

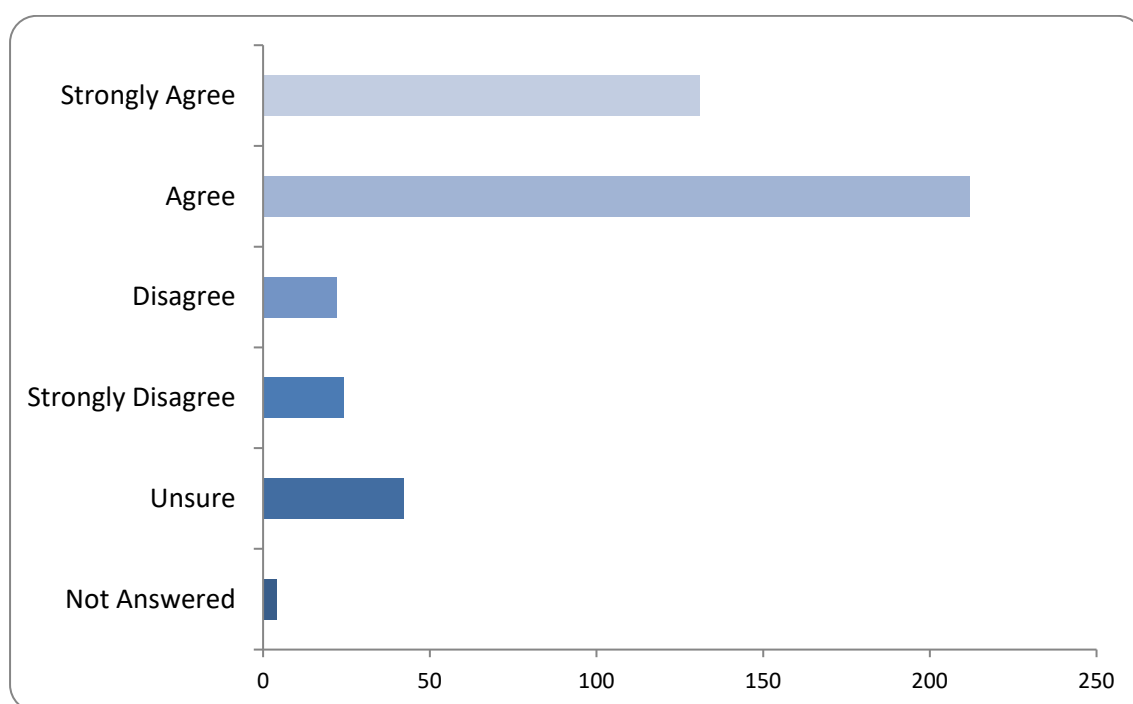
Benefits/Council Tax Reduction Scheme Consultation

<https://consultation.oxford.gov.uk/financial-services/council-tax-reduction>

The activity ran from 11/07/2023 to 04/09/2023.

Responses to this survey: **435**

1: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principle of using income bands for deciding how much support people get in paying their Council Tax?



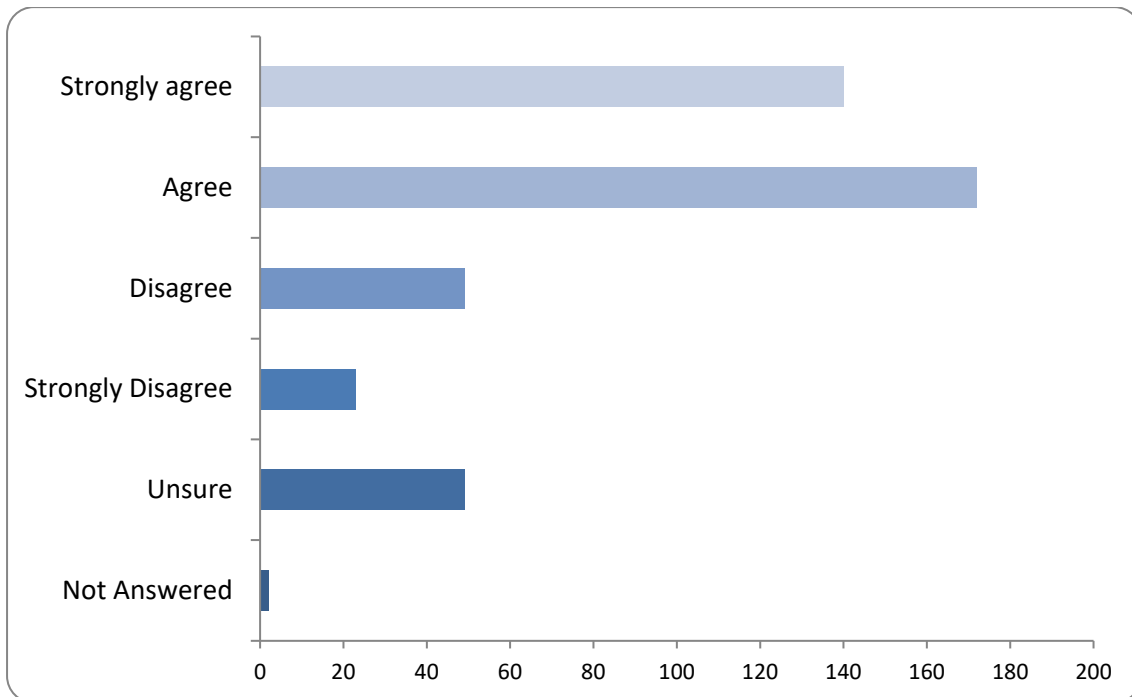
Option	Total	Percent
Strongly Agree	131	30.11%
Agree	212	48.74%
Disagree	22	5.06%
Strongly Disagree	24	5.52%
Unsure	42	9.66%

