

STATE SERVICES COMMISSION
Te Komihana O Nga Tari Kawanatanga



Understanding the Drivers of *Satisfaction and Trust* in Public Services - A Qualitative Study

For State Services Commission

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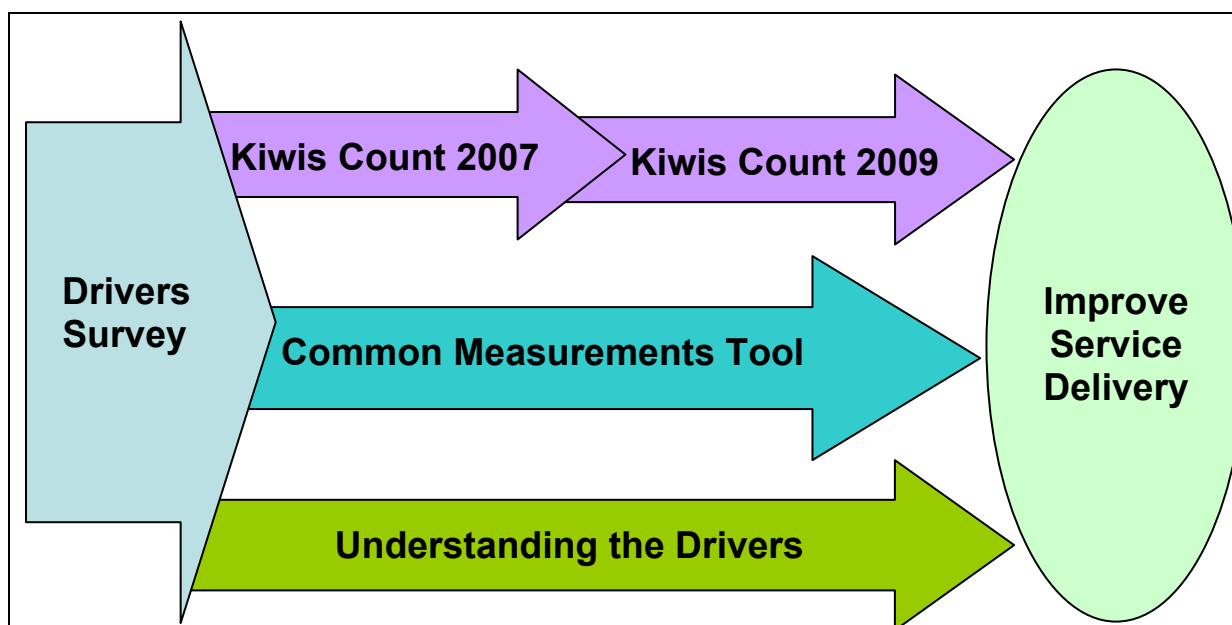
1. Background and Introduction

1.1 Background

In 2007 as part of the *Accessible State Services* Development Goal, the State Services Commission (SSC) began a programme of research to find out more about New Zealanders' experience of public services (NZE research programme). This included the *Drivers Survey*¹ which successfully identified the key factors (or drivers) that impact New Zealanders' satisfaction with, and trust in, public services.²

To measure how well public services are performing in relation to the drivers a biennial all-of-government national survey called *Kiwis Count*³ was launched in the same year. In addition, the *Common Measurements Tool* (CMT) is available to agencies to measure satisfaction with their own services in a standardised, yet flexible way. Together, *Kiwis Count* and *CMT* let us know how well we are doing in improving the areas that really matter to New Zealanders, and where to focus resources so they have the greatest impact. However, improving New Zealanders' experience of public services is not only about knowing *where* to improve, but understanding *how* to improve.

Understanding the Drivers is a qualitative research project that fills this gap in our knowledge by exploring how New Zealanders understand the drivers. Their views have provided us with a wealth of information to assist public service agencies to become more user-focused and accessible, and to improve the service experience of New Zealanders. The following diagram shows how all the different projects under the NZE research programme relate to improved service delivery.



