

Results of the Planning Service's 2005/06 Customer Satisfaction Survey



In our continuing efforts to provide a good quality service, we recognise the importance of listening to what our customers have to say.

With this in mind, a customer satisfaction survey issued in February 2006 to a random sample of 600 applicants and planning agents who had received a planning decision in the 6 months period prior the survey.

The survey sought customer opinion on the quality of service that we provide, including issues such as being kept informed, speed of decision, opportunity to negotiate, advice on fees, professionalism of staff, fairness of treatment.

At 26%, the response rate to the survey was statistically lower than average for postal surveys. Although the findings and conclusions should therefore be treated with caution, they do provide important feedback from those who responded.

We are committed to acting on the feedback and messages from the results of the survey as part of a strategic approach to improve the quality of our customer service. While it is encouraging that the professionalism of staff and fairness on how respondents were treated rated as positive, the overall results are disappointing, although not unexpected.

A range of short to medium term measures are in progress to improve communication and our customer service, including,

- the implementation of a major new IT system – electronic Planning Information for Citizens (e-PIC). Work is well advanced in this system which will, among other things, allow applicants and others to track the progress of applications online. Over 75% of the survey respondents indicated that they would use the system when it is introduced.
- an IT-based system to manage telephone calls and e-mails, which will be introduced later this year.
- the implementation of the NICS Customer Service Standards throughout the Agency.

We believe that these measures and other work currently being done across the Agency will pay dividends in due course, and are confident that this will be reflected in the next customer satisfaction survey.

Q1. To Which Planning Service office did you send your last application?

| Office | Percentage % |
|-------------|--------------|
| Ballymena | 16% |
| Belfast | 13% |
| Coleraine | 9% |
| Craigavon | 21% |
| Downpatrick | 17% |
| Enniskillen | 8% |
| Londonderry | 3 |
| Omagh | 13% |

Q2. Approximately how many applications for planning permission have you submitted in the past 2 years?

| 50 or less | More than 50 |
|------------|--------------|
| 73% | 27% |

Q3. How long did you have to wait to receive a decision on your last application?

| 8 Months or less | More than 8 Months |
|------------------|--------------------|
| 61% | 39% |

Q4. Did you find this length of time acceptable?

| Yes | No |
|-----|-----|
| 30% | 70% |

Q5. What was the outcome of your last application for planning permission?

| Granted | Refused |
|---------|---------|
| 79% | 21% |

Q6. Was the reason for your refusal satisfactorily explained?

| Yes | No |
|-----|-----|
| 29% | 71% |

Q7. How would you rate the following services delivered by the Planning Service?

| | Very good to fair | Poor to very poor |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Opportunity to negotiate | 45% | 55% |
| Speed of decision | 34% | 66% |
| Being Kept informed | 32% | 68% |
| Advice on Fees | 79% | 21% |

Q8. From the experience of your last application how would you rate the following?

| | Very good to fair | Poor to very poor |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Speed in dealing with telephone enquiries | 53% | 47% |
| Response time to correspondence | 51% | 49% |
| Professionalism to staff | 70% | 30% |
| Fairness of treatment | 66% | 34% |

Q9. How often do you access the Planning Service Website?

| Daily/weekly/monthly | Never |
|-----------------------------|--------------|
| 59% | 41% |

Q10. How do you rate the website?

| Very good to fair | Poor |
|--------------------------|-------------|
| 94% | 6% |

Q11. When we go live with our new online facilities (ePIC) how often would you use this method?

| Always/sometimes | Never |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| 77% | 23% |

Q12. Do you have the electronic capability to submit applications online? (Internet access and CAD tools to prepare electronic drawings/elevations etc and standard office packages for any additional reports required e.g. EIA)

| Yes/partial | No |
|--------------------|-----------|
| 69% | 31% |

Q13. Are you aware of the Planning Service complaints procedure?

| Yes | No |
|------------|-----------|
| 62% | 38% |

Q14. Have you ever made a formal complaint?

| Yes | No |
|------------|-----------|
| 17% | 83% |

Q15. How satisfied were you with the way your complaint was handled?

| Very satisfied to satisfied | Dissatisfied to very dissatisfied |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 35% | 65% |

Q16. Taking all aspects of the survey into account, how satisfied were you with the overall service you received?

| Very satisfied to satisfied | Dissatisfied to very dissatisfied |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 42% | 58% |