.3 TPS Kano model – Performance elements
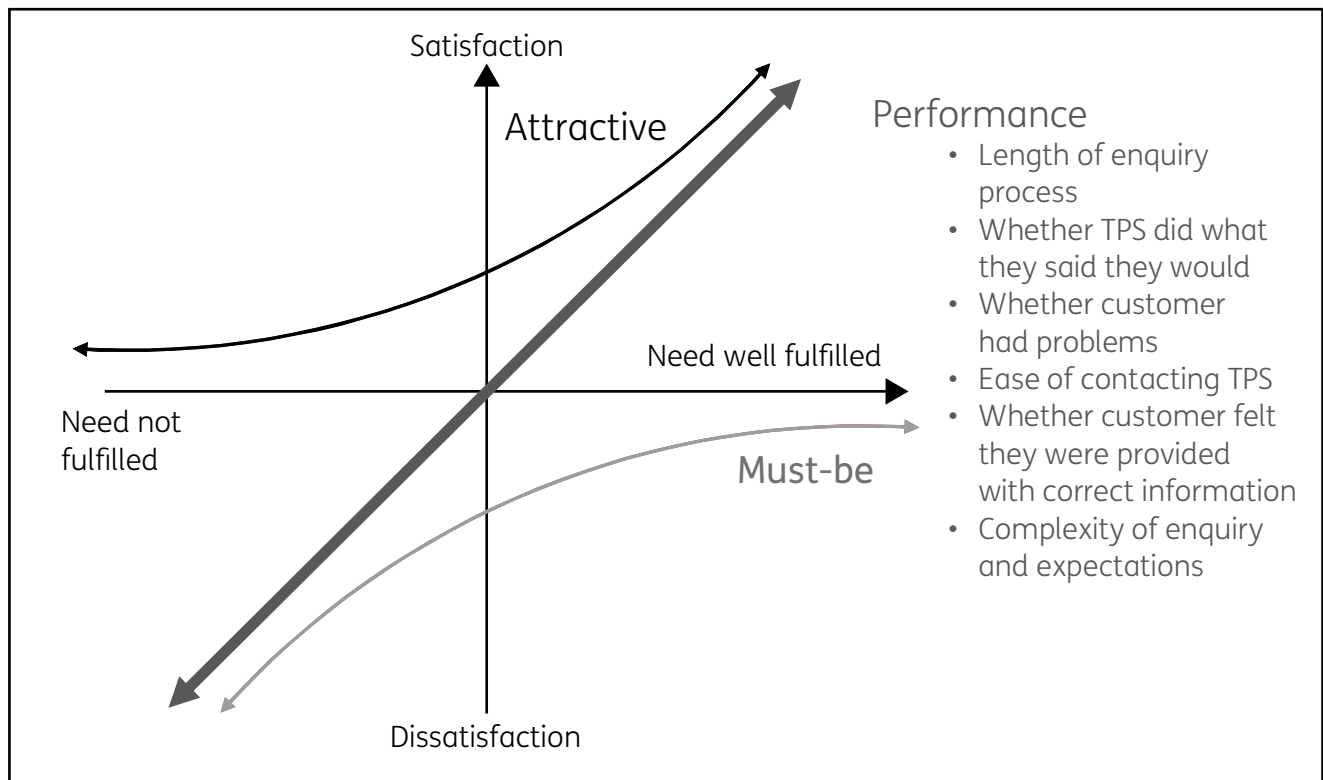
The length of enquiry process was a strong driver of both satisfaction and disappointment, and as such was the 'strongest' performance factor. Similarly how easy TPS were to contact and how complicated the enquiry was also drove satisfaction and disappointment.

The three remaining performance factors were whether TPS did what they said they would, whether the customer had any problems in the last six months, and whether they felt that they were provided with correct information. These are perhaps slightly surprising to find as performance factors as it may be expected that they would be must-be factors (as basic things that must be fulfilled). However, this could be an indication that customers are expecting problems, or that TPS would not do what it said it would.

Figure 5.4   TPS Kano model – Attractive elements

Attractive
- Being given enough time on the telephone
- Knowledgeable staff
- Given progress updates
- Given clear timings
- Receiving a reply to a sent form
- Only requiring one or two contacts in total for enquiry

