

WAR PENSIONERS' WELFARE SERVICE – KEY PARTNER SURVEY REPORT 2004



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WAR PENSIONERS' WELFARE SERVICE – KEY PARTNER SURVEY

1. Introduction

The War Pensioners' Welfare Service, as part of the Veterans Agency (VA), has a mission to deliver modern, high quality, customer-focused service to war disablement pensioners, war widows and widowers, their dependants, carers and other veterans and to deliver them consistently, efficiently and effectively.

In 2004 VA issued a questionnaire to measure the perception of Key Partner satisfaction from those who had worked in partnership with the Welfare Service. By conducting annual surveys we will be able to compare year on year results and identify any developing trends. The result of this, the 2004 survey, provides the Welfare Service with the opportunity to address any areas for improvement.

2. Objectives

The objective of the research programme is to assist the VA in establishing the needs of current and future Key Partners with particular emphasis on ensuring that the Agency identifies:

- The level of satisfaction with VA services and support
- The cause of any dissatisfaction
- Key Partner ideas

3. Approach

VA uses up to date research information to identify the needs and views of all aspects of partnership. By issuing and analysing questionnaires the Agency is able to evaluate:

- Contact and advice
- Response times
- Service quality
- Service improvement

4. Key Partner Samples

This survey concentrates on those of our customers who specifically work in partnership with the Welfare Service and the Agency at Norcross. Questionnaires were issued to cover the following categories abbreviated within the report as shown:

- War Pension Committee Chairman (WPCC)
- War Pension Committee Member (WPCM)
- War Pensioners' Welfare Service Support Visitor (WSV)
- Ex-Service Organisation (ESO)

A total of 315 questionnaires were issued to Key Partners who agreed to participate in the survey, with a response rate of 248 (79%).

5. Management Summary – Overall Key Findings

Although 248 questionnaires were returned completed, when asked to provide the area within which they worked, a higher number of responses were received. This indicates that many of the Key Partners work within several areas. For example one Key Partner advised that they worked as a WPCM and for an ESO.

When asked if they had worked with the War Pensioners' Welfare Service only 6 (2%) Key Partners did not reply. The remainder advised that they had worked with the Welfare Service within many areas. The majority, 177 (71%) stating this was to assist one of our customers with a claim or enquiry. 128 (52%) advised that they worked as a WPCM.

Of the 248 replies received over half, 131 (53%) advised that they are "Very satisfied" with the help, information or advice they receive from the Agency. Only 4 (2%) stated that they are "Dissatisfied" or "Very dissatisfied" with any help, advice or information they receive.

A very high proportion 229 (92%) of Key Partners state that they feel "Very satisfied" or "Satisfied" with the speed with which the Agency deals with any queries or referrals.

Key Partners who are not aware of key personnel and their roles within the Welfare Service were asked to state the information they required. 42 responses were received to this question with 25 (60%) stating they require information on all roles. Other comments received included: **"I need a family tree for all the offices in greater London and in SW and Surrey"** and **"I am fairly new branch secretary and only make contact with regional welfare managers. Information on other roles would be helpful"**.

A very high percentage of Key Partners, 241 (97%) stated that they were aware of whom to contact regarding any queries or referrals they may have.

Although 188 (76%) of Key Partners are aware of the Welfare Service link on the Veterans Agency website a further 56 (23%) are not aware of the link. Only 27 (14%) advised that they had used the Welfare link.

Of the 46 (22%) WSVs who felt they have not received sufficient training to undertake their role, 35 comments were received. 7 (20%) of these comments were to request a visit to Norcross.

When asked how satisfied they are with the time taken to pay expenses, 74 (30%) of Key Partners did not provide an answer, with 15 (7%) advising they were "Dissatisfied" or "Very dissatisfied".

The overall service received from the Welfare Service produced a positive result, with 212 (85%) of Key Partners advising this was “Excellent” or “Good”.