Not Answered	4	0.92%
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2: Consumer Price Index Inflation last year was 10.1%.

If we increased the income bands by 10.1% from 1st April 2024, anyone with a household income of less than £26,728 would qualify for some support.

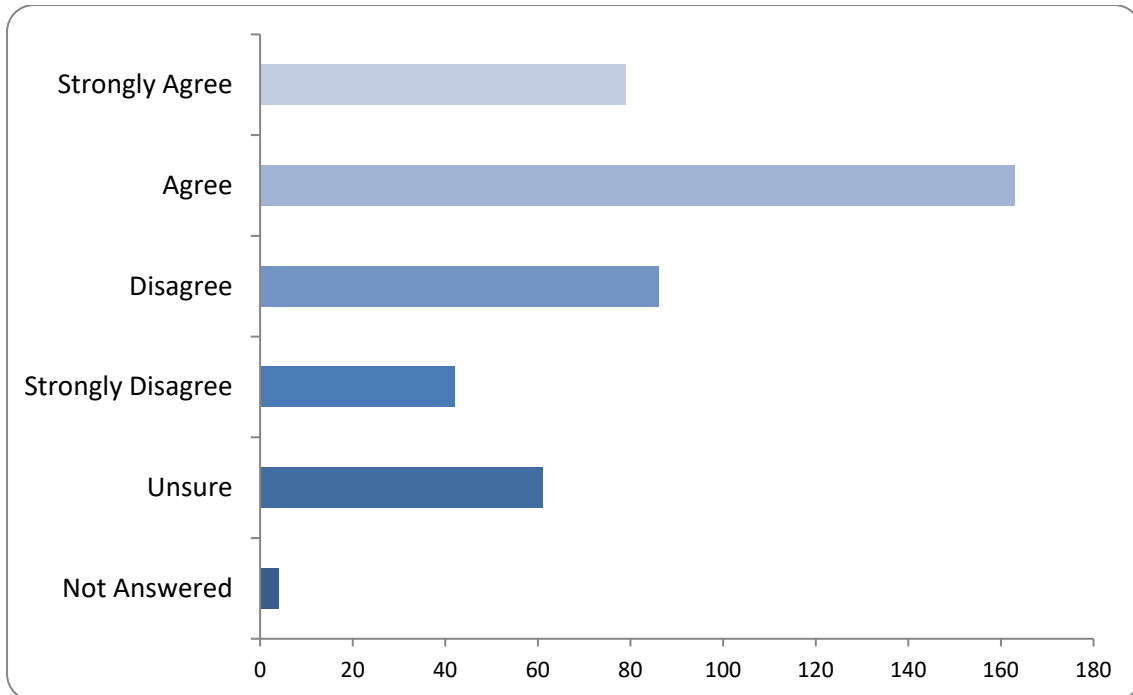
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to uprate the income bands from 2024/25 in line with inflation?



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	140	32.18%
Agree	172	39.54%
Disagree	49	11.26%
Strongly Disagree	23	5.29%
Unsure	49	11.26%
Not Answered	2	0.46%

3: Increasing the bands by 5% from 1st April 2024, anyone with a household income of less than £25,480 would qualify for some support.