¹ For full report see <http://www.ssc.govt.nz/display/document.asp?NavID=316>

² The SSC identified Canada as a world leader in measuring customer satisfaction to improve service delivery, and the New Zealanders' Experience research programme draws on Canada's best practice approach.

³ For full report see <http://www.ssc.govt.nz/display/document.asp?NavID=316>

1.2 Introduction

In March 2008, the State Services Commission contracted UMR Research to undertake qualitative research into the drivers of Satisfaction and Trust. Forty focus groups were conducted over the period May through to July 2008. Population groups included General Public, Māori, Asian, Pacific and Young people (aged 15-30 years).

Understanding the Drivers complements *Kiwis Count*. It asks New Zealanders how they understand those aspects of service delivery measured by *Kiwis Count*. Together the two projects inform service improvement in ways, and in areas that really matter to New Zealanders.

■ Scope

The following tables outline the drivers of satisfaction and trust for each demographic group explored in the research. While the order of importance for each driver varies from group to group, the actual drivers are largely the same. The percentage in brackets relates to satisfaction (or trust for the trust drivers). For example, the four satisfaction drivers listed for Māori account for 77% of their satisfaction with service quality.

➤ Drivers of satisfaction

General Public (66%)	Maori (77%)	Pacific (57%)	Asian (57%)	Young People (62%)
Met expectations	Treated fairly	Competent staff	Met expectations	Met expectations
Competent staff	Competent staff	Kept promises	Treated fairly	Kept promises
Kept promises	Kept promises	Good value	Good value	Treated fairly
Treated fairly	Individual circumstances	Admitted mistakes	Competent Staff	Competent Staff
Individual circumstances	Good value	Understood process	Kept promises	Good value
Good value			Individual circumstances	

- The service experience met your expectations (*Met expectations*)
- Staff were competent (*Competent staff*)
- Staff kept their promises – that is, they did what they said they would do (*Kept promises*)
- You were treated fairly (*Treated fairly*)
- Your individual circumstances were taken into account (*Individual circumstances*)
- It's an example of good value for tax dollars spent (*Good value*)
- They (public servants) admitted responsibility when they made mistakes (*Admitted mistakes*)
- You were aware of what to do every step of the process (*Understood process*)

➤ Drivers of trust

General Public (57%)	Maori (61%)	Asian (60%)
Confidence public servants do good job	Confidence public servants do good job	Confidence public servants do good job
Provides services that meet your needs	Public servants treat people fairly	Provides services that meet needs
Public servants treat people fairly	Provides services that meet your needs	Public service keeps its promises
Public service keeps its promises	Provides you will all the information needed	
Admits responsibility when makes mistakes		

- You have confidence that public servants do a good job (*Confidence public servants do good job*)
- The Public Service provides services that meet your needs (*Provides services that meet your needs*)
- Public servants treat people fairly (*Public servants treat people fairly*)
- The Public Service keeps its promises – that is, it does what it says it will do (*Public service keeps its promises*)
- The Public Service admits responsibility when it makes mistakes (*Admits responsibility when makes mistakes*)
- The Public Service provides you with all the information you need (*Provides you will all the information needed*)

What is clear from the above tables is that *Understanding the Drivers* is about understanding what matters specifically to *Māori, Asian, Pacific* and *Young* people as much as it is about all New Zealanders. It is also important to clarify that while services across the *public sector* provided context to people’s experiences and perceptions, the term used to describe them is *public services*. This term was used in *Kiwis Count* after pre-testing identified *public services* as being widely understood by the public to mean ‘services provided by the government,’ including at the local level.

■ Reading this report

The main objective of this report is to understand the key factors driving New Zealanders’ satisfaction and trust in public services. This report is therefore structured around the drivers. Each driver chapter explains *what* the drivers mean and *how* managers can improve service delivery. These chapters also look at the linkages across drivers. The report includes chapters for demographic groups insofar as their views differ from the general public. The last chapter outlines respondents’ general impressions of public services.