7. Areas for Improvement

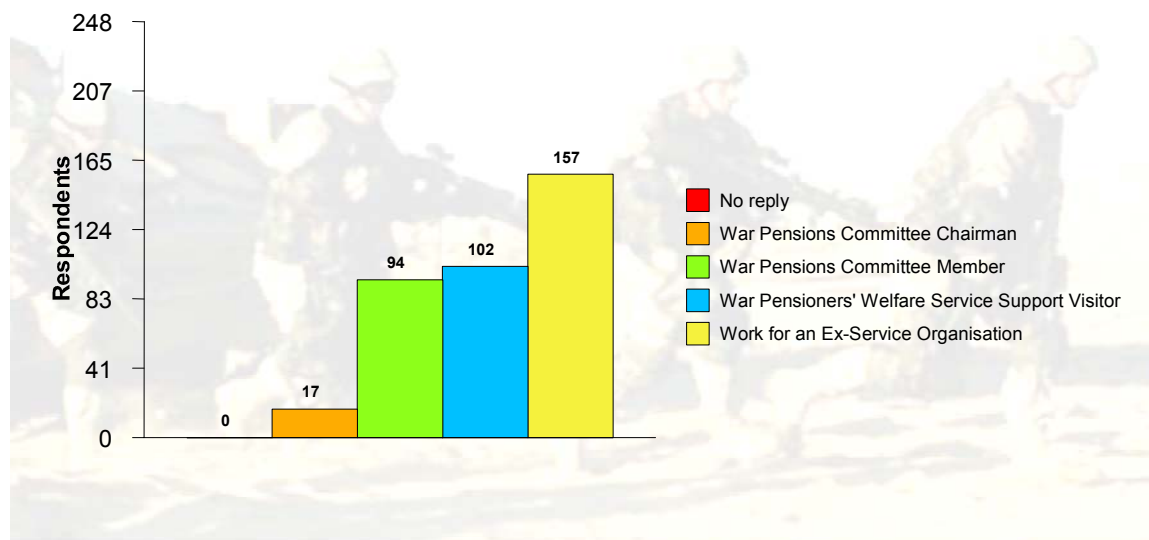
Areas for improvement that have been identified from this survey are:

1. Welfare Support Team to consider visits to Norcross for Key Partners
2. Welfare Service key personnel, names and roles to be issued on a regular basis
3. Welfare Support Team to consider Veterans Agency Website awareness information, including associated links, to be issued to all Key Partners.
4. All Key Partners to be consulted on a regular basis with regards to any training requirements.
5. Consideration to be given to the current process of paying WSV, WPC Chairman and WPC Members incurred expenses.

8. Survey Results –Key Partner Survey

The presentation of the analysis follows the same order as the questionnaire.

Please tick the boxes, which relate to you.



Although 248 questionnaires were returned to the Agency, 370 answers were received to the question asked. This highlights that several Key Partners work within a number of areas.

Key Partners who answered "Work for an Ex-Service Organisation" were asked to state the organisation. Responses received included:

"Royal British Legion"

"Combat Stress"

"War Widows Association"

"SSAFA Forces Help"

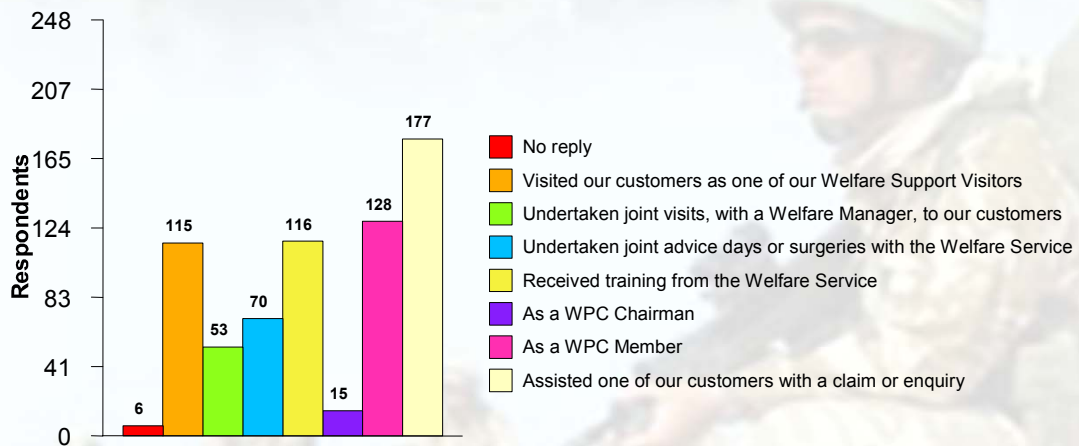
"BLESMA"

"St Dunstans"

"Royal Naval Association"