Satisfaction

Performance

Need not fulfilled

Need well fulfilled

Must-be

Dissatisfaction
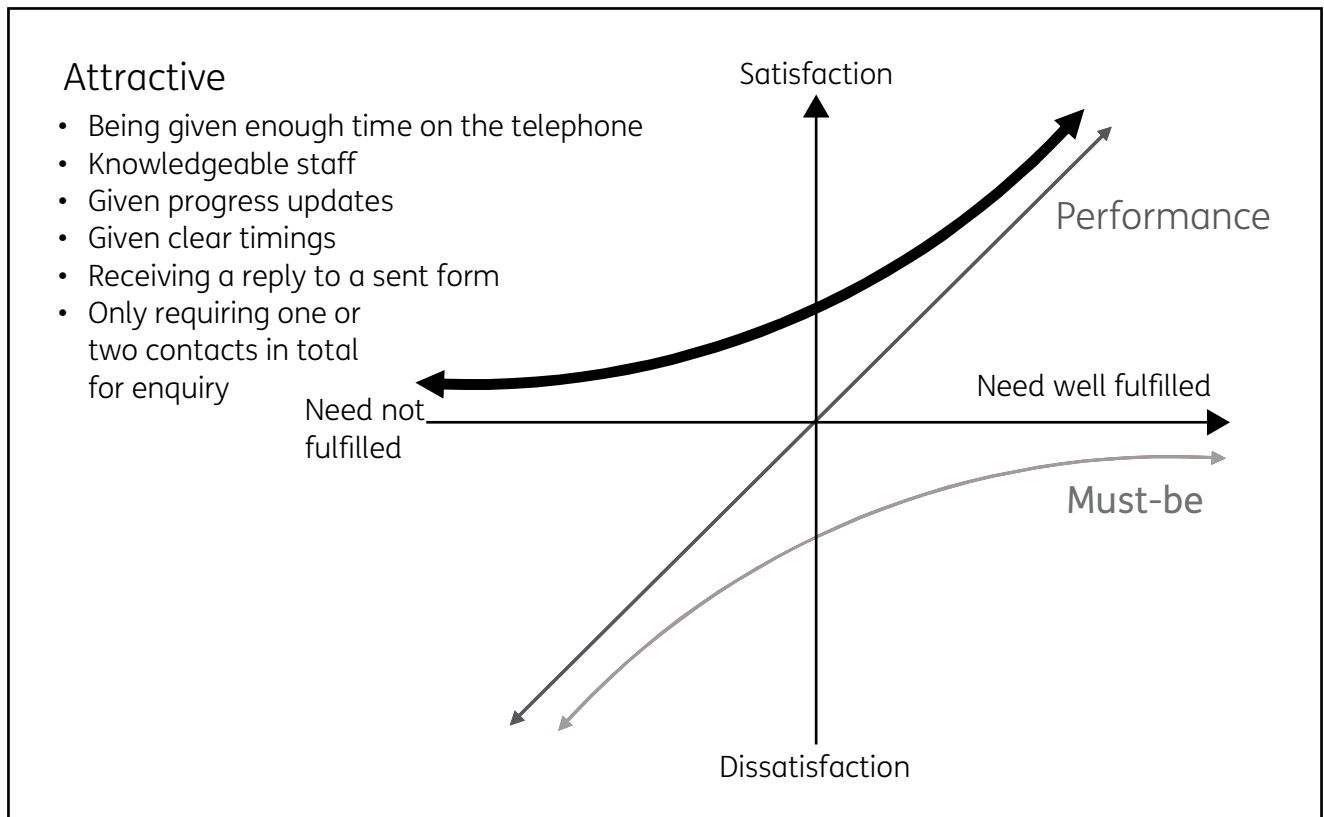
The attractive factors for TPS were being given enough time on the telephone, having knowledgeable staff, being given progress updates and clear timings and only requiring one or two contacts in total for their enquiry. These are all factors that do not lead to dissatisfaction when done badly, but do increase satisfaction when done well, and can be viewed as an extra bonus.

5.2.2   The Disability and Carers Service

Figure 5.5   DCS Kano model – Must-be elements
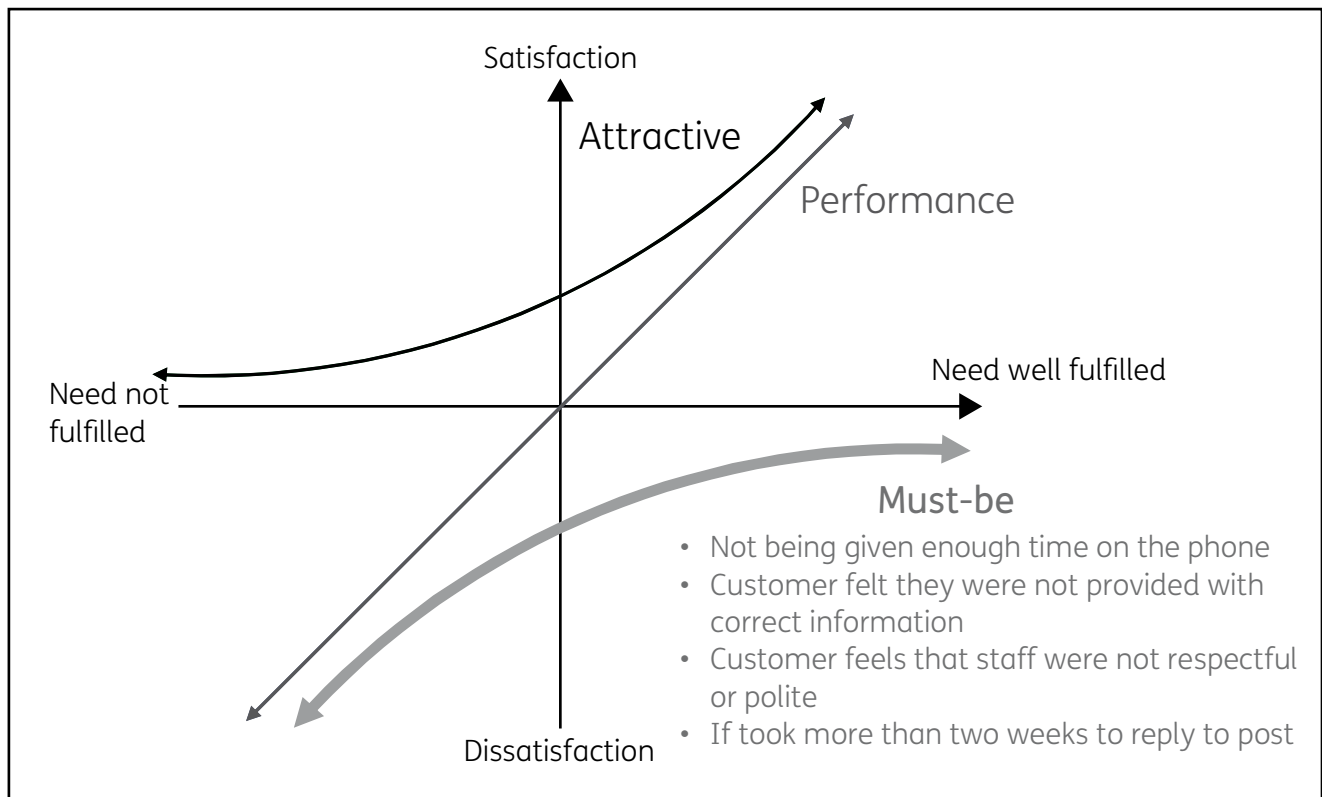
For the DCS, as was the case for TPS, must-be factors revolved around how the customers feel they were treated. Not being given enough time on the telephone was an important must-be factor for the DCS, as was being provided with correct information. Whether the staff were respectful and polite was a common must-be factor among both agencies of PDCS. The final must-be factor for DCS was the length of time it took them to reply to any letters.

