

# South Grants Office

## Customer Survey

June 2015

Northern Ireland  
**Housing** Executive

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **i. Background to the Survey**

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

The aims of the survey were:

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

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

### **ii. Research Methodology and Sample**

It was agreed that the sample frame should include grant applicants in the South Grants Office catchment area whose application had been completed within a 12 month period, i.e. between May 2014 and April 2015. This was agreed as an appropriate cut-off point, bearing in mind resource constraints and the length of time grants customers could be expected to remember details of the application process. The Housing Executive's computerised Grants Management System and Private Sector Management System identified a total of 178 grant applicants, whose contact details were available, to be included in the sample frame for the survey.

The agreed methodology was a telephone survey. The sample frame included applicants who had received Disabled Facilities Grant, Renovation Grant and Home Repair Grant. However, with reduced availability of funding, discretionary grants for renovation and home repair assistance are only available in exceptional circumstances and mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants therefore accounted for the majority (87%) of the overall sample.

### **iii. The Questionnaire**

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

**iv. Fieldwork**

Research Unit staff carried out the interviews by telephone in May and June 2015. All 178 grant applicants whose application had been completed during the 12 months from May 2014 to April 2015 were included in the survey. Response rate information is in Table A.

**Table A: Sample and response information**

<b>Grant Type</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Achieved Interviews</b>
	Number	Number
Disabled Facilities	155	76
Renovation	18	4
Home Repair	5	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>83</b>

**v. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

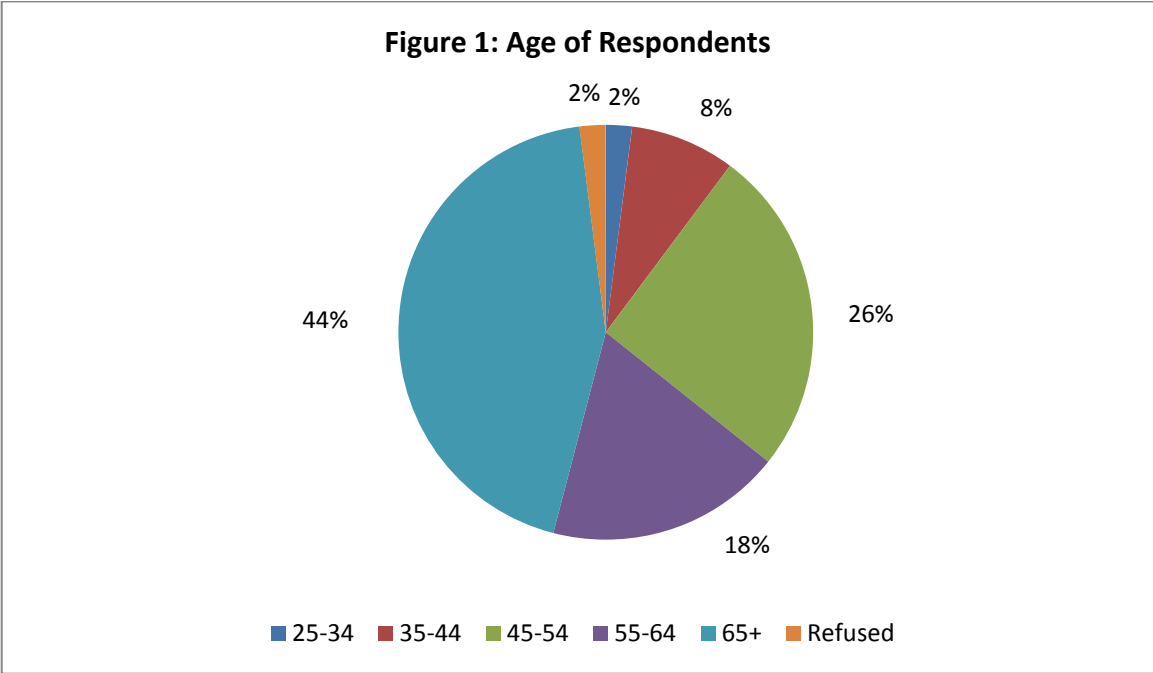
The number of respondents to any piece of quantitative research has an impact on the way information is presented in the analysis. It is standard practice, in the case of a survey achieving between 50 and 100 interviews, for both numbers and percentages to be quoted in the textual analysis and where the sub-sample size is less than 50 for numbers only to be quoted in the analysis. It is also standard practice where findings have a numeric value of less than five and may be of a sensitive nature, exact numbers are not reported in order to protect the anonymity of respondents.