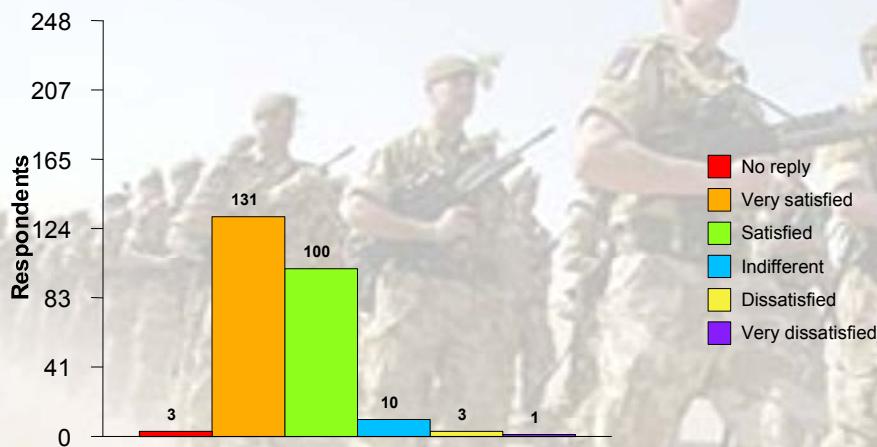
"Not Forgotten Association"

How have you worked with the War Pensioners' Welfare Service.



When asked how they have worked with the War Pensioners' Welfare Service, the majority, 177 (71%) of Key Partners advised that this was to assist a customer with a claim or enquiry.

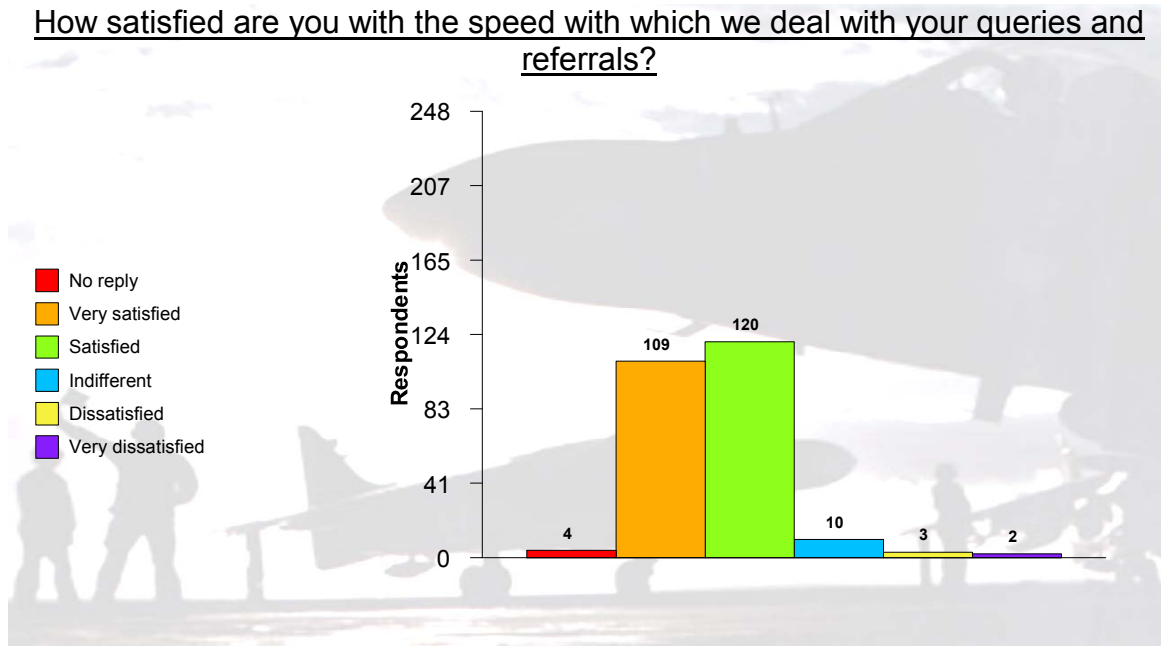
How satisfied are you with the help, information or advice you receive from us?



The majority of Key Partners, 231 (93%) stated that they were "Very satisfied", or "Satisfied" with the help, information or advice they receive from the Agency. However, 14 (6%) stated they were "Indifferent", "Dissatisfied" or "Very dissatisfied", with the help they received.

A small number of comments were received for the “Dissatisfied” and “Very dissatisfied” categories. These included:

"The request is normally not accompanied by an expense claim form. I had to use another office to seek them on one occasion. Not good practice"