Figure 5.6   DCS Kano model – Performance elements
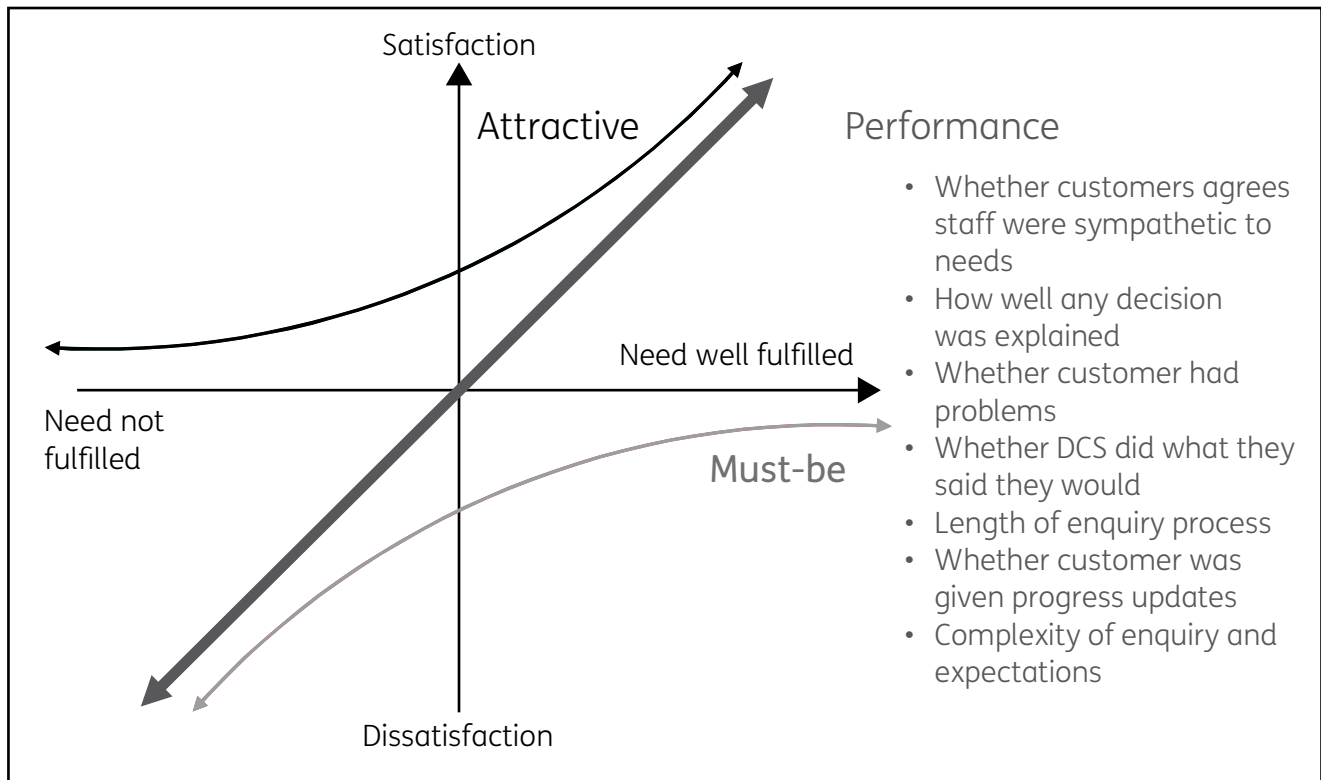
Many of the performance factors for the DCS were similar to those factors identified for TPS. Whether the agency did what it said it would, whether the customer had any problems and the complexity of the enquiry were all performance factors affecting both agencies. The length of the enquiry process was also common to both agencies, but the strength of the factor was far weaker for the DCS than for TPS.

Figure 5.7   DCS Kano model – Attractive elements

Attractive
- If customer felt staff listened to what they had to say
- If first person could answer the query
- Only having to repeat a little information
- Being easy to contact
- If customer felt staff were knowledgeable
- If customer only needed one contact for enquiry (compared with three or more)