# Commentary and Analysis

## 1.0 Respondent Profile and Grant Type

### 1.1 Age of respondents

More than two-fifths (36; 43%) of respondents were aged 65 or older; one-quarter (21; 25%) were aged between 45 and 54; less than one-fifth (15; 18%) were aged between 55 and 64; seven (8%) were aged 35 to 44 and two (2%) were aged between 25 and 34. Two (2%) respondents refused to state their age (Figure 1, Table 1.1).



### 1.2 Ethnicity of respondents

Almost all (80; 96%) respondents described their ethnicity as white and one respondent (1%) described their ethnicity as 'other'. The remaining two (2%) respondent refused to state their ethnicity (Table 1.2).

### 1.3 Household Religion

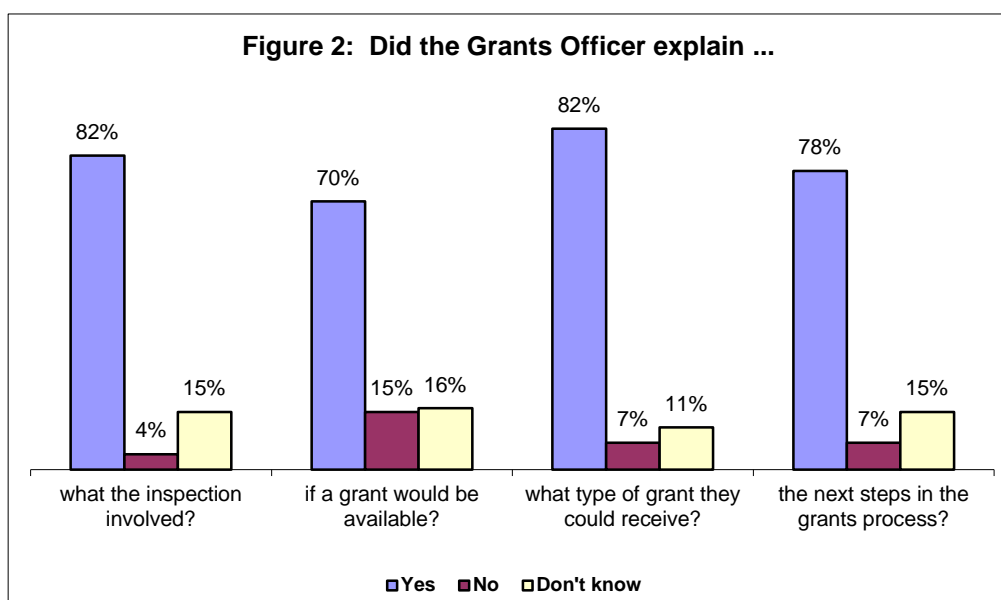
More than two-thirds (58; 70%) of respondents described their household religion as Catholic and more than one-fifth (19; 23%) described their religion as Protestant. Equal proportion of respondents (1; 1% in each case) described their household religion as 'none' or 'mixed religion' and the remaining four respondents (5%) refused to give the household religion (Table 1.3).

### 1.4 Grant Type

The vast majority (76; 92%) of respondents had received a Disabled Facilities Grant, four (5%) had received a Renovation Grant and three (4%) had received a Home Repair Grant (Table 1.4).

## **2.0 Contacts with Grants Office**

- 2.1** More than four-fifths (67; 81%) of respondents said they had been involved in every stage of the grants process and 16 (19%) said they had been involved in some of the stages (Table 2.1).
- 2.2** More than three-quarters (65; 78%) of respondents stated they were aware of their case officer at an early stage in the process, five (6%) stated this was not the case and 13 (16%) could not remember (Table 2.2).
- 2.3** More than two-thirds (56; 68%) had been offered a Preliminary Test of Resources; equal proportions (12; 15% in each case) said they had not been offered a Preliminary Test of Resources or could not remember and three (4%) stated a Preliminary Test of Resources was not applicable (Table 2.3).
- 2.4** The majority (74; 89%) of respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with the preliminary contact from the grants office; seven (8%) respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and the remaining two respondents (2%) were dissatisfied (Table 2.4 and 2.5).
- 2.5** The majority (73; 88%) of respondents said the grants officer had made an appointment to visit them. Of those respondents who said an appointment had been made, the vast majority (70) said the appointment had been kept (Tables 2.6 and 2.7).
- 2.6** Respondents were asked a series of questions to establish if the grants officer had explained the grants process to them. More than four-fifths of respondents (68; 82%) said the grants officer had explained what the inspection stage involved (Figure 2, Table 2.8).
- 2.7** More than two-thirds (58; 70%) of respondents said the grants officer had explained whether they thought the grant would be available (Figure 2, Table 2.7).
- 2.8** More than four-fifths (68; 82%) said the grants officer had advised them on the type of grant they could receive (Figure 2, Table 2.8).
- 2.9** More than three-quarters (65; 78%) said the grants officer explained the next steps in the grant application process (Figure 2, Table 2.8).
- 2.9** The majority (78; 94%) of respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with the inspection stage of the process; five (6%) respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (Table 2.9).



