



Surveyors Ombudsman Service

Customer Satisfaction 2009

A Research Report

For



Prepared By

DJS Research Ltd

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This is now the first year in which the Surveyors Ombudsman Service has undertaken research into how satisfied people are with the service the organisation provides. The research was undertaken between January 2009 and April 2009. A total of 50 complainants were surveyed using a self completion method and 18 took part representing a response rate of 36%. The executive summary sets out some of the headline findings from the 2009 study.

Customer Problems and Initial Contact

- 1.2. The key problem identified by half was the Homebuyers Survey Valuation (also the most serious problem for the highest proportion) with a few also mentioning the Home Conditions Survey, General Poor Customer Experience and Professional Advice.
- 1.3. The proportion of complainants who had been made aware of the code of practice was high with 14 of the 18 who had been made aware.
- 1.4. Looking at satisfaction with the initial reception scores were good with almost all satisfied with the speed of initial response on the phone, staff spoken to, explanation/advice given, written response and explanation about the Surveyors Ombudsman Service's powers.

Experience of Complainants

- 1.5. Looking specifically at the Investigation Officers and the information they provide satisfaction was high with the majority satisfied with their friendliness, helpfulness, knowledge and reliability. Views were more mixed on the understanding of the problem and authority to deal with the problem. This reflects the high proportion who felt the outcome of the case went against them.
- 1.6. In the past findings have suggested a tangible link between complainants overall satisfaction levels and how frequently they have been updated. However, many had not been contacted proactively to keep them informed on progress of their case and in the context of cases that can take longer than expected this should be addressed.

- 1.7. Complainants were also asked to assess their satisfaction with various specific aspects of the Surveyor Ombudsman Service's processes. Satisfaction levels were high with explanation at the start and ease of access to an investigation officer. However, views were more mixed on the extent to which they were updated and the extent to which the Surveyors Ombudsman Service attempted to resolve complaints through mediation/negotiation, efficiency of the process, speed of the process and overall level of service.
- 1.8. Complainants were also asked about satisfaction with various aspects of the provisional conclusion report. Satisfaction with readability was reasonable with nearly half satisfied. However, there was some level of strong dissatisfaction with the accuracy of content and the report's recommendations.
- 7.1 When asked about the outcome of the case most felt it was not in their favour. We believe this is because the scale of the financial goodwill received did not live up to expectations. This is a key issue and impacts on the low satisfaction scores and likelihood to use again and recommend. Almost half (8 of 17) said they were very dissatisfied. Complainants need to understand the limitations of the Surveyors Ombudsman Service with regards to what can be delivered.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. Now in its first year of operation, the Surveyors Ombudsman Service provides an ombudsman service for chartered surveying firms, surveyors and estate agents.
- 2.2. The Surveyors Ombudsman Service was set up by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors to handle complaints about their members and has been approved by the Office of Fair Trading to run an estate agents redress scheme.
- 2.3. In 2008/2009 the Surveyors Ombudsman Service had around 3,000 members.
- 2.4. The Surveyors Ombudsman Service's principal objective is to receive and investigate complaints from members' customers and to issue final decisions based on fair and balanced outcomes for those complaints. On its website they describe their role as being "We provide a free and independent service. Our job is to investigate complaints fairly by listening to both sides of the story and looking at the facts."
- 2.5. Before the Surveyors Ombudsman Service can accept their complaint, customers must first have been through their own member company's complaint procedures and the case must have reached "deadlock". Deadlock occurs when the company has stated it cannot do any more to try and resolve the customer's complaint. If the Surveyors Ombudsman Service considers a complaint to be within its remit, the team will investigate the case and will consider whether or not any action must be taken by the member company. One of the conditions of membership is that the companies are required to honour the Ombudsman's final decision.
- 2.6. This is the first year in which the Surveyors Ombudsman Service has undertaken research into how satisfied users are with the service the organisation provides.

Aims and Objectives of the 2009 Research

- 2.7. The main focus of the research remains straightforward and broadly in-line with that of other Ombudsman Services, i.e. to examine whether those who have approached the Surveyors Ombudsman Service consider it is achieving its aim of providing a service that is independent, easy to use, free of charge, transparent and effective.

- 2.8. As the Surveyors Ombudsman Service is new there are quite a small number of complainants and enquirers compared to other Ombudsman services. As a result the decision was taken to focus on complaints only.

Research Method

- 2.9. The complainants group is made up of members of the public that went on to lodge an official complaint with the Surveyors Ombudsman Service about one of their members.
- 2.10. For the purposes of this study a sample of all complainants whose case was closed between September and December 2008 was used. This sample was sent a postcard prior to the research to inform them the research was taking a place and to give them the option to opt out of the research if they prefer not to take part.
- 2.11. A total of 50 postal surveys were issued, all with a covering letter from the Surveyors Ombudsman Service and a reply paid envelope. After approximately 3 weeks a reminder was sent out to those who had not replied. The survey was closed on 30th April 2009.
- 2.12. A total of 18 analysable surveys were returned, a response rate of 36%. Employing steps to ensure participation (such as clear communication, leaving sufficient time to respond and introducing a web survey option) will remain important in the future. Nonetheless, as with other Ombudsman Service studies, the response rate still remains very good for a self completion study.

3. Who were the Complainants?

- 3.1 Section 3 examines the key characteristics of those who responded to complainant surveys issued by DJS Research.
- 3.2 As outlined in the previous section, a total of 18 complainants returned surveys to DJS Research. It should be noted throughout this report the base numbers of responses to each individual question may vary as not all respondents answer every question. For some questions the total number may exceed the base - this is because respondents have been given the opportunity to select multiple responses.