Satisfaction

Performance

Need not fulfilled

Need well fulfilled

Must-be

Dissatisfaction
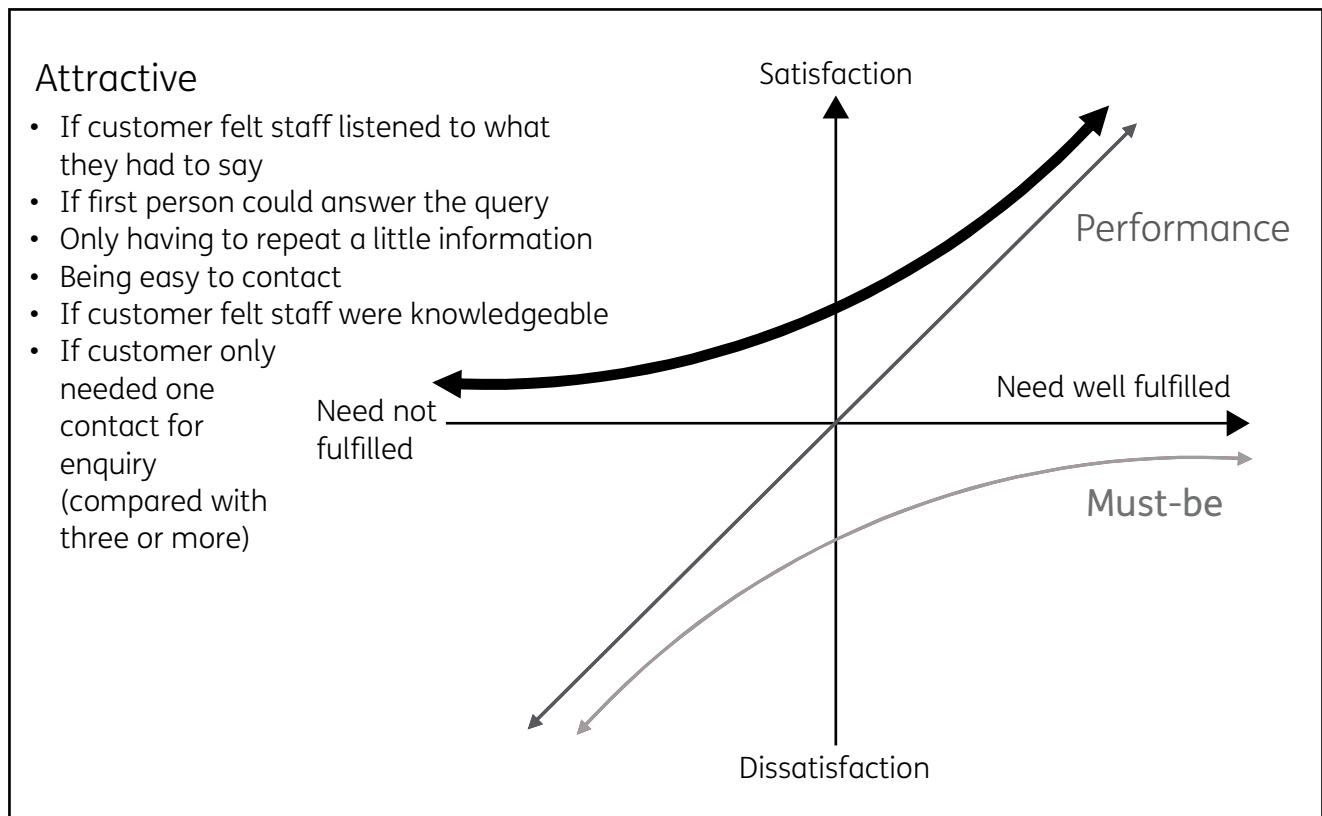
The number of contacts and whether the customer felt staff were knowledgeable were attractive factors for both TPS and the DCS. This may suggest that customers expect to have more than one contact and are not expecting the staff to appear knowledgeable. The strongest attractive factor was whether the customer felt that staff listened to what they had to say. Further attractive factors were if the first person could answer the customer's query, only needed to repeat a little bit of information when being transferred and the ease of contacting the DCS.

5.3   Summary

Throughout this report, various factors are expressed as having an affect on satisfaction. However, by using logistic regression models, key drivers of satisfaction and disappointment can be extracted and through the use of the Kano model framework, these can be categorised according to their influence on the satisfaction scale.

For both agencies of PDCS must-be or hygiene factors revolved around how the customers felt they were treated. These are factors that might be taken for granted when fulfilled, but if PDCS performs badly in any of these factors dissatisfaction will result.

For TPS these comprised, in order of strength:

- badly explained decisions;

- staff not being respectful and polite;

- staff not being sympathetic to the customer's needs; and

- unhelpful staff.

For DCS these comprised:

- not being given enough time on the telephone;
- being provided with correct information;
- staff not being respectful and polite; and
- the length of time it took the service to reply to any letters.

The performance factors affected both satisfaction and disappointment and many of these were common to both agencies:

- the length of the enquiry process;
- whether the agency did what it said it would;
- whether the customer had any problems; and
- the complexity of the enquiry were all performance factors affecting both agencies.

Interestingly, the performance factors including the service doing what they said they would, whether the customer had any problems in the last six months, and whether they felt that they were provided with correct information (the last a specific TPS performance factor,) all could be reasonably expected to fall under must-do factors. This could potentially indicate that customers are expecting problems with the service.

Attractive factors were those that do not lead to dissatisfaction when done badly, but increase satisfaction when done well and hence could be viewed as an extra bonus.

Specifically for the DCS these comprised:

- whether the customer felt that staff listened to what they had to say;
- whether the first person could answer the customer's query;
- only needing to repeat a little bit of information when being transferred; and
- the ease of contacting the service.

The specific factors for TPS were:

- being given enough time on the telephone; and
- being given progress updates and clear timings.

Only requiring one or two contacts in total for their enquiry and having knowledgeable staff was a common factor among both agencies.

6 Customer profile

This chapter looks at the health/disability characteristics, internet access and usage of customers contacting Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS). It also looks at the benefits customers are in receipt of and how PDCS customers who were in receipt of Pension Credit (PC), Attendance Allowance (AA) and Disability Living Allowance (DLA) first heard about the benefits. A series of tables and figures showing the demographic profile of customers contacting PDCS is also included in this section. It is important to bear in mind that the survey is of customers contacting PDCS and therefore may not representative of the whole PDCS customer base.