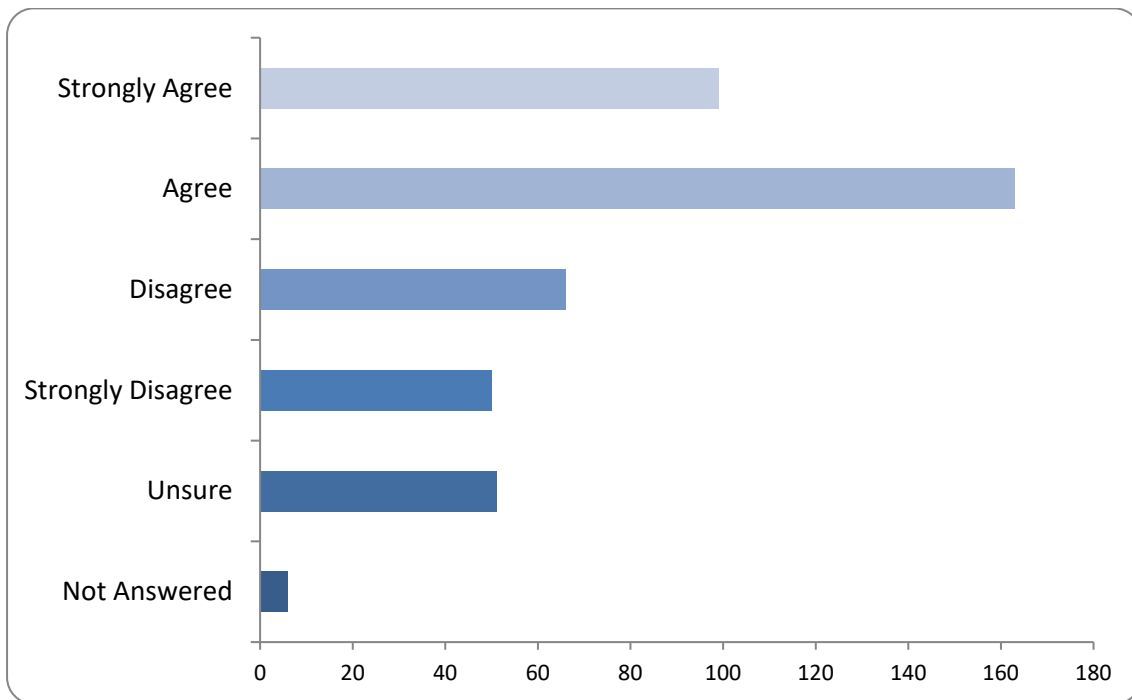
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to uprate the income bands from 2024/25 by a lower percentage such as 5%?



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly Agree	79	18.16%
Agree	163	37.47%
Disagree	86	19.77%
Strongly Disagree	42	9.66%
Unsure	61	14.02%
Not Answered	4	0.92%

4: In our current local scheme support is calculated on the household income, which means the applicant’s income and their partner’s income are taken into account. Anyone who is over the age of 18 and living in the property, but not named on the council tax bill, for example a grown up son or daughter or another relative, is expected to contribute towards paying the council tax charge, unless they fall into an exemption category based on their personal circumstances.

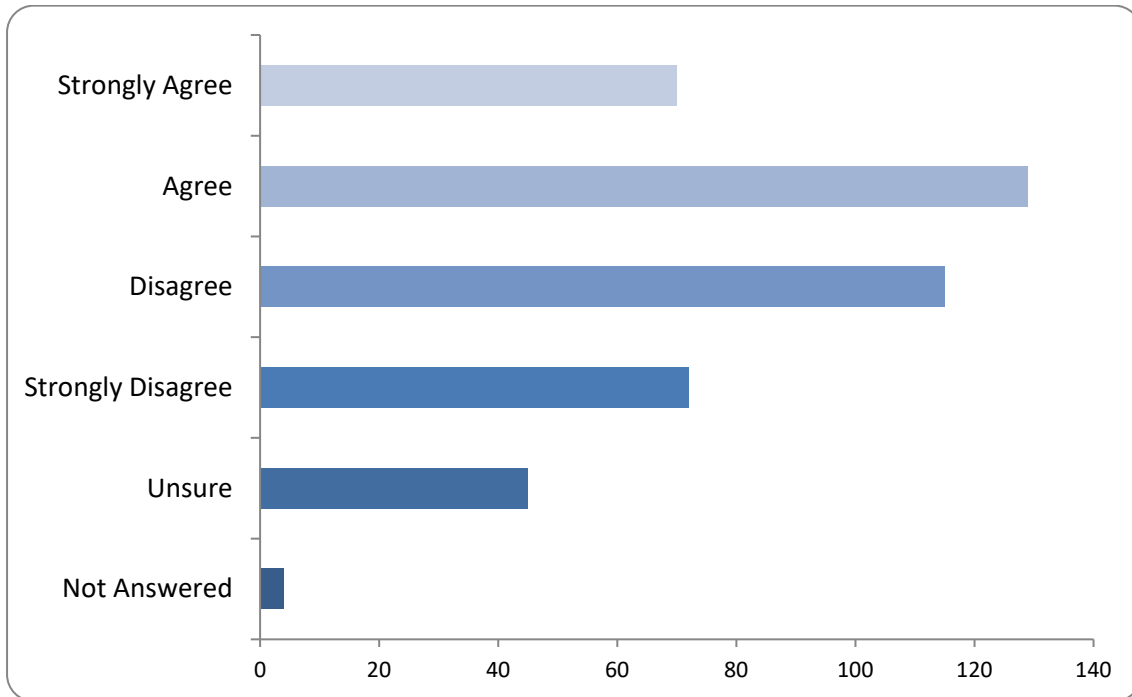
To what extent do you agree or disagree that adult family members should be expected to make a contribution to paying the council tax charge