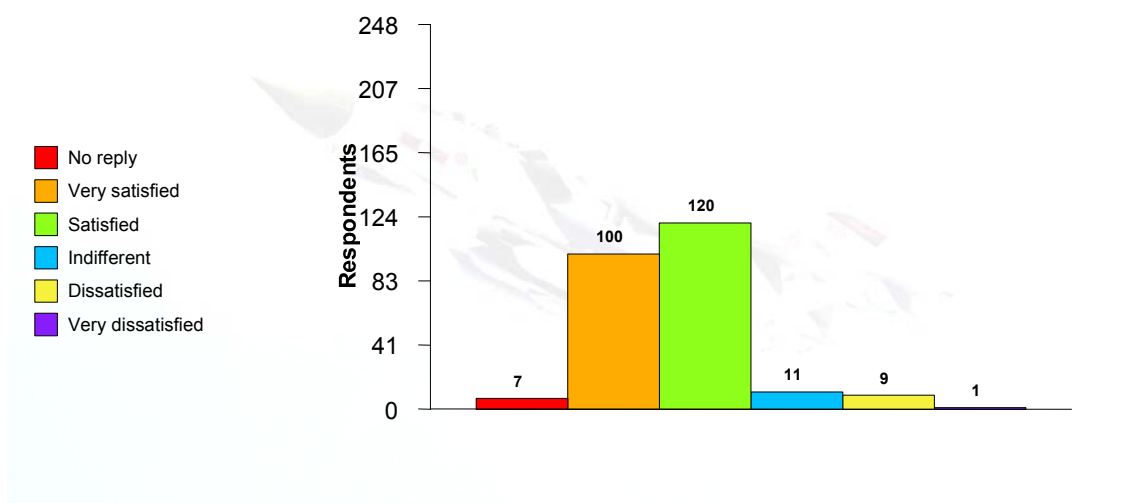
With a majority of 229 (92%), Key Partners advised that they are “Very satisfied” or “Satisfied” with the speed with which queries and referrals are dealt with.

A small number of comments were received for the “Dissatisfied” and “Very dissatisfied” categories. These included:

"The delay in receiving replies to correspondence is very unsatisfactory. The time taken is well outside Charter Mark times about which we hear so much. Indeed, on occasions, no reply at all is given"

"Far too long in getting any response"

How satisfied are you with the presentation and content of written communication from the Welfare Service?



Of the 241 respondents to the question, 220 advised that they were “Very satisfied” or “Satisfied” with the presentation and content of written communication from the Welfare service.

The 10 Key partners who stated that they were “Very dissatisfied” or “Dissatisfied” with the presentation and content of the written communication from the Welfare Service were asked to provide comments. These included:

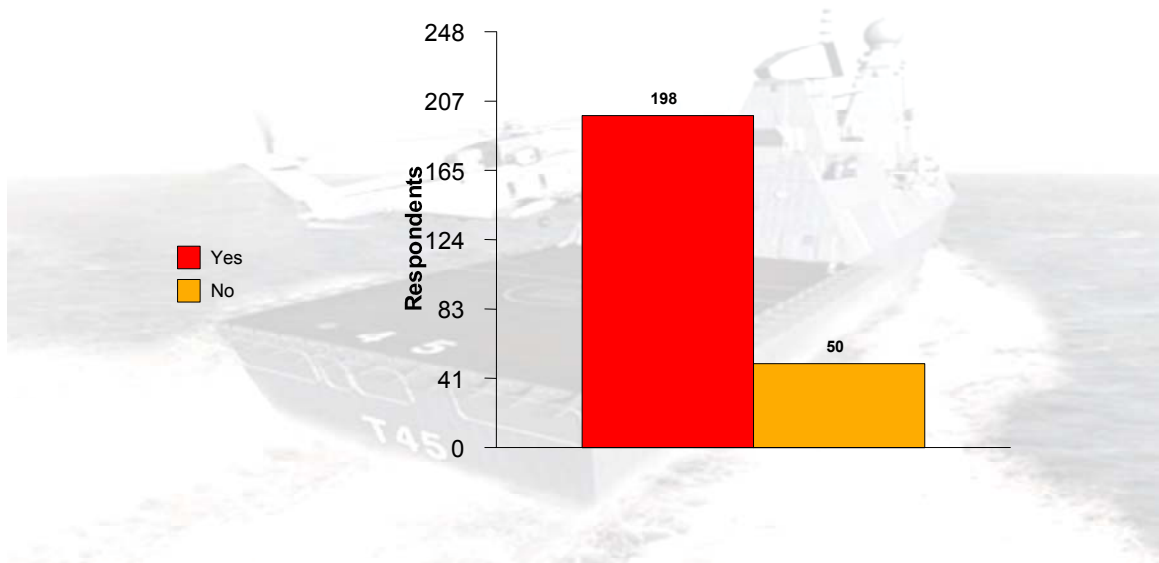
"When requesting WPWS to take action on behalf of clients, I seldom receive feedback"

"Poor English"

"What communications!"

"Many publications are bloated, impersonal and need updating or regionalised"

Are you aware of the key personnel, within the Welfare Service, and their roles?



Although 198 (80%) of Key Partners are aware of the key personnel and their roles within the Welfare service, 50 (20%) stated they were not aware.