Personal characteristics

- 3.3 There was a fairly even split of men (10) and women (7).
- 3.4 The majority of respondents (12 of 17) were aged between 46 and 65 year old. This is in line with the profile of other Ombudsman services, which tends to be older.

Table 1: Age of respondents

Sex	Complainants
Under 16	0
16-18	0
19-25	0
26-35	2
36-45	3
46-55	4
56-65	6
66+	2
Base (n)	17

- 3.5 Those surveyed were then asked about their housing tenure. Clearly given the nature of the complaint all who answered were owner occupiers.
- 3.6 The vast majority of respondents to both surveys stated that English was their first language – 16 of 17.

- 3.7 All survey respondents identified themselves as being "White". Most (13 of 17) were White English and the others were White Scottish (2) and White Other (2).

Table 2: Racial or ethnic background

Racial or ethnic background		Complainants	Census 2001
White	English	13	92%
	Welsh	0	
	Scottish	2	
	Irish	0	
	Other British	0	
	Any White	2	
Total White		17	
Mixed			8%
Asian or Asian British	Indian	0	
	Pakistani	0	
	Bangladeshi	0	
	Any other Asian	0	
Black or Black British	Caribbean	0	
	African	0	
	Any other Black	0	
Chinese / Other Ethnic Group	Chinese	0	
	Any other	0	
Total Ethnic Minority		0	
Base (n)		17	

- 3.8 None of the respondents to the survey reported any disabilities that might make it difficult to use the complainant service such as impaired hearing, poor sight/blindness or problems with physical mobility.

4. The Companies and their Customers' Problems

4.1 This section provides information about what type of service was being provided to those who made a complaint to the Surveyors Ombudsman Service. It also considers the reasons why those complaints were made.

Type of Company and Actual Company

4.2 Most complaints (14 of 18) were with chartered surveying firms and some (4 of 18) were with a surveyor. None were with an estate agent.

Problems with Member Companies

4.3 Survey respondents were asked to identify the types of problems they experienced with the company they were making their complaint to. Respondents were first asked to identify all the problems they had experienced and then select the single most serious problem from amongst them.

4.4 Looking first at all problems experienced (as set out in the table below). The problem mentioned most often (9 of 18) was the Homebuyers Survey Valuation and it was the most serious problem for around a third (5 of 18). This was followed by the Home Conditions Survey, General Poor Customer Service and Professional Advice (each mentioned by 3 of the 18).

Table 3: All problems and single most serious problem experienced with member companies

Problem	All problems	Most serious problem
Homebuyers Survey Valuation	9	5
Home Conditions Survey	3	2
General Poor Customer Service Experience	3	1
Professional Advice	3	0
Mortgage Valuation	2	2
Building Survey	2	2
Measurement Survey	1	0
Residential Sales	1	0
Other	4	3
Base (n)	18	18

Duration of Complaint to Company

- 4.5 The survey also asked the respondents how long they had been dealing with their company about their particular problem(s) before getting in touch with the Surveyors Ombudsman Service. Most got in touch after the complaint had elapsed for 5-6 months or longer (10 of the 18).

Table 4: Duration of complaint to company

Duration	Complainants
Under a month	2
1-2 months	1
3-4 months	3
5-6 months	4
7-12 months	4
Not really sure/don't remember	2
Base (n)	18

Information about how to Complain

- 4.6 We asked respondents to the survey if they had been made aware of the firm's Code of Practice on complaints handling and if so by whom. Almost all had been informed (14 of 18) and half of these (7 of the 14) had been informed by the firm.

Table 5: Made aware of Code of Practice on complaints handling

	Complainants
Yes	14
No	3
Not sure/don't remember	1
Base (n)	18

Table 6: How Enquirers and Complainants were made aware of the Code of Practice

	Complainants
From the Firm/Estate Agent	7
From the Surveyors Ombudsman Service	2
From the Office of Fair Trading	0
From the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)	0
Not sure/don't remember	5
Base (n)	14

- 4.7 The survey then asked respondents whether or not they had been told that after 8 weeks pursuing their complaint with their company they would be able to take the case to the Surveyors Ombudsman Service – 8 weeks being the time period that needs to pass before the matter falls within the Surveyors Ombudsman Service’s term of reference. About half (10 of 18) had been advised by the firm, although the rest had not.
- 4.8 Of those complainants who had been told about the 8 week “rule”, the key way in which they had found out was when the firm told them that they were unable to resolve the complaint or could do no more – i.e. at the point of ‘deadlock’ (5 of 12), when they first complained to the firm (3 of 12) and during the company’s complaint process (2 of 12).

Table 7: Stage at which advised

Stage	Complainants
When I first complained to the firm	3
During the firm’s complaint process	2
When the firm told me it was unable to resolve my complaint or could do no more	5
I experienced sustained difficulty and was unable to register my complaint, however Surveyors Ombudsman Service accepted my complaint anyway	0
Other	2
Not sure/don’t remember	0
Base (n)	12

5. Initial Reception with the Surveyors Ombudsman Service

5.1 This section of the report examines respondents' satisfaction with the initial contact with the Surveyors Ombudsman Service, including how people had found out about the organisation.