6.1 Disability and long-term health problems

All customers were asked whether they had any long-term illness, health problem or disability that limited their daily activities or the work they can do. If customers reported that they had, they were then asked what the long-term illness, health problem or disability was. These customers were asked whether their illness or disability had caused them any problems or difficulties when dealing with organisations like PDCS and if so, whether they had required any help from PDCS and whether any help was received.

6.1.1 The Pension Service

Two-fifths (38 per cent) of The Pension Service (TPS) customers stated that they had a long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits their daily activities or the work they do. When asked what their long-term illness or disability was over half (56 per cent) of customers reported they had problems with movement, three in ten (29 per cent) cardio-respiratory problems, 16 per cent problems with well-being, nine per cent fatigue or stamina problems, four per cent sensory problems, three per cent disorders relating to movement and the brain and one per cent communication difficulties.

All customers who reported they had a long-term illness or disability were asked whether this caused them problems when dealing with organisations like TPS. Only thirteen per cent of customers reported their illness or disability did cause them problems when dealing with organisations like TPS. Of the customers who experienced problems when dealing with organisations like TPS; only one-fifth (19 per cent) reported that they required help – of which three-fifths (62 per cent) customers received help directly from TPS. A significant proportion of customers who reported they experienced problems when dealing with organisations like TPS did not report that they required help (80 per cent), these customers are likely to have developed coping strategies to manage their dealings with the organisations like TPS.

In relation to channel of contact, customers who had an illness or disability were more likely to have received a home visit (12 per cent). The customers with an illness or disability who experienced problems or difficulties when dealing with organisations like TPS were even more likely to receive a home visit (20 per cent). An even larger proportion of those customers who had an illness or disability, experienced problems when dealing with organisations like TPS and reported that they required help had received a home visit as part of their most recent enquiry (31 per cent).

Older customers (those aged 75 and over) were significantly more likely to report that they had a long-term illness or disability than younger customers (55 per cent compared with 36 per cent). In relation to gender, male customers were more likely than female customers to report they had an illness or disability (40 per cent compared with 36 per cent). However, female customers were more likely to report that their illness or disability caused them problems when dealing with organisations like TPS (15 per cent compared with ten per cent).

TPS customers who were contacting to claim another benefit were more likely than other enquiry types to report they had an illness or disability (54 per cent) and state that their illness or disability caused them problems when dealing with organisations like TPS (17 per cent). Customers who were contacting to claim Pension Credit were more likely than average to report they had an illness or disability (46 per cent) with 14 per cent reporting that this caused them difficulties when dealing with organisations like TPS.

6.1.2   The Disability and Carers Service

When all Disability and Carers Service (DCS) customers were asked whether they had a long-term illness, health problem or disability which limited their daily activities or the work they can do, seven in ten (72 per cent) customers contacting DCS reported they had. Eighty per cent of customers in receipt of DLA reported they had an illness or disability. The 20 per cent of customers who were in receipt of DLA and yet did not report having an illness or disability were disproportionately women (72 per cent) and nearly all were aged 25-59 years old (80 per cent). The age and gender of these respondents would suggest that they are more likely to be parents and could be contacting on behalf of their children.

Customers were asked what their long-term illness, health problem or disability was. Three-fifths (57 per cent) of customers reported having problems with movement, a quarter (24 per cent) cardio-respiratory problems, 14 per cent problems with well-being, 12 per cent psychological or behavioural problems, eight per cent fatigue or stamina problems, six per cent sensory problems, five per cent disorders relating to movement and the brain and one per cent for both learning difficulties and communication difficulties.

Three in ten (29 per cent) customers with an illness or disability reported that it caused them problems or difficulties when dealing with an organisation like the DCS. Twenty-six per cent of customers who experienced problems or difficulties when dealing with organisations like DCS required help and of these customers two-thirds (68 per cent) received help from DCS. As discussed in Section 6.1.1 for TPS customers, DCS customers are likely to develop coping strategies to deal with any problems or difficulties that arise when dealing with organisations like DCS. Customers who reported having psychological or behavioural problems, disorders relating to movement and the brain and sensory problems were more likely than average to report that it caused them problems when dealing with organisations like DCS (61 per cent, 43 per cent and 34 per cent respectively).

DCS customers were more likely to have received a home visit when they had:

• a long-term illness or disability (ten per cent);

• an illness or disability that caused them problems when dealing with organisations like DCS (42 per cent); and

• required help from DCS (87 per cent).

DCS customers aged 61 and over were more likely than customers aged 60 and under to state that they had a long-term illness or disability (84 per cent compared with 63 per cent). In relation to gender, male customers were more likely than female customers to report they had a long-term illness or disability (80 per cent compared with 67 per cent).

6.2   Internet and email

All customers were asked whether they had access to the internet at home and if so, how often they used the internet. These questions were added to the second quarter of fieldwork so this section only includes aggregated responses given in the second, third and fourth quarter.

Three-fifths of PDCS customers reported that they had access to the internet at home. Interestingly this was the same for both TPS (63 per cent) and DCS (62 per cent) customers. All customers with access to the internet were asked how often they used the internet; the responses are shown in Table 6.1. The response 'never use the internet' was not read out and only coded when spontaneously mentioned by respondents.

Table 6.1   How often use the internet (TPS and DCS)

	TPS %	DCS %
Every day	45	41
Most days	21	23
About once a week	12	12
About once a fortnight	3	3
About once a month	3	3
About once every 2-3 months	1	2
About once every six months	*	1
Less often	1	1
Never use the internet	12	14
Don't know	1	1
Base: All customers with internet access	1,438	1,355

For customers who have access to the internet, usage is actually very frequent for both TPS and DCS customers. The proportion of customers who used the internet at least once a week was high with three-quarters (76 per cent) of TPS customers and four-fifths (79 per cent) of DCS customers reporting that they did so.