The 50 respondents, who stated that they were not aware of the key personnel within the Welfare Service, and their roles, were asked to specify if this was an individual role or whether information was required on all roles.

Responses received included:

"Head of Welfare - Welfare Operations Manager"

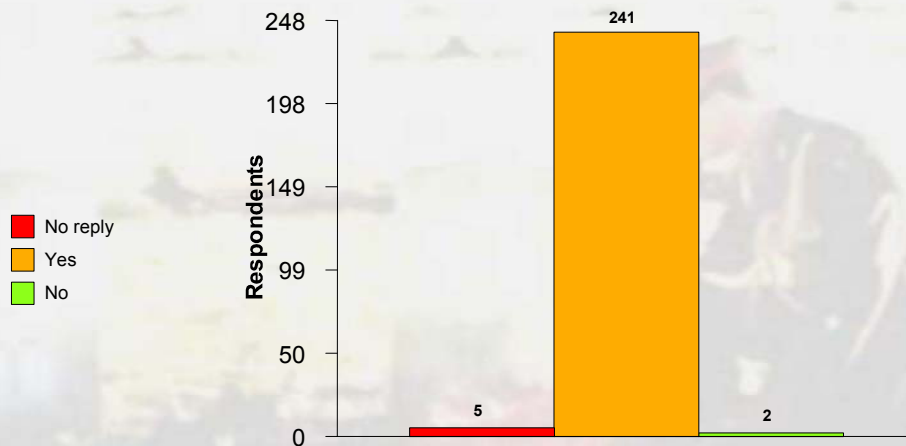
"All roles"

"As a new member of a WPC on all"

"Would like to have information on all roles. Who helps potential war pensioners with their application and appeals? Does someone help the applicants at the tribunal"

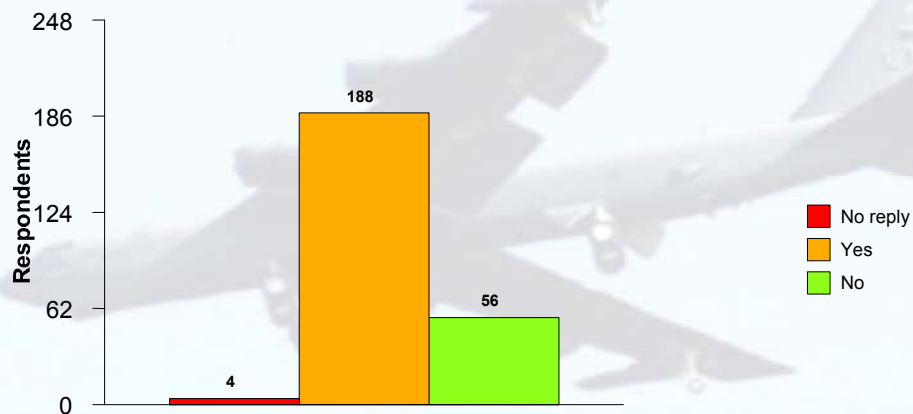
"It would be nice to know who is involved and contact telephone numbers from the region upwards"

Do you know who to contact regarding any queries, or referrals you may have?



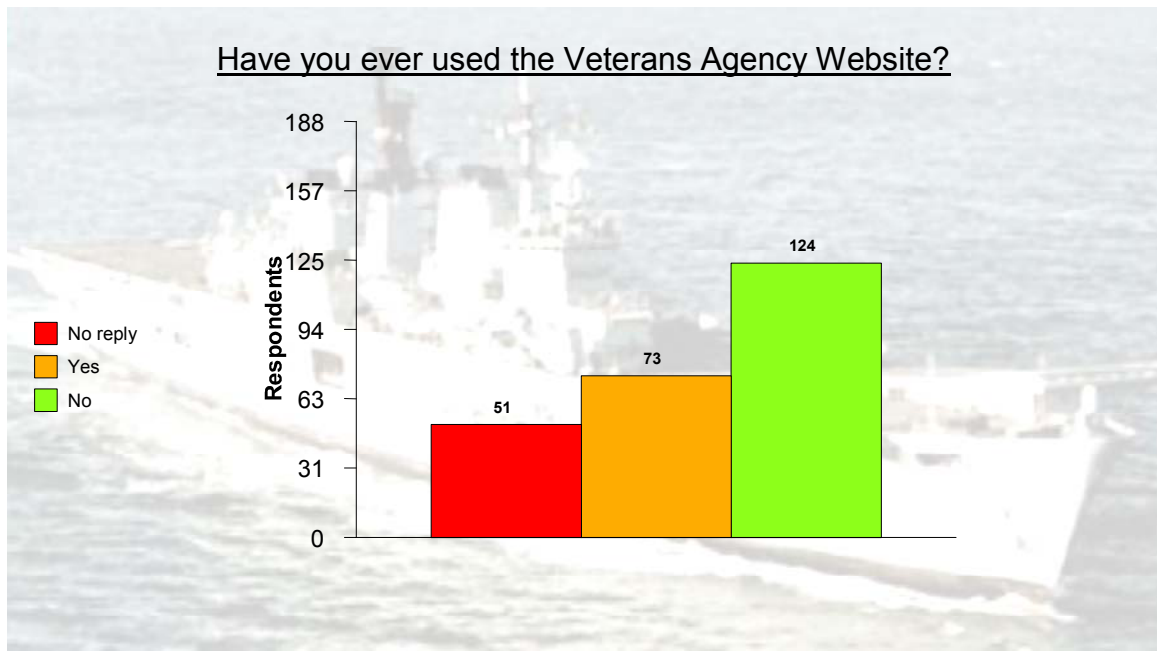
The majority of Key Partners, 241 (97%) are aware of whom to contact regarding any queries or referrals they may have.