5.2 We gave respondents a list of elements relating to the initial reception they received when contacting the Surveyors Ombudsman Service and asked people to assess how satisfied (or otherwise) they had been with each aspect. Satisfaction levels were generally high with the majority very satisfied on all attributes and are set out in the tables below:

- Speed of initial response on the phone – almost all were satisfied (12 of 16) and just 1 was dissatisfied
- Staff spoken to – almost all were satisfied (14 of 16) and just 1 was dissatisfied
- Explanation/advice given – almost all were satisfied (13 of 16) and just 2 were dissatisfied
- Written response – almost all were satisfied (13 of 17), although 3 were dissatisfied
- Explanation about powers of SOS – almost all were satisfied (14 of 18) and just 2 were dissatisfied

Table 8: Satisfaction with first contact with the Surveyors Ombudsman Service - complainants

Problem	Very dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Neither/ Nor	Fairly satisfied	Very satisfied	Base
Speed of initial response on the phone	1	0	3	2	10	16
Staff spoken to	1	0	1	3	11	16
Explanation/ advice given	1	1	1	3	10	16
Written response	2	1	1	4	9	17
Explanation about powers of SOS	2	0	2	5	9	18

6. The Experience Of Complainants

6.1 In this chapter the experience of complainants will be explored in greater detail. Areas covered include their satisfaction with Surveyors Ombudsman Service staff and the organisation more generally, their views on the outcome of the complaint and their willingness to use the Surveyors Ombudsman Service again or recommend the organisation to others.

Complainants Views of Investigation Officers

6.2 Almost all had written contact (16 of 18) with the person responsible for investigating their case and nearly two thirds (11 of 18) had contact by phone.

6.3 Most were satisfied with friendliness (11 of 18) and helpfulness (11 of 18) and the neither/nor responses (5 for both) can be attributed to lack of contact with the investigation officer.

6.4 Most were satisfied with knowledge (11 of 16) and reliability (10 of 18). However, there were a few dissatisfied with each of these attributes.

6.5 Views were more mixed on the understanding of the problem (8 of 18 dissatisfied) and authority to deal with the problem (5 of 18 dissatisfied).

Table 9: Complainants satisfaction with Investigation Officers

Attribute	Very dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Neither/nor	Fairly satisfied	Very satisfied	Base
Friendliness	1	1	5	3	8	18
Helpfulness	1	1	5	2	9	18
Knowledge – knew what they were talking about	2	1	2	1	10	16
Reliability – always did what they said they would	3	0	5	5	5	18
Understanding of my problem – knew what I was talking about	5	3	0	5	5	18
Authority – confident they had the ability to solve my problem	4	1	1	5	7	18

Surveyors Ombudsman Service Information

- 6.6 The next question asked complainants to rate different aspects of the information they received stating how satisfied they were with each. Again, this question was asked in specific relation to the investigation officers.
- 6.7 Just about half were satisfied that information was readily given (10 of 18), timely/given when needed (9 of 17), clear/easy to understand (8 of 17) and comprehensive/told me everything (10 of 17). The rest either stated neither/nor or were dissatisfied. There was particular dissatisfaction with the timeliness of information (7 of 17 dissatisfied) and the comprehensiveness of information (6 of 17 dissatisfied).

Table 10: Complainants satisfaction with Information Provided by Investigation Officers

Attribute	Very dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Neither/ Nor	Fairly satisfied	Very satisfied	Base
Readily given/easy to get	3	1	4	2	8	18
Timely/given when needed	3	4	1	1	8	17
Clear/easy to understand	2	1	6	0	8	17
Comprehensive / told me everything	3	3	1	2	8	17

Keeping in Touch

- 6.8 All complainants had been contacted by someone at the Surveyors Ombudsman Service asking them to provide more information on the case.
- 6.9 Most (15 of 17) had been contacted by the Investigation Officer and some had been contacted by the Ombudsman (3 of 17) and 1 could not recall who had contacted them.

Table 11: Contacted by the Surveyors Ombudsman Service for more information – Complainants

Contact	Complainants
Yes, by the Investigation Officers	15
Yes, by the Ombudsman	3
Yes, by someone else/not sure who it was	1
No	1
Base (n)	17

- 6.10 In the past the findings from Ombudsman service customer satisfaction research have suggested a tangible link between complainants' overall satisfaction levels and how frequently they had been updated on the progress of their case.
- 6.11 Many (7 of 18) had not been contacted proactively to keep them informed how the case was progressing, although 3 had been contacted once, 4 twice and 4 had been contacted 3 or 4 times.

Table 12: Update by the Surveyors Ombudsman Service on progress – Complainants

Contact	Complainants
Yes, it contacted me once	3
Yes, it contacted me twice	4
Yes, it contacted me three or four times	4
No	7
Base (n)	18

- 6.12 Most (16 of 18) had contacted the Surveyors Ombudsman Service at some time for an update on the progress of their complaint.

Contact with Investigation Officer

- 6.13 Of those who telephoned the Investigation Officer, about half (6 of 13) could usually get through and the rest usually (5) or always (1) had to leave messages with just 1 saying they never got through. Of those who left telephone messages, a third (2 of 6) had to wait longer than 1-2 days and just 1 did not receive a reply.

Table 13: Ease of Access to Investigation Officer – Complainants

Contact	Complainants
Usually get through	6
Usually had to leave messages	5
Always had to leave messages	1
Never got through/was not offered a chance to leave messages	1
Base (n)	13

- 6.14 Of those who wrote to the Investigation Officer 7 of 11 always received an acknowledgement within 10 working days and just 1 never received a reply.

Table 14: Acknowledgement of Written Response – Complainants

Acknowledgement within 10 working days	Complainants
Always	7
Sometimes	3
Never	1
Base (n)	11

Satisfaction with Surveyors Ombudsman Service Process

- 6.15 Complainants were asked to assess their satisfaction with various specific aspects of the Surveyors Ombudsman's processes. The research undertaken for other Ombudsman service suggests that satisfaction with the outcome of their case may colour respondent's views of the process, so these questions seek to separate out "process" from satisfaction with "outcome".
- 6.16 The results are displayed in the table below. Most were satisfied with the explanation of what to expect given at the start of the process (14 of 18) and the ease of access to the investigation officer (10 of 17).
- 6.17 Views were more mixed on the extent to which they were updated with 9 satisfied and 9 dissatisfied and with the extent to which the Surveyors Ombudsman Service attempted to resolve complaints through mediation/negotiation (9 of 16), efficiency of the process (10 of 18), speed of the process (12 of 18) and overall level of service.