The survey found that the proportion of PDCS customers online was relatively high, and those customers with internet access were regular users of the internet. Further information on internet usage and propensity to perform specific tasks online has been added to the second year of the survey and will offer more insight into the scope of developing online channels.

Older customers were less likely to report they had access to the internet, with three in ten (29 per cent) of both TPS and DCS customers aged 75 and over reporting they had internet access at home compared with three-quarters (67 per cent) of TPS customers aged 74 and under and seven in ten (69 per cent) of DCS customers aged 74 and under.

TPS and DCS customers who were widowed were less likely to have access to the internet (44 per cent and 29 per cent respectively). TPS customers who were separated from their partners were also less likely to have access to the internet (42 per cent).

6.3   Signposting

All PDCS customers who reported they were in receipt of PC, AA or DLA were asked how they had first heard about the benefit. Figure 6.1 displays the results.

Figure 6.1 How first heard about DLA, AA and PC

Base: All customers who receive benefit (DLA: 1,437, AA: 429, PC: 1,148).
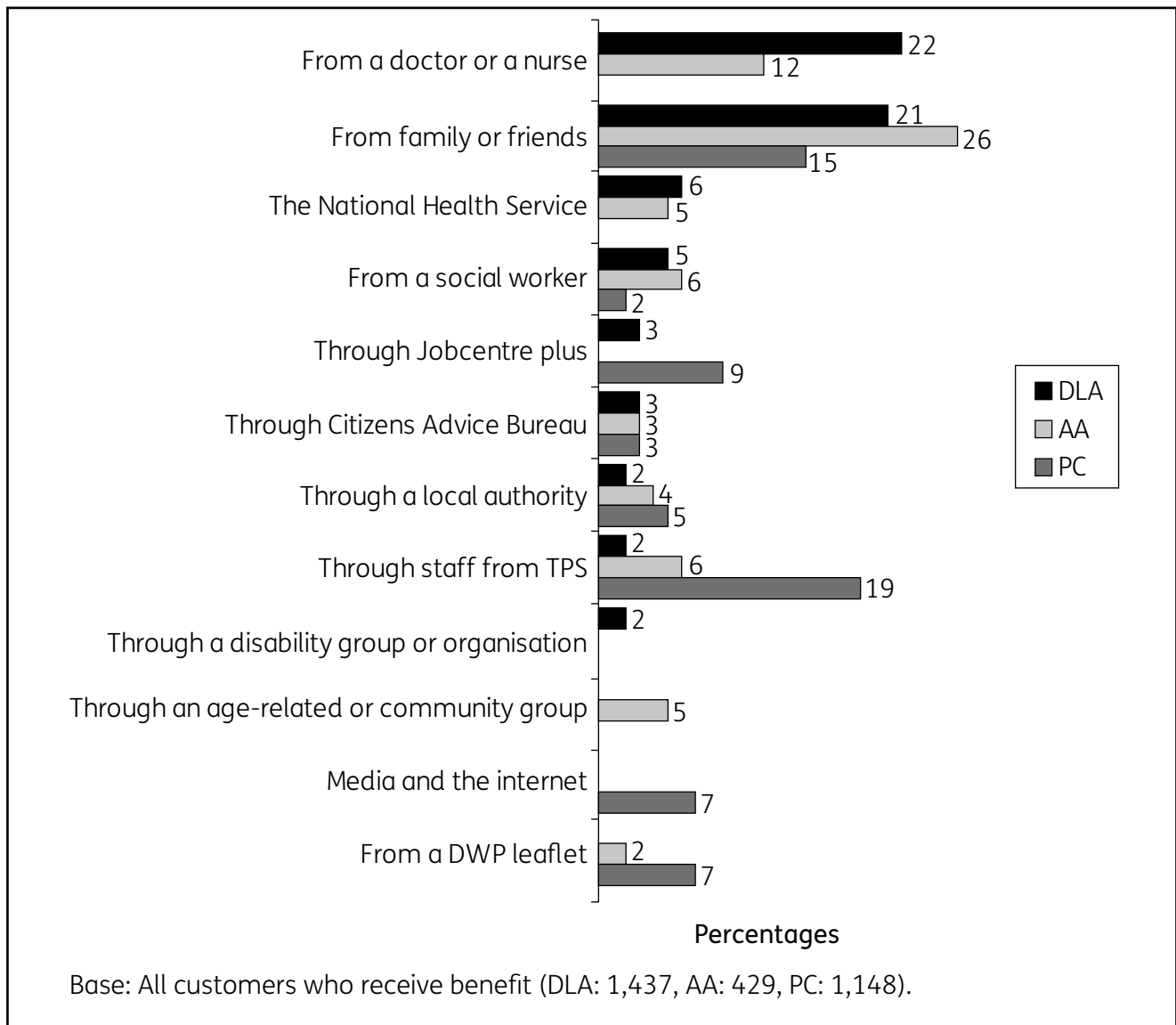
As shown in Figure 6.1, the most common sources for how customers first heard about DLA were from a doctor or a nurse (22 per cent) and from family or friends (21 per cent). For AA from family or friends (26 per cent) and from a doctor or a nurse (12 per cent) and for PC through staff from TPS (19 per cent) and from family or friends (15 per cent).

6.4   Basic demographics

6.4.1   Sex

Table 6.2 displays the sex of customers contacting PDCS.

Table 6.2   Profile of customers sex – PDCS

	TPS %	DCS %
Male	50	40
Female	50	60
Base: All customers	3,071	2,870

6.4.2   Age

Table 6.3 shows the age of customers contacting PDCS.