Are you aware that the Welfare Service has a link on the Veterans Agency Website?



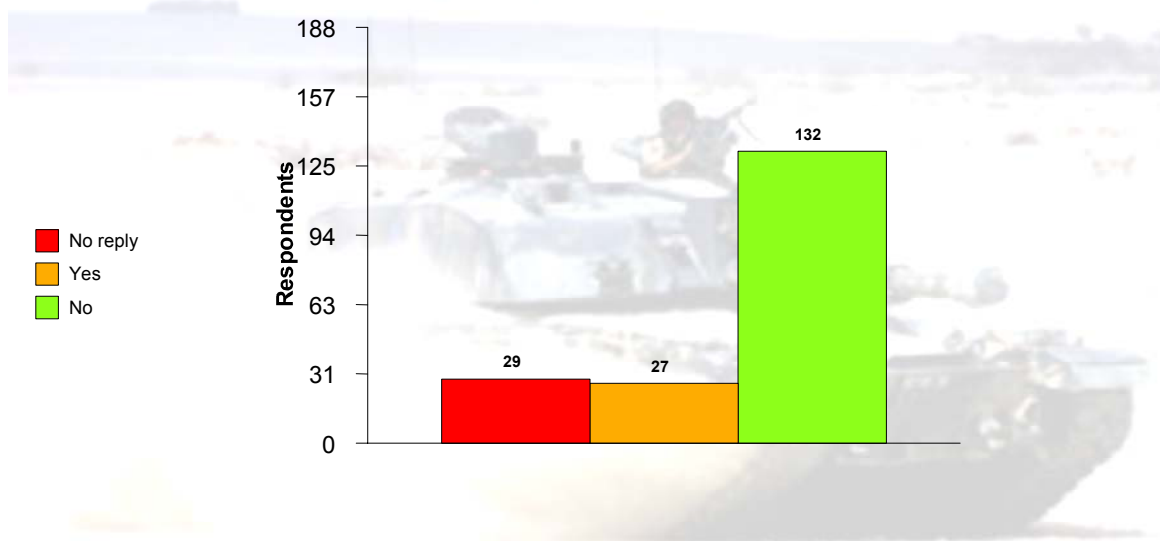
The majority of Key Partners, 188 (76%) are aware that the Welfare Service has a link on the Veterans Agency Internet Website. However, the survey highlights that 56 (23%) are not aware of the link.

Have you ever used the Veterans Agency Website?