Table 15: Complainants satisfaction with Surveyors Ombudsman Service process

Attribute	Very dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Neither/nor	Fairly satisfied	Very satisfied	Base
Explanation of what to expect given at the start of the process	0	2	2	6	8	18
Extent to which I was kept updated	4	5	0	5	4	18
Ease of access to investigation officer	2	2	3	4	6	17
Extent to which the Surveyors Ombudsman Service attempted to resolve through mediation/negotiation	5	4	5	0	2	16
Efficiency of the process	8	2	3	2	3	18
Speed of the process	8	4	0	3	3	18
Overall level of service	6	3	2	3	4	18

Speed of Case Resolution

- 6.18 The speed of case resolution has been identified as a key driver of satisfaction in studies for other Ombudsman Services.
- 6.19 Cases often took longer to reach a conclusion than they had expected¹. Most (10 of 17) expected the case to take 1-2 months, but for most (12 of 18) the case took 3-6 months.

Table 16: Length of case – expected and actual

Length	(a) Expected	(b) Actual
Less than 1 month	1	0
1-2 months	10	1
3-6 months	4	12
7 months and over	2	5
Base (n)	17	18

Provisional Conclusion Report

- 6.20 We asked about satisfaction with various aspects of the provisional conclusion report. Satisfaction with readability was reasonable with nearly half (8 of 18) satisfied. However, there was some level of strong dissatisfaction with the accuracy of content (8 of 18 very dissatisfied) and the report's recommendations (9 of 18 very dissatisfied).

Table 17: Complainants satisfaction with provisional conclusion report

Attribute	Very dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Neither/ Nor	Fairly satisfied	Very satisfied	Base
Accuracy of content	8	4	1	1	4	18
Readability	3	2	5	3	5	18
Report's recommendations	9	4	2	0	3	18

¹ There may be a propensity among complainants to over estimate the length of their case – many will have been through sometimes lengthy and complicated internal member company procedures before going to the Surveyors Ombudsman Service and the boundaries between the two may become blurred.

Outcome of Case

- 6.21 After asking about the process and the provisional conclusion report the survey moved on to the outcome of the case. Most (13 of 18) felt the outcome was against them – 8 of these felt it was completely against them. Only 4 of the 18 felt the report was in their favour.

Table 18: Outcome of complaint - Complainants

Confidence	Complainants
Completely in complainants favour	1
On balance in complainants favour	3
On balance it was a draw	1
On balance against complainant	5
Completely against complainant	8
Base (n)	18

Further Representation

- 6.22 Over half (11 of 18) of cases went to the further representation process. All of these cases were because the complainant had submitted further representation. These were submitted for a range of reasons, often because they had further information or evidence to take into consideration (9 of 11), but also because they were not happy with the remedy that had been awarded (8 of 11) or felt there were errors in the report (8 of 11). However, most (8 of 11) felt this did not change the conclusion and some (2 of 11) felt it changed in the firm's favour.

Table 19: Reasons for making Further Representations – Complainants

Reason	Complainants
I felt there were errors in the report	8
I had further information or evidence that I wished to be taken into consideration	9
I was not happy with the remedy that had been awarded	8
Other	1
Base (n)	11

Benefits Awarded

- 6.23 The survey then asked complainants about what they had hoped to be awarded as a result of complaining, which of these was most important to them and which benefit they actually received.
- 6.24 Most were looking for financial goodwill (17 of 18) and for most (14 of 18) this was most important to them. Some (5 of 18) wanted an apology. However, this was most important to just 2 of these.
- 6.25 Most (13 of 16) received the financial goodwill they had hoped for and a higher number than had hoped for it (6) received an apology.

Table 20: Benefits awarded – hoped, most important and actual – complainants

Length	(a) Hoped	(b) Most Important	(c) Actual
An apology	5	2	6
An additional or repeat product/service	1	0	0
Financial goodwill	17	14	13
Other	2	2	3
Base (n)	18	18	16

- 6.26 Most (8 of 14) received financial awards of £100-£500, although some (4 of 14) received awards over £1,000.

Table 19: Financial awards - Complainants

Amount	Complainants
Less than £100	1
£100-£500	8
£501-£1,000	1
Over £1,000	4
Base (n)	14

Complainants' Satisfaction

- 6.27 Overall complainant satisfaction was low with 8 of the 17 very dissatisfied. Just 5 of the 17 (less than third) were satisfied. This reflects the high proportion who felt the outcome of the complaint went against them.

Table 20: Overall Satisfaction - Complainants

Satisfaction	Complainants
Very satisfied	2
Fairly satisfied	3
Neither/nor	1
Fairly dissatisfied	3
Very dissatisfied	8
Base (n)	17

- 6.28 Despite the low levels of satisfaction above nearly a half (7 of 16) said they were likely to use the Surveyors Ombudsman Service again. This does suggest that some who are dissatisfied are willing to give the service another try. However, around half (8 of the 16) said they were unlikely to use the Surveyors Ombudsman Service again.

Table 21: Complainants' Willingness to Use Surveyors Ombudsman Service Again

Likelihood	Complainants
Very likely	5
Quite likely	2
Not sure	1
Fairly unlikely	3
Very unlikely	5
Base (n)	16

- 6.29 Just over a third (6 of 17) said they would be willing to recommend the Surveyors Ombudsman Service to a friend or neighbour if they had a relevant complaint. However, more than half (9 of 17) said they would not and of these 7 said they definitely would not.