***Telephoning the Grants Office within the previous 12 months***

- 2.10** More than half (45; 54%) of respondents had telephoned the grants office during the course of their grant application in the previous 12 months. The majority (38) of respondents had been told the name of the person dealing with their call, two respondents had not and five were unsure if they had been given a name (Tables 2.10 and 2.11).
- 2.11** The majority (42) of respondents who had telephoned the grants office had found the staff polite; 41 respondents said they had not felt hurried or rushed by staff dealing with their query and 39 respondents said staff were knowledgeable (Table 2.12).
- 2.12** Of the respondents who had telephoned the grants office (45; 54% of all respondents), 30 said the person who initially took the call had been able to deal with their query; eight stated the person was unable to deal with their query and the remaining seven were unsure if their query had been dealt with (Table 2.13).
- 2.13** The majority of respondents (39) who had telephoned the grants office were very satisfied/satisfied with the overall service they had received; equal proportions (3 respondents in each case) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied or dissatisfied/very dissatisfied with the overall service they had received (Table 2.14).

## **3.0 Grant Forms<sup>1</sup>**

### **3.1 Schedule of Works**

More than three-quarters (64; 77%) of all respondents had dealt with the Schedule of Works package. Of these, (58) thought the Schedule of Works package was clear, five thought it was not clear and the remaining respondent was unsure if the Schedule of Works package was clear (Table 3.1).

### **3.2 Contact by case Officer**

More than half (45; 54%) of all respondents had been contacted by their case officer after they received the schedule of works package; more than one-quarter (26; 31%) could not remember if the case officer had contacted them and 12 (15%) stated that the case officer did not contact them (Table 3.2).

### **3.3 Test of Resources Form**

More than half (49; 59%) of respondents had completed a Test of Resources form. Of these, the majority (40) thought the test of resources form was easy to complete, three thought the form was not easy to complete and six respondents could not remember (Table 3.3).

### **3.4 Grant Approval Document**

The Grant Approval Document had been dealt with by more than two-thirds (66; 80%) of all respondents. The majority (63) thought the grant approval document was clear, one thought the form was not easy to complete and two respondents could not recall (Table 3.4).

### **3.5 Contact by Grants Officer**

More than half (46; 55%) of respondents stated the grants officer contacted them after their grant had been approved, 25 (30%) could not remember the grants officer contacting them and 12 (15%) said the grants officer did not contact them (Table 3.5).

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

**4.1** Almost three-quarters (60; 72%) of respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with the payment stage of the grants process, nineteen (23%) were dissatisfied/very dissatisfied and four (5%) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (Table 4.1).

**4.2** More than two-thirds (74; 90%) of respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with the builder who had carried out the work and nine (11%) were dissatisfied/very dissatisfied (Table 4.2).

**4.3** All respondents who had received a Disabled Facilities Grant (76; 92% of all respondents) were asked if the work fulfilled their needs. Of these, almost all (72; 94%) were very satisfied/satisfied that the grant work carried out had

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



fulfilled their needs; three (4%) were dissatisfied/very dissatisfied and the remaining respondent (1%) was neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (Table 4.3).