Table 6.3   Age (TPS and DCS)

	TPS %	DCS %
16-24	6	4
25-44	23	25
45-60	14	27
61-65	23	8
66-74	20	18
Over 75	14	18
Base: All customers	3,071	2,870

6.5   Ethnicity

Table 6.4 shows the ethnicity of TPS and DCS customers

Table 6.4   Ethnicity (TPS and DCS)

	TPS %	DCS %
White	95	92
Asian	2	3
Black	1	2
Mixed	1	1
Other	1	1
Base: All customers	3,071	2,870

Throughout the majority of the report, ethnicity is discussed in terms of 'white' and 'non-white' customers. The low numbers of non-white customers' means in most cases it is not possible to distinguish between the different ethnic minority groups.

6.6   English as a second language

Four per cent of PDCS customers reported that English was not their first language. These customers were asked what their first language was, results are shown in Table 6.5.

Table 6.5   English as a second language (PDCS)

	%
Punjabi	13
Guajarati	10
Welsh	10
French	8
Urdu	6
Arabic	2
Bengali	2
Somali	2
Base – All customers for whom English was not their first language	228

6.7   Marital status

All customers were asked to describe their current marital status. The results for TPS and DCS are shown in Table 6.6.

Table 6.6   Marital status (TPS and DCS)

	TPS %	DCS %
Married, civil partnership or living with long-term partner	63	57
Single or engaged	7	18
Widowed	16	12
Divorced	11	10
Separated	3	3
Refused	1	1
Base: All customers	3,071	2,870

6.8   Current living situation

All customers were asked which of the options shown in Table 6.7 best described their current living situation.

Table 6.7   Current living situation (TPS and DCS)

	TPS %	DCS %
Living in your own home	89	83
Living with family	4	8
Living in sheltered housing	4	4
Living in residential care	*	*
Living in a nursing home	*	*
Don't know	3	4
Refused	1	1
Base: All customers	3,071	2,870

6.9   Working status

All customers were read out the list in Table 6.8 and asked which best described their current employment status.

Table 6.8   Working status (TPS and DCS)

	TPS %	DCS %
Retired	77	43
Employed full-time	8	9
Employed part-time	9	7
Unemployed – waiting to take up a job already obtained	–	*
Unemployed – looking for work	2	3
Unemployed – intending to look for work but temporarily sick/injured	*	6
Permanently unable to work due to long-term sickness/illness	2	17
Self-employed	2	2
Full-time education	–	1
Not looking for work – looking after family/home	2	10
Don't know	*	1
Refused	1	1
Base: All customers	3,071	2,870

Appendix A
Technical report

During the second half of 2009 and first half of 2010 a survey of customers contacting the Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS) was carried out to measure their experience of, attitudes towards and satisfaction with the service. The survey was designed to cover the population of contacts made by people who had first hand contact with PDCS concerning a range of issues to do with their pension-related or disability-related benefits.

The sample

The survey was designed to cover the population of **contacts** made by people with PDCS who:

- had first hand contact with PDCS concerning a range of issues to do with their pension or disability related benefit claim;

- were either the claimant themselves or were people contacting on behalf of the customer including non-professional customer representatives; and

- were either claiming a benefit, had some change of circumstance or had a query.

The population of contacting customers comprised all contacts initiated by customers through any channel, including contacts made in writing (either through a letter or completing a form), by telephone, or by email. All professional customer representatives were excluded from the research (for example Citizens' Advice Bureaux, Solicitors making contact on behalf of a client, Members of Parliament making contact on behalf of a constituent). These parties were excluded because it was felt that they would make contact on behalf of a number of different people and their responses would be an 'average' of all their contact with PDCS, rather than thinking about a specific case.

The sample for each quarter came from operational management information held by PDCS over a three month period where a new claim, renewal or unsuccessful claim was made or there was a change in circumstance recorded on the system.

While PDCS' database could identify new claims, unsuccessful claims and renewals for all benefits, it was more difficult to identify changes of circumstance. This was done by comparing the customer's status at the beginning of the three month sampling period to their status at the end of the three month sampling period. If there were any changes flagged on the system then there was a high probability that the customer (or someone on their behalf) contacted PDCS to report this change of circumstance.

Queries were not directly sampled, as there was no simple way of extracting these customer details. However many customers who had previously been sampled as making a claim or having a change of circumstance may have later had a query. This would then be picked up during the interview when they were asked about their most recent enquiry with PDCS.

Sample selection

An equal proportion of Disability and Carers Service (DCS) and The Pension Service (TPS) sample was selected each quarter to make sure each service could be analysed separately. There was slight disproportionate sampling of Pension Credit (PC) to State Pension (SP); PC was over sampled to make sure there were enough interviews for subgroup analysis. This was then corrected during the weighting.

Within each benefit the sample was stratified by the following variables prior to selection (in the order specified); a '1 in n' selection was then made:

- customer transaction type (i.e. new claim, renewal, change of address, change of bank account, etc); and

- government office region.

Response rates

Fieldwork was conducted in four separate periods across the year. Due to the general election in May 2010 there is a slight gap between the last and penultimate quarters. In total 5,941 interviews were achieved across the four quarters against a target of 6,000 (1,500 per quarter).

Table A.1 gives an overview of the interviews achieved each quarter.

Table A.1   Interviews achieved

Quarter	Fieldwork dates	Total interviews	TPS interviews	DCS interviews
Q1	28 July and 31 August 2009	1,523	792	731
Q2	10 November and 10 December 2009	1,476	763	713
Q3	15 February and 23 March 2010	1,444	761	683
Q4	8 July and 17 August 2010	1,498	757	741

A full breakdown of response is shown in Table A.2 for all quarters combined.