Table 21: Complainants' Willingness to Recommend Surveyors Ombudsman Service to Friends/Family

Willingness to recommend	Complainants
Yes, definitely	5
Yes, probably	1
Not sure	2
Probably not	2
Definitely not	7
Base (n)	17

Confidence in the Surveyors Ombudsman Service and Surveyors/Estate Agents

- 6.30 The proportion of complainants who said their confidence in the Surveyors Ombudsman Service has increased is low with just 4 of the 17 saying it had increased at all. Most (11 of 17) said it had decreased and 9 of these said it had decreased greatly.

Table 22: Complainants' confidence in Surveyors Ombudsman Service

Confidence	Complainants
Greatly increased	4
Increased	0
Remained the same	2
Decreased	2
Greatly decreased	9
Base (n)	17

- 6.31 The proportion of complainants who said their confidence in Surveyors/Estate agents is low with just 2 of the 17 saying it had increased at all. Most (13 of 17) said it had decreased and 10 of these said it had greatly decreased.

Table 23: Complainants' confidence in Surveyors/Estate Agents

Confidence	Complainants
Greatly increased	2
Increased	0
Remained the same	2
Decreased	3
Greatly decreased	10
Base (n)	17

7. Summary of Findings and Recommendations

- 7.2 This is the first year in which the Surveyors Ombudsman Service has undertaken research into how satisfied people are with the service the organisation provides. This section summarises the main findings from the 2009 research and then goes on to make some recommendations based on those findings.

Method

- 7.3 A total of 50 complainants were invited by letter to complete a paper survey. Complainants are members of the public who have made an official complaint with the Surveyors Ombudsman Service and whose case is considered closed.
- 7.4 Of these 50 complainants a total of 18 responded (a strike rate of 36%). Employing steps to ensure participation (such as clear communication, leaving sufficient time to respond and introducing a web survey option) will remain important in the future. Nonetheless, as with other Ombudsman studies, the response rate still remains very good for a self completion study.

Customer Problems

- 7.5 Respondents to the survey were asked to identify all the problems that related to the particular enquiry or complaint they had made to the Surveyors Ombudsman Service. The key problem identified by half was the Homebuyers Survey Valuation with a few also mentioning the Home Conditions Survey, General Poor Customer Experience and Professional Advice.
- 7.6 Looking at the single most serious problem mentioned. Again the Homebuyers Survey Valuation was mentioned by the highest proportion (about a third).

Information About How to Complain

- 7.7 The proportion of complainants who had been made aware of the Code of Practice on complaints handling was high with 14 of the 18 who had been made aware. Half of these had been by the firm, 2 by the Surveyors Ombudsman Service and the others could not remember.

Initial Contact with Surveyors Ombudsman Service

- 7.8 Complainants' satisfaction with initial contact with the Surveyors Ombudsman Service was high in 2009 with almost all satisfied with the speed of initial response on the phone, staff spoken to, explanation/advice given, written response and explanation about the Surveyors Ombudsman Service powers.

Experience of Complainants

- 7.9 Satisfaction with Investigation Officers was high with the majority satisfied with their friendliness, helpfulness, knowledge and reliability. Views were more mixed on the understanding of the problem (8 of 18 dissatisfied) and the authority to deal with the problem (5 of 18). This reflects the high proportion who felt the outcome of the case went against them.
- 7.10 About half were satisfied with the information provided by Investigation Officers in terms of information being readily given, timely/given when needed, clear/easy to understand and comprehensive/told me everything. However, there was some particular dissatisfaction with the timeliness of information (7 of 17 dissatisfied) and the comprehensiveness of information (6 of 17 dissatisfied).
- 7.11 In the past findings have suggested a tangible link between complainants overall satisfaction levels and how frequently they have been updated. However, many (7 of 18) had not been contacted proactively to keep them informed on progress of their case and almost all had made contact themselves to seek an update.
- 7.12 Ease of contact with the Investigation Officer was generally good with about half usually getting through on the phone without having to leave a message and the majority receiving an acknowledgement to a written response within 10 working days.
- 6.32 Complainants were asked to rate various specific aspects of the Surveyors Ombudsman Service process. Satisfaction levels were high with explanation at the start and ease of access to an investigation officer. However, views were more mixed on the extent to which they were updated and the extent to which the Surveyors Ombudsman Service attempted to resolve complaints through mediation/negotiation, efficiency of the process, speed of the process and overall level of service.
- 7.13 Cases often took longer to reach a conclusion than complainants had expected. Most expected a case to take 1-2 months, but in actual fact cases tended to last 3-6 months.

- 7.14 Complainants were also asked to assess their satisfaction with various aspects of the provisional report. Satisfaction with readability was reasonable with nearly half satisfied. However, there was some level of strong dissatisfaction with the accuracy of content (8 of 18 very dissatisfied) and the report's recommendations (9 of 18 very dissatisfied). Again this reflects the fact that many felt the outcome of the complaint was against them.
- 7.15 Over half went through to the further representation process. However, most felt this did not change the conclusion or that it changed in the firm's favour.
- 7.16 When asked about the outcome of the case most felt the outcome was not in their favour. This was despite the fact that most sought financial goodwill and that most received this. This suggests that it was the scale of the financial goodwill that went against them. The nature of the Surveyors Ombudsman Service means that problems may have led to significant financial loss for complainants. We suggest that dissatisfaction with the level of financial award is high and influences many other responses to the Surveyors Ombudsman Service.
- 7.17 Overall satisfaction levels were low with a high number (8 of 17) very dissatisfied. As a result about half are not likely to use the Surveyors Ombudsman Service, most would not recommend the service and most have declined confidence in the service and Surveyors/Estate Agents. We suggest this reflects dissatisfaction with the level of financial award.