## **5.0 Communication from the Grants Office**

- 5.1** All respondents (83; 100%) said a builder had been involved in the grant process; fewer respondents said an occupational therapist (79; 95%); architect (41; 49%) or Fold (24; 29%) had been involved in the grant process on their behalf (Table 5.1).
- 5.2** More than four-fifths (71; 85%) of respondents felt that the grants office had worked well with the builder, while eight (10%) were unsure and four (5%) said the office had not worked well with their builder (Table 5.1).
- 5.3** Of the 79 respondents who said an Occupational Therapist (OT) had been involved in the grant process, more than three-quarters (66; 84%) of respondents felt the grants office had a good working relationship with their OT during the grant process; eight (10%) were unsure and five respondents (6%) felt the grants office did not work well with the OT (Table 5.1).
- 5.4** Of the 41 respondents who said an architect had been involved in the grant process, 29 respondents felt the grants office had a good working relationship with their architect during the grant process and 12 respondents were unsure (Table 5.1).
- 5.5** Of the 24 respondents who said Fold had been involved in the grant process, 20 respondents felt the grants office had a good working relationship with Fold; two respondents were unsure and two respondents said the grants office had not worked well with Fold (Table 5.1).
- 5.6** More than four-fifths (73; 88%) of respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with the letters they had received from the grants office; eight (10%) respondents said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and the remaining two respondents (2%) were very dissatisfied/dissatisfied (Table 5.2).
- 5.7** The majority (78; 94%) of respondents felt they had been treated fairly throughout the grants process, the remaining five respondents (6%) stated that they had not been treated fairly (Table 5.3).
- 5.8** The majority (73; 88%) of respondents were very satisfied/satisfied overall with the grants process; seven (8%) respondents said they were very dissatisfied/dissatisfied and the remaining three (4%) respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (Table 5.4).

## **6.0 Internet Access**

**6.1** More than half (42; 51%) of respondents had access to the internet. Of these 23 said they would be interested in accessing grants forms and documentation via the internet, seventeen said they would not be interested and the remaining two respondents did not know (Tables 6.1 and 6.2).

## **7.0 Further Comments**

**7.1** More than half (47; 57%) made a further comment on the grants process. Twenty-four respondents were satisfied with the service provided; nine respondents said the process was too complicated; six respondents said the process takes too long; three respondents said documentation had been either lost or misplaced which led to a delay in their application and two respondents said the payment stage of the process is too long. Equal proportions (1 respondent in each case) said they were dissatisfied with the grants process or dissatisfied with the builder or dissatisfied that their grant did not cover the cost of architect fees (Table 7.1).

## Appendix 1: Tabular Report

### South Grants Customer Survey

Table 1.1: Age of Respondents

	Numbers	Percentages
25-34 years	2	2
35-44 years	7	8
45-54 years	21	25
55-64 years	15	18
65+ years	36	43
Refused	2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 83 (all respondents)*

Table 1.2: Ethnicity of Respondents

	Numbers	Percentages
White	80	96
Other	1	1
Refused	2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 83 (all respondents)*

Table 1.3: Household Religion

	Numbers	Percentages
Catholic	58	70
Protestant	19	23
Mixed Religion (Protestant/Catholic)	1	1
None	1	1
Refused	4	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 83 (all respondents)*

Table 1.4: Grant Type

	Numbers	Percentages
Disabled Facilities Grant	76	92
Renovation Grant	4	5
Home Repair Grant	3	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 83 (all respondents)*

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

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes, every stage	67	81
Yes, some of the stages	16	19
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 83 (all respondents)*

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

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	65	78
No	5	6
Don't Know/Can't Remember	13	16
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 83 (all respondents)*

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

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	56	68
No	12	15
Don't Know/Can't Remember	12	15
Not Applicable	3	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 83 (all respondents)*

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

	Numbers	Percentages
Very satisfied	31	37
Satisfied	43	52
Neither	7	8
Dissatisfied	2	2
Very Dissatisfied	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 83 (all respondents)*

Table 2.5: If dissatisfied, please state why.

	Numbers
Grant office lost and misplaced documents which caused delays	1
Had to submit same documents more than once	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>

*Base: 2 (all respondents dissatisfied with preliminary contact from the Grants office)*

Table 2.6: Did the Grants Officer make an appointment to visit you?

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	73	88
No	5	6
Don't Know/Can't Remember	5	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>

Base: 83 (all respondents)

Table 2.7: Did the Grants Officer turn up to the appointment?

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	70	96
Don't Know/Can't Remember	3	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>100</b>

Base: 73 (respondents who had an appointment)

Table 2.8: Did the Grants Officer explain...

	Numbers %			
	Yes	No	D/K	Total
what the inspection stage involved?	68	3	12	<b>83</b>
	82	4	15	<b>100%</b>
whether they thought a grant would be available?	58	12	13	<b>83</b>
	70	15	16	<b>100%</b>
what type of grant you could receive?	68	6	9	<b>83</b>
	82	7	11	<b>100%</b>
the next steps in the grants process?	65	6	12	<b>83</b>
	78	7	15	<b>100%</b>

Base: 83 (all respondents)

Table 2.9: How satisfied/dissatisfied were you with the inspection stage of process?

	Numbers	Percentages
Very satisfied	30	36
Satisfied	48	58
Neither	5	6
Dissatisfied	0	0
Very Dissatisfied	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>

Base: 83 (all respondents)

Table 2.10: Did you make telephone contact with the Grants Office at any time during your application?