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly Agree	99	22.76%
Agree	163	37.47%
Disagree	66	15.17%
Strongly Disagree	50	11.49%
Unsure	51	11.72%
Not Answered	6	1.38%

5: The council may be able to make a cost saving, by making letters showing how the level of any reduction is calculated, available online rather than posting them out to customers.

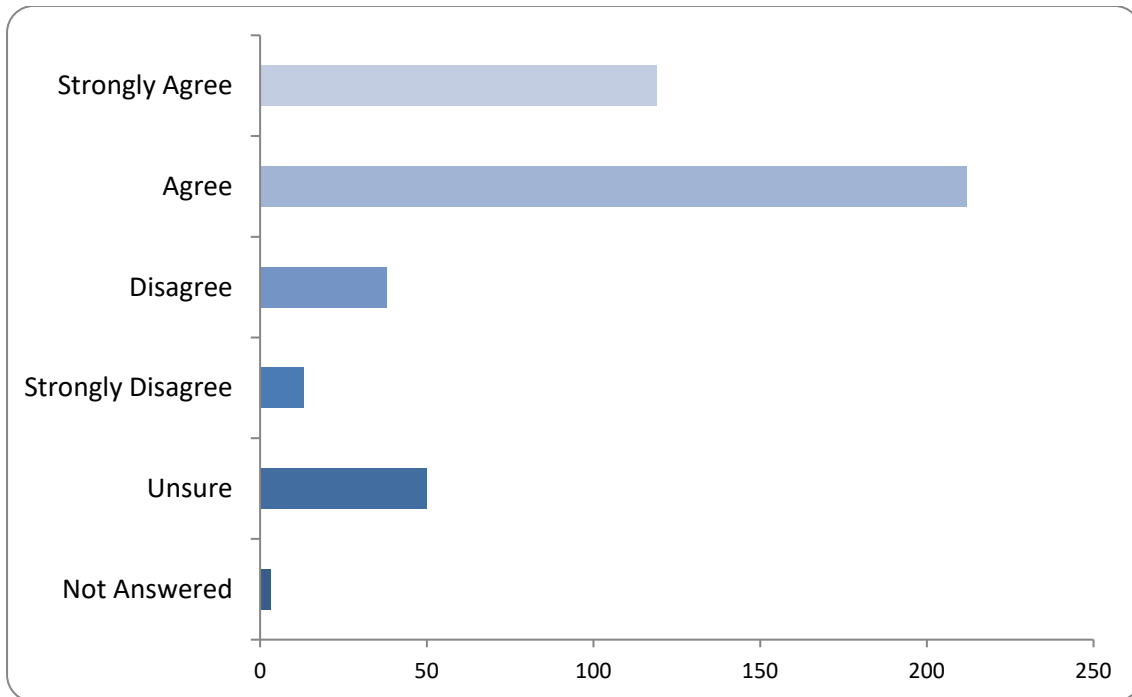
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the council making details of the level of council tax reduction calculated only available online?



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly Agree	70	16.09%
Agree	129	29.66%
Disagree	115	26.44%
Strongly Disagree	72	16.55%
Unsure	45	10.34%
Not Answered	4	0.92%

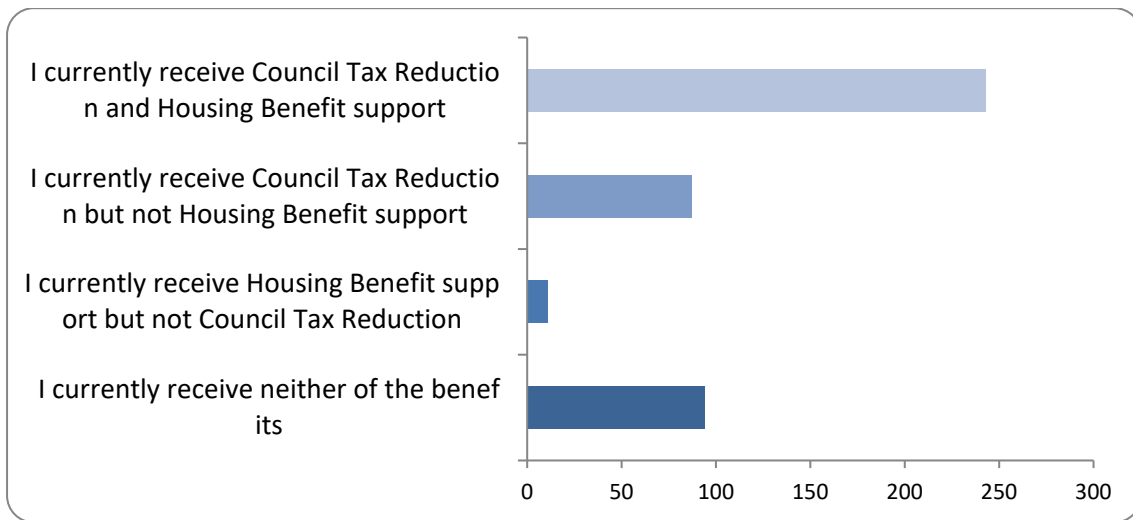
6: Our current council tax reduction scheme allows for an application to be backdated for one month before the date of the application if the applicant was not able to apply sooner and had a good reason for this. It may be possible for a change in the law to cause a charge to be applied for a period that is longer than a month in the past.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the council allowing longer than one month to apply for a council tax reduction where a customer’s council tax charge has been changed due to a change of law.