Recommendations

Process Related Recommendations

- 7.18 Results from the survey show quite clearly that there is substantial dissatisfaction with the Surveyors Ombudsman Service. We believe this is primarily because the financial goodwill received does not meet complainants' expectations rather than because of the level of service. Complainants need to understand the limitations of the Surveyors Ombudsman Service with regards to what can be delivered.
- 7.19 Looking at service there were mixed views on updating and the speed and efficiency of the process and there were a low proportion receiving regular proactive progress updates. In the context of cases that sometimes take longer than expected this should be addressed.

Research Related Recommendations

- 7.20 This year was the first time a survey has been completed for the Surveyors Ombudsman Service. It is difficult to draw too many conclusions in light of the fact that expectations of financial compensation are impacting negatively on overall satisfaction. It may be fairer to look at satisfaction with the service issues rather than overall satisfaction in order to get past this key issue.
- 7.21 Nevertheless this survey has raised some key issues for the Surveyors Ombudsman Service and hence we recommend a repeat of the survey (with potentially more complainants) next year.

Appendix

The Questionnaire

Surveyors Ombudsman Service

Complainants Questionnaire

We at the Surveyors Ombudsman Service wish to provide the highest possible standard of service to those who bring complaints to us about the services of our member companies. According to our records, we have investigated and made a final decision on a complaint from you during the past 12 months. We would like to hear your views on how we handled your case and the decision we made, or the solution we helped to negotiate. Please note, however, that the Ombudsman *cannot* reopen cases. We will use the results of the survey to improve our service to others.

Please put a tick in the box for your answer. In some questions you should tick just one box and in others tick all boxes that apply.

The Problems You Had

This first section asks about the background to your complaint.

Q1 Which type of Firm did you have a problem with?

	TICK ONE BOX
Chartered Surveying Firm	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Surveyor	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Estate Agent	<input type="checkbox"/> 3

Q2 Which Firm did you have a problem with?

	TICK ONE BOX
Allied Surveyors	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Ashdown Lyons	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Connells Survey and Valuation Limited	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Countrywide Surveyors	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
ESurv	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Hardies Property and Constructions	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Lexicon Surveying Services	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
Metropolis Surveyors	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
Robinson and Hall LLP	<input type="checkbox"/> 9
Wolton Chartered Surveyors	<input type="checkbox"/> 10
Other Firm (PLEASE SPECIFY)	<input type="checkbox"/> 11

Q3 What type of Surveyor or Estate Agent provided, product, or service, were you having problems with that led you to make a complaint to the Surveyors Ombudsman Service in the first instance?

	TICK ALL THAT APPLY
Home Conditions Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Home Information Pack (HIPs)	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Homebuyer's Survey Valuation	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Measurement Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Mortgage Valuation	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Professional Advice	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Residential Sales (I was the purchaser)	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
Residential Sales (I was the vendor)	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
Building Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> 9
Planning Application	<input type="checkbox"/> 10
General poor customer service experience	<input type="checkbox"/> 11
Other please write in	<input type="checkbox"/> 12

Q4 Looking at all the problems with the Firm in Q3 above, which was the single most serious problem?

	TICK ONE BOX
Home Conditions Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Home Information Pack (HIPs)	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Homebuyers Survey Valuation	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Measurement Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Mortgage Valuation	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Professional advice	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Residential Sales (I was the purchaser)	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
Residential Sales (I was the vendor)	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
Building Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> 9
Planning Application	<input type="checkbox"/> 10
General poor customer service experience	<input type="checkbox"/> 11
Other (please write in)	<input type="checkbox"/> 12

Q5 Were you made aware of the Firm's Complaints Handling Procedure on complaints handling?

	TICK ONE BOX	
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	ANSWER Q6
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	SKIP TO Q7
Not sure/can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	SKIP TO Q7

Answer Q6 if you answered yes above**Q6** If so, how did you first learn of this Complaints Handling Procedure?

	TICK ALL THAT APPLY
From the Firm / Estate Agent	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
From the Surveyors Ombudsman Service	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
From the Office of Fair Trading	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Not sure / don't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
From the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Other (PLEASE WRITE IN)	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Q7 For how long did you try to resolve the problem with the Firm, **before** you approached the Surveyors Ombudsman Service?

	TICK ONE BOX
Under a month	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
1 – 2 months	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
3 – 4 months	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
5 – 6 months	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
7 - 12 months	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
More than a year	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Not sure / don't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 7

- Q8** Did the Firm advise you at any stage that you could refer your complaint to the Surveyors Ombudsman Service if it remained unresolved after 8 weeks?

	TICK ONE BOX	
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	ANSWER Q9
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	SKIP TO Q10
Not sure/don't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	SKIP TO Q10

Answer Q9 if you answered yes above

- Q9** At what stage did the Firm tell you that you could refer your complaint to the Surveyors Ombudsman Service if it remained unresolved after 8 weeks?

	TICK ONE BOX
When I first complained to the Firm	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
During the Firm's complaints process	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
When the Firm told me it was unable to resolve my complaint or could do no more (deadlock)	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Not sure / don't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
I experienced sustained difficulty, and was unable to register my complaint; however Surveyors Ombudsman Service accepted my complaint anyway.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Other (PLEASE WRITE IN)	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Initial Reception

I'd now like to ask you how satisfied you were with your **initial** contact with the Surveyors Ombudsman Service.