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	45	54
No	27	33
Don't Know/Can't Remember	11	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>

Base: 83 (all respondents)

Table 2.11: Did the person dealing with the call give his/her name?

	Numbers
Yes	38
No	2
Don't Know/Can't Remember	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45</b>

*Base: 45 (respondents who had contacted the grants office by telephone)*

Table 2.12: Did you find the staff...

	Yes	No	DK/Can't Remember	Total
	Numbers			
polite?	42	3	0	<b>45</b>
knowledgeable?	39	5	1	<b>45</b>
In a hurry/rushed?	3	41	1	<b>45</b>

*Base: 45 (respondents who had contacted the grants office by telephone)*

Table 2.13: Was the person who took your call able to deal with your query directly?

	Numbers
Yes	30
No	8
Don't Know/Can't Remember	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45</b>

*Base: 45 (respondents who had contacted the grants office by telephone)*

Table 2.14: How satisfied/dissatisfied were you with the telephone service?

	Numbers
Very satisfied	16
Satisfied	23
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	3
Dissatisfied	2
Very Dissatisfied	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45</b>

*Base: 45 (respondents who had contacted grants office by telephone)*

Table 2.15: If dissatisfied, please state why.

	Numbers
Unable to get information that was needed	1
Didn't want to know about problems with builder	1
Everything took too long	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3</b>

*Base: 3 (all respondents dissatisfied with telephone contact with the Grants office)*

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

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	58	90
No	5	8
Don't Know/Can't Remember	1	2
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100</b>
Fold dealt with document	9	
Family/friend dealt with document	5	
Builder dealt with document	5	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	

*Base: 64 (respondents who dealt with the Schedule of Works Package)*

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

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	45	54
No	12	15
Don't Know/Can't Remember	26	31
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 83 (all respondents)*

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

	Numbers
Yes	3
No	40
Don't know/can't remember	6
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>49</b>
Fold completed form	11
Family/friend completed form	8
Builder completed form	5
N/A	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>

*Base: 49 (respondents who completed the Test of Resources Form)*

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

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	63	95
No	1	2
Don't know/can't remember	2	3
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>100</b>
Fold dealt with document	9	
Family/friend completed form	4	
Builder completed form	4	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	

*Base: 66 (respondents who dealt with the Grant Approval Document)*

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

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	46	55
No	12	15
Don't Know/Can't Remember	25	30
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 83 (all respondents)*

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

	Numbers	Percentages
Very satisfied	15	18
Satisfied	45	54
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	4	5
Dissatisfied	12	15
Very Dissatisfied	7	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 83 (all respondents)*

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

	Numbers	Percentages
Very satisfied	47	57
Satisfied	27	33
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	0	0
Dissatisfied	4	5
Very dissatisfied	5	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 83 (all respondents)*

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

	Numbers	Percentages
Very satisfied	55	72
Satisfied	17	22
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	1	1
Dissatisfied	3	4
Very dissatisfied	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 76 (respondents who received a disabled facilities grant)*



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

	Numbers %			
	Yes	No	Unsure	Total
The builder?	71 85	4 5	8 10	<b>83</b> <b>100%</b>
The occupational therapist?	66 84	5 6	8 10	<b>79</b> <b>100%</b>
The architect?	29 35	12 15	0 0	<b>41</b> <b>100%</b>
Fold?	20 24	2 2	2 2	<b>24</b> <b>100%</b>

*Bases: 83 (builder); 79 (OT); 41 (architect); 24 (Fold).*

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

	Numbers	Percentages
Very satisfied	28	34
Satisfied	45	54
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	8	10
Dissatisfied	2	2
Very Dissatisfied	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 83 (all respondents)*

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

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	78	94
No	5	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 83 (all respondents)*

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

	Numbers	Percentages
Very satisfied	31	37
Satisfied	42	51
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	3	4
Dissatisfied	5	6
Very Dissatisfied	2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 83 (all respondents)*

Table 6.1: Do you have access to the internet?

	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	42	51
No	41	49
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 83 (all respondents)*

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

	Numbers
Yes	23
No	17
Don't know	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>42</b>

*Base: 42 (respondents who had access to the internet)*

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

	Numbers
Satisfied with grants process	24
Grants process is too complicated	9
Grants process takes too long	6
Documents lost or misplaced which led to delays	3
Payment stage is too slow	2
Dissatisfied with grants process	1
Dissatisfied with builder	1
Dissatisfied that grant did not cover the cost of architect fees	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47</b>

*Base: 47 (all respondents who made additional comment about grants process)*