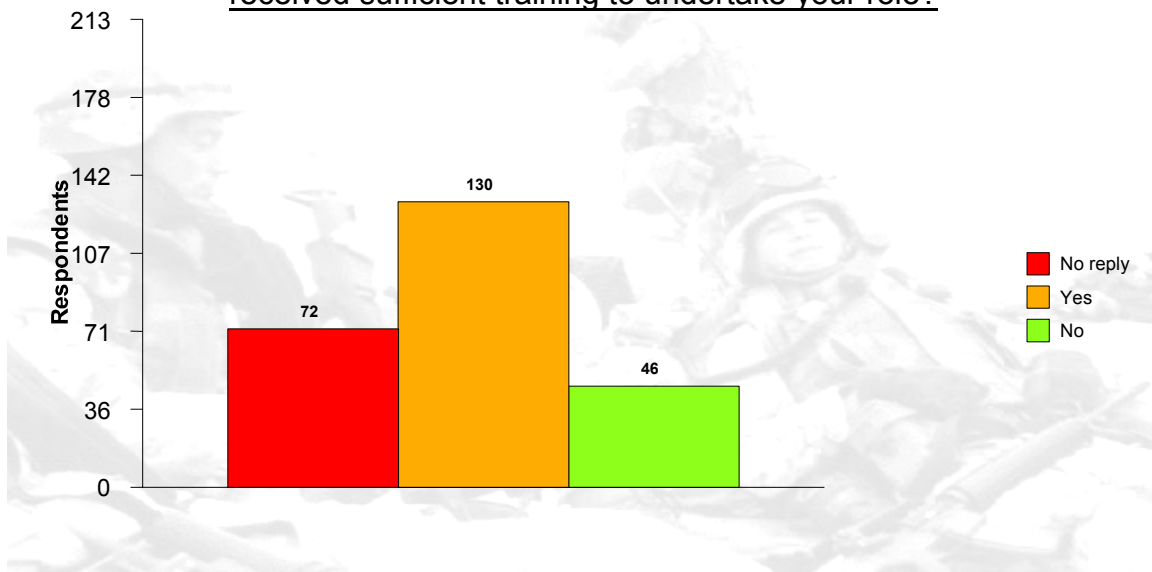
The majority of Key Partners, 124 (66%) have not used the Veterans Agency Website.

Have you ever used the Welfare Service Link?



Of the 188 Key Partners aware of the Welfare Service link on the Veterans Agency Website, only 27 (14%) have used the link.

If you are a WSV, WPC Chairman or WPC Member, do you feel that you have received sufficient training to undertake your role?



Although 130 (61%) of Key Partners within the roles of WSV, WPC Chair or WPC Member do feel they have received sufficient training to undertake the role, 46 (22%) state that they have not.

The 46 Key Partners were asked to advice on the topics they require additional training on.

Responses received included:

"A visit to Norcross would be beneficial also attendance as an observer at a tribunal hearing would be good"

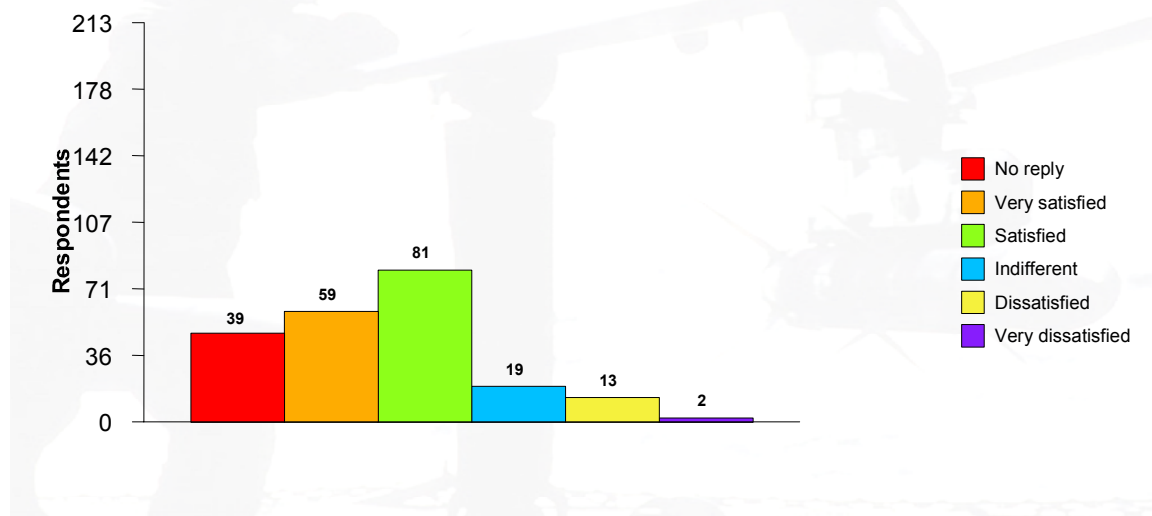
"Norcross internal procedures - Norcross relationship with MOD - Appeals"

"I think a visit to VA would be very helpful. I also feel an occasional refresher on what is expected of WPC members would be a good idea"

"I feel that WPC members could take a more active role in the support of your welfare service I personally have not yet been of any use except to attend meetings although I have offered to be of service"

"Region no longer holds annual training days"

If you are a WSV, WPC Chairman or WPC Member, how satisfied are you with the time taken to pay your expenses?



The majority, 140 (66%) of the WSV, WPC Chair and WPC members indicated that they were “Very satisfied” or “Satisfied” with the time taken to pay their expenses. 34 (16%) stated that they were “Indifferent”, “Dissatisfied” or “Very dissatisfied” with the time taken in relation to payment of their expenses.