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly Agree	119	27.36%
Agree	212	48.74%
Disagree	38	8.74%
Strongly Disagree	13	2.99%
Unsure	50	11.49%
Not Answered	3	0.69%

7: Do you currently receive Council Tax Reduction based on your income for help with your Council Tax charge or Housing Benefit support based on your income for help with your rent?



Option	Total	Percent
I currently receive Council Tax Reduction and Housing Benefit support	243	55.86%
I currently receive Council Tax Reduction but not Housing Benefit support	87	20.00%
I currently receive Housing Benefit support but not Council Tax Reduction	11	2.53%
I currently receive neither of the benefits	94	21.61%

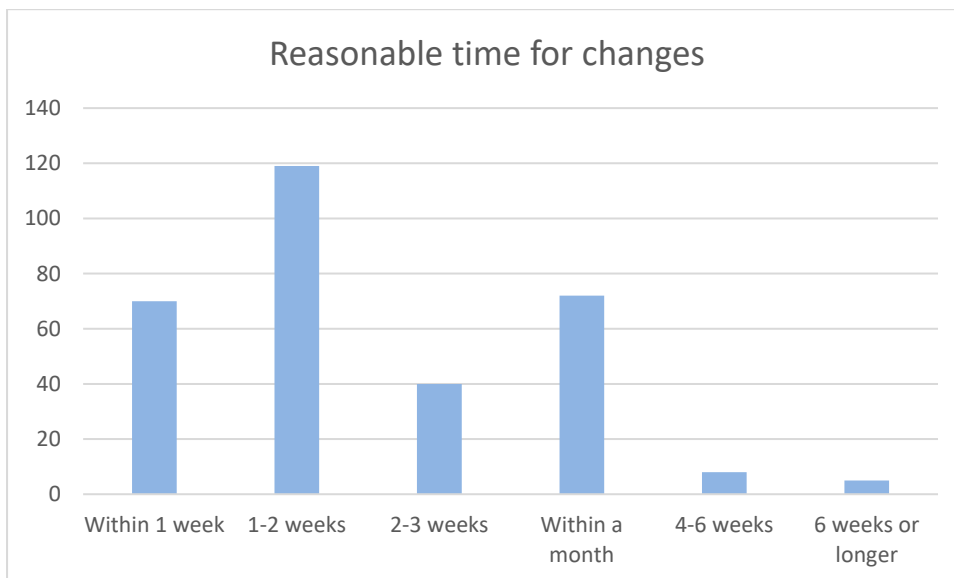
8. What do you feel is a reasonable processing time for:

a) New Claims



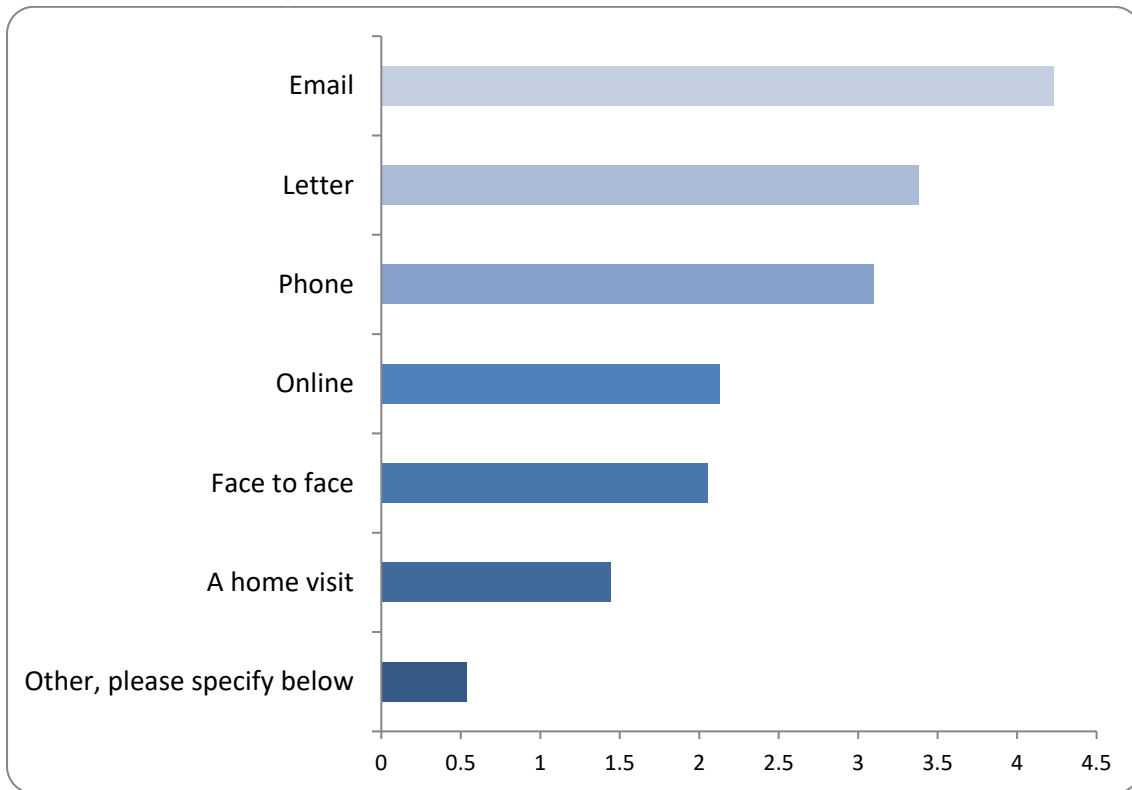
Option	Total	Percent
Within 1 week	47	13.95
1-2 weeks	116	34.42
2-3 weeks	53	15.73
Within a month	104	30.86
4-6 weeks	11	3.26
6 weeks or longer	6	1.78

b) Changes in circumstances



Option	Total	Percent
Within 1 week	70	22.29
1-2 weeks	119	37.90
2-3 weeks	40	12.74
Within a month	72	22.93
4-6 weeks	8	2.55
6 weeks or longer	5	1.59

9: How would you prefer to communicate with us about your benefits?



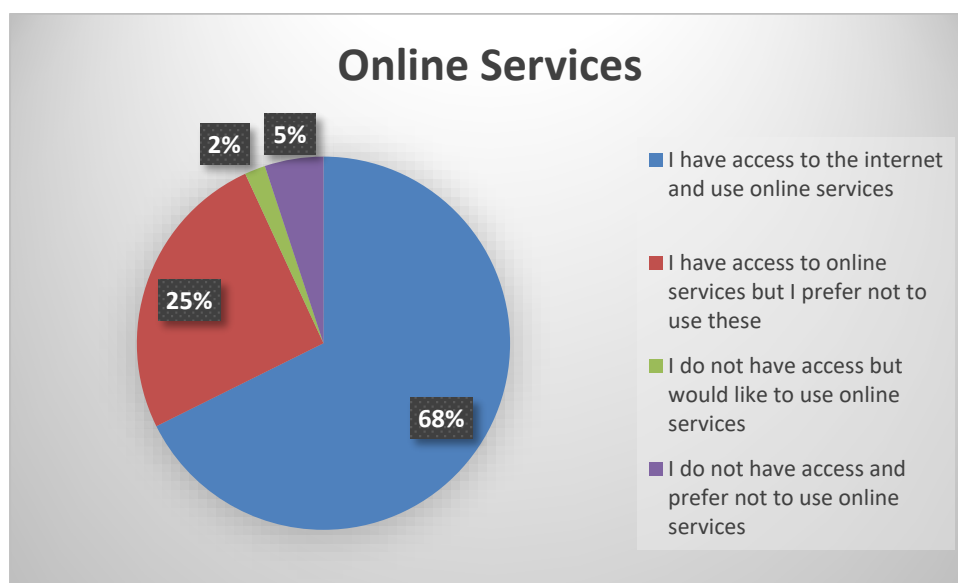
Item	Ranking
Email	4.23
Letter	3.38
Phone	3.10
Online	2.13
Face to face	2.06
A home visit	1.44
Other, please specify below	0.54

Other:

Method	Number
Text	7
Zoom/Teams	3
Via a nominated third party (family member/POA/support worker)	2
Other method (e.g phone, email, face to face) but written confirmation by letter	1
Chat (live chat?)	1
AI	1
An appointment for face to face with more notice	1