Q10 Thinking back to when you first contacted the Surveyors Ombudsman Service, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following aspects of your initial reception? (If you did not experience any of these aspects, please tick '6' na as not applicable to you).

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither/nor	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	n/a
Speed of initial response on the phone	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Staff spoken to	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Explanation/advice given	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
The written response	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Explanation about the powers of the Surveyors Ombudsman Service	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Answer Q11 and Q12 if dissatisfied with the speed of initial response

Q11 After you had listened to the Surveyors Ombudsman Service's recorded message, and your call was placed in a queue to be answered by the next available Enquiry Officer how long did it take to get through on the phone?

	TICK ONE BOX
Less than 30 seconds	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
31-60 seconds	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
1-2 minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
3-5 minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
More than 5 minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Q12 What would have been an **acceptable wait** to get through to the Surveyors Ombudsman Service on the telephone once you have listened to the recorded message and your call is placed in a queue to be answered by the next available Enquiry Officer?

	TICK ONE BOX
Less than 30 seconds	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
31-60 seconds	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
1-2 minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
3-5 minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
More than 5 minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Answer Q13 if dissatisfied with the written response

Q13 Why were you dissatisfied with the written response?

	TICK ALL THAT APPLY
It was unclear what I had to do	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
It was unclear what the Surveyors Ombudsman Service do	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
It was too wordy	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
I didn't like the tone of it	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
They had not accepted my complaint	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Other (PLEASE WRITE IN)	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

The Investigation Officers Who Handled Your Complaint

I now have a few questions about your satisfaction with the Investigation Officers during the complaint process.

Q14 What contact did you have with the person responsible for investigating your case?

	TICK ALL THAT APPLY
Contact by phone	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Written contact	<input type="checkbox"/> 2

Q15 Thinking of the Investigation Officer at the Surveyors Ombudsman Service how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the way they dealt with you during the complaint?

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither/nor	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Friendliness	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Helpfulness	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Knowledge – knew what they were talking about	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Reliability – always did what they said they would	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Understanding of my problem – knew what I was talking about	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Authority – confident they had the authority to deal with the problem	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Q16 How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following aspects of the information you were given by the Investigation Officers during the complaint?

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither/ nor	Fairly dis-satisfied	Very dis-satisfied
Readily given/ easy to get	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Timely/ given when needed	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Clear / easy to understand	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Comprehensive / told me everything	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Keeping In Touch

I'd now like to ask about your satisfaction with updating during the case.

Q17 Were you contacted at any stage by someone at the Surveyors Ombudsman Service asking you to provide more information about the case? **PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY**

	TICK ALL THAT APPLY
Yes, by the Investigation Officers	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Yes, by the Ombudsman	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Yes, by someone else / not sure who it was	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

Q18 Did the Surveyors Ombudsman Service keep you informed about how your case was progressing?

	TICK ONE BOX
Yes, it contacted me once	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Yes, it contacted me twice	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Yes, it contacted me three or more times	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

Q19 Did you contact the Surveyors Ombudsman Service to ask how your case was progressing?

	TICK ONE BOX	
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	ANSWER Q20
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	SKIP TO Q21

Answer Q20 if you contacted the Surveyors Ombudsman Service about the case

Q20 Typically, when you telephoned an Investigation Officer to see how your case was progressing did you....?

	TICK ONE BOX
Usually get through	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Usually had to leave messages	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Always had to leave messages	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Never get through / was not offered chance to leave a message	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

Answer Q21 if you left messages for an Investigation Officer

Q21 If you left telephone messages for an Investigation Officer, did they ring back ...?
PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY

	TICK ALL THAT APPLY
..within 24 hours	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
..within 1 – 2 days	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
..longer than 1-2 days	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
..did not return call	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

Answer Q22 if you wrote to an Investigation Officer**Q22** If you wrote, did you receive a reply/acknowledgement within 10 working days?

	TICK ONE BOX
Always	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Never	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

Satisfaction With the Surveyors Ombudsman Service's Process Before You Received The Provisional Conclusion

I'd like to ask about your satisfaction with the Surveyors Ombudsman Service's process.

Q23 How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following aspects of the Surveyors Ombudsman Service's **process**? (If you did not experience any of these aspects, please tick '6' as not applicable to you). There are questions later asking your views on the outcome.

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither/nor	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	n/a
Explanation of what to expect given at the start of the process	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Extent to which I was kept updated	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Ease of access to Investigation Officer	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Extent to which the Surveyors Ombudsman Service attempted to resolve the complaint through mediation/ negotiation	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Efficiency of the process	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Speed of the process	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Overall level of service	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Satisfaction With The Outcome

I'd now like to ask you about your satisfaction with the outcome of the complaint.

- Q24** How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following aspects of the Investigation Officer's Provisional Conclusion report? (If you did not experience any of these aspects, please tick '6' as not applicable to you).

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither/nor	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	n/a
Accuracy of content	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Readability	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Report's recommendations	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

- Q25** When you received the Provisional Conclusion 'report' from the Investigation Officer did you feel the outcome was?

	TICK ONE BOX
..completely in my favour	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
..on balance in my favour	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
..on balance it was a draw	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
..on balance it was against me	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
..completely against me	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

- Q26** Did you or the Firm submit Further Representations? (i.e further evidence to be reviewed by the Ombudsman)

	TICK ALL THAT APPLY
Yes, I did	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Yes, the Firm did	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
No, neither did (please go to Q29)	<input type="checkbox"/> 3

Answer Q27 and Q28 if you submitted Further Representations**Q27** What were your reasons for making Further Representations?