Table A.2   Response details

Main sample issued	17,150
Office opt-out before fieldwork	1,453
Sample issued to telephone unit	15,697
Invalid sample data	5,660
Invalid telephone number (for example incorrect and business numbers)	2,504
Unknown at number	1,006
Ineligible	2,150
Valid sample (in scope of fieldwork)	10,037
Refusals (including proxy refusals)	2,332
Abandoned interview	231
Unavailable during fieldwork	378
Respondent long-term ill/incapable of interview	555
10+ unsuccessful calls/no contact	600
Interview	5,941
Fieldwork response rate	59%
Overall response rate	35%

The **Fieldwork response rate (59 per cent)** is calculated based on the productivity of valid and eligible sample. The definition of eligibility excludes:

- respondents who opted out;

- respondents who died;

- invalid or incorrect telephone numbers;

- unknown at number; and

- customers who denied contacting PDCS.

The **Overall response rate (33 per cent)** calculates the response rate as being the number of interviews by the number of cases issued.

Weighting

Weights were applied to match the survey back to the population targets, taking into account the over-sampling of PC and any non-response bias. Weights adjusted for gender, Government Office Region (GOR), benefit, and additionally for TPS only, age.

Weights for DCS and TPS were calculated independently, matching back to their own populations. The overall PDCS weight was calculated by weighting each organisation back to the proportion each agency accounted for of the total volume of contacts according to management information (MI) held by PDCS.

Weights were created for each quarter separately to allow for independent reporting, but to create an overall annual weight each quarter was weighted back to the proportion of contacts according to records from the MI data for that quarter of the year.

Questionnaire design

As part of the questionnaire development, face-to-face cognitive interviewing was carried out. Cognitive interviewing techniques seek to test respondents' understanding and interpretation of question wording and identify any items that might be misunderstood or misinterpreted. Following the cognitive interviewing exercise, a number of questions were updated. The questionnaire included the following topics:

• reason for contact with PDCS;

• methods used to contact and preferred method;

• internet and email usage;

• specific elements of the interaction with PDCS (in particular by telephone and postal);

• whether the customer sent documents, valuables and forms;

• complaints;

• overall measures of satisfaction, improvements and the best thing about the service; and

• demographics.

Fieldwork and data processing

All respondents were sent an advance letter on Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) headed paper before the start of fieldwork. This letter explained the purpose of the study, reasons for their inclusion in the research sample and the form the survey would take. These letters included a freepost address and freephone number for respondents to call if they did not wish to be contacted or if they required help or further information about the study. Contact details of everyone who opted out of the research were removed from the sample to be called.

Interviews were carried out using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). However postal questionnaires were sent out to respondents who were unable to complete a telephone interview. Respondents who did not speak English were also offered an option to complete an interview in another language.

Appendix B
Fieldwork documents

Advance letter

DWP Department for Work and Pensions

bmrb

<Title><Name><Surname>

<Address 1>   DATE

<Address 2>   Reference No: <ID>

<Address 3>

<Address 4>

<Postcode>

Dear <Title><Name><Surname>

I am writing to ask for your help. The Department for Work and Pensions has asked BMRB, an independent company, to carry out research among our customers to find out what they think of our service. For example, we'd like to know if you found it easy or difficult to contact us, and whether we treated you in a friendly and polite way. We will use the results to help us provide a high-quality service that meets our customers' needs.

How did we get your name?

You recently contacted us about the State Pension, Pension Credit or disability-related benefits. Your name has been randomly selected from a record of the people who contacted us around the same time.

What will happen next?

BMRB will be doing the interviews by phone over the next few weeks. If they contact you, we hope you will be able to spare 15 minutes to take part.

Everything you tell BMRB will be in complete confidence. BMRB will not pass any information that could identify you to the Department for Work and Pensions or anyone else unless you give your permission at the end of the survey.

I do hope you will feel able to take part in this important research. However, if you do not want to take part or would have difficulty completing the interview over the phone, either:

• telephone BMRB on freephone 0800 051 0886 (freephone textphone 18001 0800 051 0886) Monday to Friday 9am–5pm, or

• write to BMRB to tell them that you do not want to take part, or that completing the interview over the phone would cause you too much difficulty. Please include your name, postcode and reference number, which is on the top right-hand corner of this letter. Please write to **Sonia Peyron, Freepost RLTY-JCKX-BCLR, BMRB, Ealing Gateway, 26–30 Uxbridge Road, London W5 2BP.**

Your details will then be taken off the list of people that BMRB may contact.

Whatever you decide, please be assured that taking part is completely voluntary and will not affect any benefit you receive, any claims you are making or any dealings you have with the Department for Work and Pensions, The Pension Service, the Disability and Carers Service or any other government department or agency in the future.

What to do if you want to know more

If you have questions or want to discuss this research, please contact me, Mark Lambert, on 01253 332173, or ask the interviewer if they contact you.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Yours sincerely

Mark Lambert

Pension, Disability and Carers Service

The Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS) Customer Satisfaction Monitor was commissioned to regularly monitor the satisfaction of PDCS customers with the service it provides, provide real time feedback of the customer experience and ensure that the customer voice could be heard when it comes to operational and policy planning. It was conducted by TNS-BNRB on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions.

This report presents the findings of the Annual Report for 2009/10.

The fieldwork took place in four separate waves:

- 28 July 2009 and 31 August 2009.
- 10 November 2009 and 10 December 2009.
- 15 February 2010 and 23 March 2010.
- 8 July 2010 and 17 August 2010.

In total, 5,941 PDCS interviews were achieved.

If you would like to know more about DWP research, please contact:
Kate Callow, Commercial Support and Knowledge Management Team,
Upper Ground Floor, Steel City House, West Street, Sheffield, S1 2GQ.
http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rrs-index.asp