Pidgeon	1
I want to provide info in writing (letter/email) but if I have a question phone up or see someone face to face	1
I want to have a choice	1
Whatsapp	1

10. Which of the following describes you best about the usage of our online services?

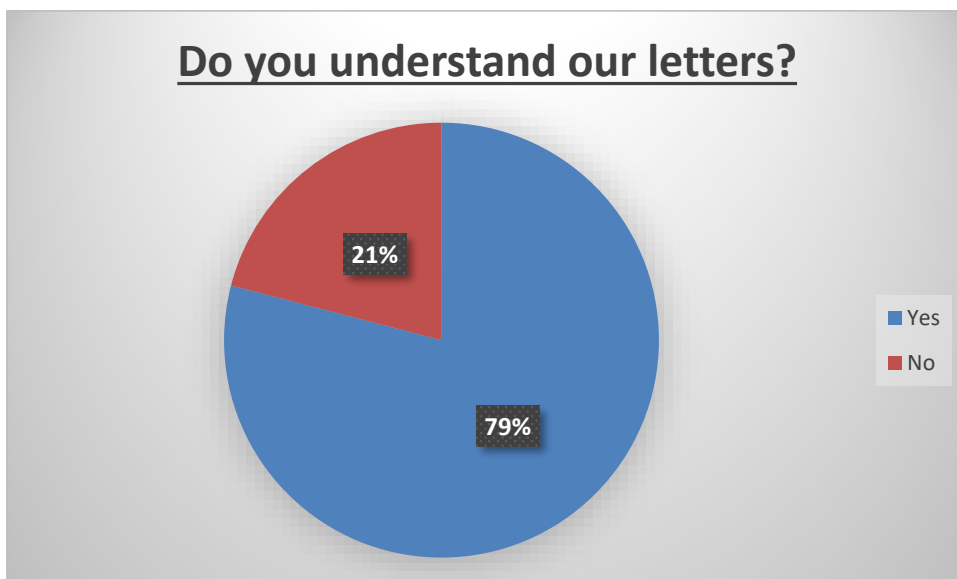


Option	Total	Percent
I have access to the internet and use online services	226	67.66
I have access to online services but I prefer not to use these	85	25.45
I do not have access but would like to use online services	6	1.80
I don't have access and prefer not to use online services	17	5.09

Do you have any other comments or suggestions about our online services?

Theme	Number
It needs to be simpler	13
I can access but I am worried about those who are elderly, disabled or financially excluded	13
I am elderly/disabled and this makes it difficult	12
Suggestions	10
I don't have the knowledge/skills to use	7
I have never used/don't want to	7
There are technical problems with it	7
I am not happy about how my case was dealt with	5
Data Retention	3
I am happy/Thank you/things are better	2

11. Do you understand the letters that we send you to notify you of our decision?

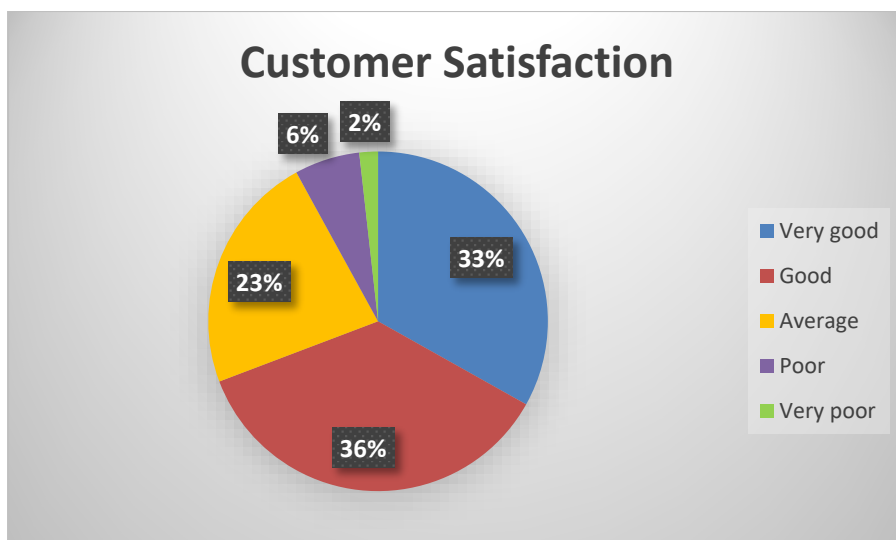


Option	Total	Percent
Yes	264	79.04
No	70	20.96

Please give further explanation:

Theme	Number
Too long and wordy/too much information	26
I need someone to help explain them to me	19
I am happy/it is clear/it has improved	17
The calculations are hard to understand	16
I understand but I find it difficult	15
I don't like the tone of the letter	5
There has been a delay in getting the letter and I don't know if all reported changes have been made	4
Other Suggestions	6
I don't like how my benefit is calculated	3

12. How satisfied are you with the Benefits Service overall?



Option	Total	Percent
Very good	112	33.14
Good	122	36.09
Average	77	22.78
Poor	21	6.21
Very poor	6	1.78

Is there anything that you feel the Benefits Service do well or could do better?