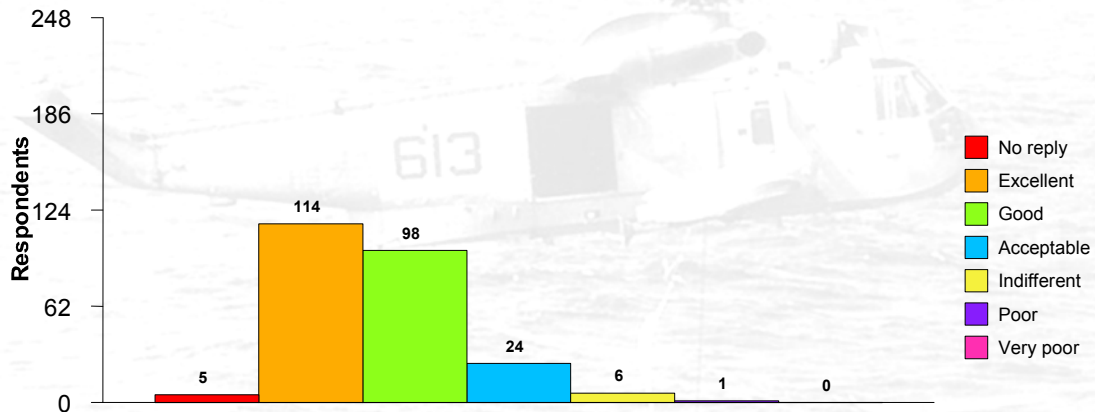
Comments received for the “Very dissatisfied” or “Dissatisfied” categories included:

"Far too long a claim should take no more than 14 days maximum to process"

"It has on occasions taken almost 3 months for expenses to be paid. I can see no reason for such delays, but if there is a good reason perhaps it could be informed to us"

"As a pensioner I think there is quite a time taken to re pay expenses after visits"

Which of these words best describes the overall service you received from the War Pensioners' Welfare Service?



When asked about the overall service received from the War Pensioners' Welfare Service, 236 (95%) stated that this was "Excellent", "Good" or "Acceptable". A minority of 7 (3%) advised that they felt the service to be "Poor", "Very poor" or were "Indifferent".

One comment was received from a Key Partner who felt that the overall service was "Poor" or "Very poor". This stated:

"Since the Brighton office closed the contact with the welfare office has been minimal. Portsmouth office never acknowledges receipt of reports, particularly since (name supplied) left. After reporting the death of a pensioner recently whom I had visited monthly for nine years. No acknowledgement"

Finally we asked our Key Partners for their thoughts on how we can improve our service, and for any part of the service they were especially unhappy or happy with. We received many comments which included:

"Over the past few years we have seen the WP Agency make excellent improvements in the time it takes to settle claim applications and deal with appeals. I hope the improvements continue. The WPWS provides a friendly and very helpful service to war pensioners/widows. Since the new appeals system, which includes, appeals against allowance decisions, WPWS Committee members have much reduced contact with war pensioners"

"A recently appointed chairman still feeling my way must applaud the professionalism of staff at Norcross whom I find to be most helpful and at paths to provide a first class service"

"I find the staff very helpful and I think they keep me well informed. Nothing is too much trouble and when I ring for advice they give it at

once if possible or find out very quickly. I don't like all the speakers but most are informative and add to our knowledge"

"Simplify by not changing the title of the service continually. If it follows the pattern used in my local newspaper our next title will be the Hero Agency"

"1. Personalise all correspondence to clients. 2. Adopt a more pro-active role in the regular visits to pensioners. 3. In urgent cases of need - completion of common application forms for financial assistance from Royal British Legion"

"As an ex-serviceman myself I feel confident in my role as a visitor to war pensioners. However I receive little or no updates on current policy or changes in pension conditions. Pass on any queries to what I consider to be the appropriate authority"

"More use could be made of WPC members and WPWS support visitors to keep in touch with war pensioners in their areas. Mobile VA surgeries are very useful but we are still probably not reaching all the potential pensioners of those needing advice. Displaying posters in Post Office and doctors surgeries is all very well but many potential clients are still being missed and the Agency need to promote more awareness"

"Have meeting in places with good rail links. Tell us well in advance if the meetings have been changed - to save expenses I book tickets well in advance"

"Visitors are mostly mature citizens who have already undergone training. The continual training updates and visits from area managers I feel are totally unnecessary"

"Urgently need to provide a family tree of responsibilities and phone numbers"

"Hope to make a visit to Norcross to see procedures from your prospective"

"I am delighted with the service. I think claims are being dealt with quicker"

"One of our case workers has particularly commended the value of the VA free phone service to our clients"