	TICK ALL THAT APPLY
I felt there were errors in the report	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
I had further information or evidence that I wished to be taken into consideration	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
I was not happy with the remedy that had been awarded	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Other (PLEASE WRITE IN)	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

Q28 Did these Further Representations change the conclusions made by the Investigation Officer, and do you think it changed in your favour or in the Firm's favour?

	TICK ALL THAT APPLY
Yes, more in my favour	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Yes, more in the Firm's favour	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Yes, in no-one's favour	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
No, it did not change	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

Q29 Which of the following benefits did you **hope** to be awarded?

	TICK ALL THAT APPLY
An apology	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
An additional or repeat product /service	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Financial award	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Other (PLEASE WRITE IN)	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

Q30 Which of the benefits you **hoped** to be awarded was most important to you?

	TICK ONE BOX
An apology	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
An additional or repeat product / service	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Financial award	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Other (PLEASE WRITE IN)	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

Q31 Which of the following benefits were you **actually** awarded?

	TICK ALL THAT APPLY BOX
An apology	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
An additional or repeat product / service	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Financial award	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Other (PLEASE WRITE IN)	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

Answer Q32 if financial goodwill was made

Q32 If financial goodwill was made, what was it worth?

	TICK ONE BOX
Less than £100	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
£100 - £500	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
£501-£1,000	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Over £1,000	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Not sure/don't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Time Taken To Reach The Final Decision

I'd now like to ask your views on the speed of conclusion of your case.

Q33 How long did you **expect** the case to take to reach a Final Decision from the time the Surveyors Ombudsman Service had taken up your case?

	TICK ONE BOX
Less than 1 month	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
1 – 2 months	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
3 – 6 months	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
7 months and over	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

Q34 How long did it **actually** take for the case to reach a Final Decision from the time the Surveyors Ombudsman Service had taken up your case? **PLEASE TICK ONE**

	TICK ONE BOX
Less than 1 month	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
1 – 2 months	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
3 – 6 months	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
7 months and over	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

Overall Satisfaction With the Surveyors Ombudsman Service

I'd now like to ask overall how satisfied you were with the Surveyors Ombudsman Service's handling of your complaint

Q35 Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the Surveyors Ombudsman Service's handling of your query?

	TICK ONE BOX
Very satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Fairly satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Fairly dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Very dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Q36 If a friend or neighbour asked you for advice on the Surveyors Ombudsman Service's handling of a query of complaint about a Surveying Firm, Surveyor or Estate Agent would you recommend they use the Surveyors Ombudsman Service's service?

	TICK ONE BOX
Yes, definitely	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Yes, probably	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Probably not	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Definitely not	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Q37 If you ran into similar problems again, how likely would you be to go back to the Surveyors Ombudsman Service?

	TICK ONE BOX
Very likely	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Fairly likely	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Neither likely nor unlikely	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Fairly unlikely	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Very unlikely	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Q38 How has your experience with the Surveyors Ombudsman Service, influenced the confidence you have in the Surveyors Ombudsman Service?

My confidence in the Surveyors Ombudsman Service has ...	
	TICK ONE BOX
..greatly increased	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
..increased	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
..remained the same	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
..decreased	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
..greatly decreased	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Q39 How has your experience with the Surveyors Ombudsman Service, influenced the confidence you have in dealing with Surveyors/Estate agents?

My confidence in dealing with the Surveyors/Estate agents has ...	
	TICK ONE BOX
..greatly increased	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
..increased	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
..remained the same	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
..decreased	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
..greatly decreased	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Finally, About You

We ask these questions so we can understand how our service is received by all sections of UK society. However, if you feel uncomfortable answering any of these questions then please leave them blank.

Q40 Are you?

	TICK ONE BOX
Male	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Female	<input type="checkbox"/> 2

Q41 What is your age?

	TICK ONE BOX
Under 16	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
16 – 18	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
19 – 25	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
26 – 35	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
36 – 45	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
46 – 55	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
56 – 65	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
66 and over	<input type="checkbox"/> 8

Q42 Which best describes your housing situation? **TICK ONE BOX ONLY**

	TICK ONE BOX
Owner occupier	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Tenant of a council	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Tenant of a housing association	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Tenant of a private landlord	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Q43 Do you have any disabilities that make it difficult to use our complaints service? (If you are an older person, please include any problem that you have acquired through ageing)

	TICK ALL THAT APPLY
Impaired hearing	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Poor sight/blindness	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Problems with physical mobility	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Other disability	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Q44 Is English your first language?

	TICK ONE BOX
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2

Q45 How would you describe your racial or ethnic background?

		TICK ONE BOX
White	English	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
	Welsh	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
	Scottish	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
	Irish	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
	Other British	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
	Any other White background (PLEASE WRITE IN)	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Mixed	Any Mixed background (PLEASE WRITE IN)	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
Asian or Asian British	Indian	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
	Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/> 9
	Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/> 10
	Any other Asian background (PLEASE WRITE IN)	<input type="checkbox"/> 11
Black or Black British	Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/> 12
	African	<input type="checkbox"/> 13
	Any other Black background (PLEASE WRITE IN)	<input type="checkbox"/> 14
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group	Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/> 15
	Any other Chinese background (PLEASE WRITE IN)	<input type="checkbox"/> 16

Thank you very much for your time, please return this survey to DJS Research Ltd in the reply envelope – no stamp needed. Any other correspondence to us, will be sent to the Surveyors Ombudsman Service. If you have any queries on the survey, please call James Hinde at DJS Research on 01663 732721.

Thank you very much for your help.

This interview is part of a market research survey being carried out by DJS Research who adhere to the Market Research Society Code of Conduct.

If you want to verify that we are a bona fide consultancy the Freephone number of the Market Research Society to ring is +44 (0) 500 396 999