Theme	Number
Quicker response to changes and claims	29
I am happy/things have improved	19
Suggestion	17
I can't afford cost of living increases	13
Improve letters	8
Don't go back so far and raise overpayments	7
I am not happy with suspensions	6
Contact us more often	6
Comment on phone line	5
How my case is calculated	4
Changing benefit so regularly causes financial problems	4
Employ more staff	2
Delay to appeal/recon	2
I didn't know how to report my changes	1

How does your disability impact on your ability to contact us?

Reason	Number
Cognitive impairment	4
Deaf/hearing loss	9
PTSD	2
Anxiety	9
Mental health issues	8
Dementia/Parkinsons	3
ME/MS	2
Speech impediment	2
Memory problems	3
Mobility issues	5
Autism	4
Brain fog/difficulty understanding	9
Sight problems	2
I am a carer so do not the time to contact	2
I cannot use the phone/speak to people (not specified)	3

I have congenital hearing loss and consequently have a mild lisp when speaking. If I have an automated voice on end of the phone asking me to speak to IT!!! This is hopeless for me. Therefore a voice with a heart beat is essential.

I find trying to make a phone call challenging. Having to listen to all the menu options, I almost always have forgotten which option to select after listening. This is frustrating and time consuming. It is not always possible to get through on the phone.

However, my daughter is profoundly disabled and I have been delivering nursing- level care for her 24/7 for 32 years. This not only means that I am a highly skilled unpaid worker whose clinical skills exceed the average nurse (District and hospital to home nurses are not trained in some of the interventions I employ daily), I work more than 100 hours per week. Naturally, due to lack of

support from health and social services, I was forced to give up my highly paid career when my daughter was born, resulting in my exhaustion, shocking levels of sleep deprivation and poverty. I find that the council and its employees have no understanding of the intensity of unpaid work and poverty that some unpaid carers are forced into concerning . These are unpaid carers whose careers are too complex for respite or hospital ward nurses to safely care for. This impacts our lives to a level that most of society do not comprehend and I feel that councils need to institute some training to further respect and sensitivity to this sector. The fact that in the sector below you equate my work to looking after the home' speaks volumes. I guess it's marginally better than that other bureaucratic favourite 'economically unproductive', when unpaid carers constitute a far greater number of workers than the NHS and Social Care combined as no save the government billions per annum.

My disability will often get me confused and stressed and i often need my daughters to correspond back for me .

I have Asperger's, Fibromyalgia, copd and Emphysema. I get tongue tied and sensory overload when pushed to answer questions or produce evidence of benefit entitlement when being given a short time to produce them. Face to face or in person at home takes the pressure off of me.

I've mental health issues anxiety and it doesn't help me if you stress me out on the phone as it brings on a panic attack

Amongst other conditions I have anxiety and agoraphobia so communicating in email or online works much better for me. I live in flats and my mailbox is outside so it can be difficult for me to get my post. Also makes phone calls difficult.

I have autism and get flustered and stressed easily and having to speak to multiple different agents on the phone having to explain again and again the same issues and then being told someone will get in touch and the fail to do so and then I have to again make another phonecall and get someone else to explain issues is not conducive with my state of mind.

I suffer from anxiety and panic attack's and social phobia along with long term illness, so if I have to have a meeting or a phone call I would like enough time to come to terms that this is going to happen and take my medication in time with this appointment!

I've got Long Covid and ADHD. This makes understanding things more difficult at times, phone calls are a no go as I need to see all the information written down to process it at my own pace and respond appropriately.

I suffer from PTSD and depression . That is apart from physical issues. Any changes make me very nervous. Even filling this form worries me. So sometimes it feels safe just to ignore things, and hope that "it will go away".

I communicate with God Jesus and the Holy spirit better than you

Any telephone conversation over 15minutes puts me in a hypervigilant state. As a military veteran, I have Physical Challenges, Complex PTSD, Mental Health Challenges, Seasonal Affective Disorder, Incontinence and Sight Impaired. The daily struggles with

reliving experiences and flashbacks from both Afghanistan and Iraq presents with daily depression and anxiety coupled with insomnia which affect affects my overall health. In constant gnawing consciousness and pain.

1. Arthritic fingers causing difficulty with phones and speed of answering a call or dialling a number.
2. compromised ability to hear causing difficulty negotiating call systems and subsequently hearing/understanding advisors responses
3. Very low mobility, being housebound and therefore unable to visit council offices