2. Executive Summary

Findings from this research are based on 40 focus groups (around 8 people per group) were held in urban, provincial and rural locations around New Zealand. Groups were held with general public, Māori, Asian, Pacific People and Young People respondents. The groups were held between 30 April and 3 July 2008.

2.1 Overview

- To improve *satisfaction* in the Public Service consideration should be given to placing a priority on ensuring front-line staff have a strong customer/solutions focus. The ability to understand people's needs, to be knowledgeable enough to meet those needs where possible and to be able to communicate and explain things appropriately to people so they understand are fundamental. This may also require the Public Service to be sensitive to a range of cultural and second language needs. Improvements in these areas and giving effect to the Public Service standards of integrity and conduct is likely to lead to substantial improvements in satisfaction in public services.
- To improve *trust* in the Public Service is more challenging. Improving satisfaction and increasing awareness of the Public Service standards of integrity and conduct, including clear demonstration of accountability, may improve levels of trust. Respondents believe it is important that swift and decisive action is taken to address issues when these standards have not been upheld. However, there are other influences on trust. Negative media reports of high profile issues as well as stereotypes of public servants can also influence trust and be prevalent for many years, despite positive personal experiences.
- Improvements to overall expectations can only be objectively measured if service standards are set, so staff know what is expected of them and the public are aware of the standards they can expect to receive. Key services standards, such as realistic and achievable response times should be set and be publicly available to ensure expectations are transparent and there is accountability for fulfilling them. This will help ensure that public servants do what they say they will do.
- While the Internet and telephone may provide more cost efficient ways of providing public services, face-to-face contact is generally the most preferred and trusted channel. Telephone service standards are often criticised and on-line interactions will need to be capable of meeting more complex requirements before the public are satisfied and confident about using them more frequently.

2.2 The drivers of satisfaction

- The most important driver for the general public, Asian and Young People groups was *The service experience met your expectations*. The driver covers almost any contact or experience an individual has with a public service and links to all other satisfaction drivers. Ensuring front-line staff have a strong customer-focus, such as, being able to listen and understand an individual's needs and being knowledgeable of their organisation's services are critical. The ability to be sensitive to people's needs and to be able to communicate with them in a way that they understand are also important. For public service managers it will be important to manage public expectations in terms of what can reasonably be achieved. Attention to these issues is likely to improve satisfaction with public services.
- The driver *Staff were competent* flows from the previous driver, that is, competent staff are those who meet expectations. Thus, improvements to this driver will occur if front-line staff have a strong customer/solution focus, are knowledgeable and are good communicators. It is important for staff to be able to listen, understand needs, explain processes and inform people about their entitlements.
- In terms of the driver *Your individual circumstances were taken into account* respondents said they feel as if they are treated 'as a number', yet they believe their circumstances are unique and in some instances involve a complex set of interconnected interactions with public services. The circumstances that respondents think are most important to take into account are individual disabilities and household circumstances, particularly for families on low incomes or are under pressure for other reasons. Improvements to this driver will occur if front-line staff take the time to listen and understand each individual's situation and have systems in place to manage more complex issues, especially those that involve more than one public service agency. The development of some flexibility for staff within reasonable guidelines to recognise individual circumstances would also be helpful.
- The driver *You were treated fairly* has a lot of over-lap with the previous driver as there is an expectation that all people should be treated according to their needs and these are dependent on an individual's circumstances. The driver is more complex than many others because respondents interpret it in several different ways. Fair treatment can be understood as being non-judgmental and respectful in dealing with people guided by the aphorism 'treat me as you would want to be treated.' Being treated fairly can also mean receiving a quality of service that is expected. It can also mean being treated justly, so that people in similar circumstances are treated the same. For some Māori, being treated fairly has special significance linked to injustices that have occurred since the Treaty of Waitangi which have implications for expectations of public services today. This was also the most important driver for Maori.
- The need for follow-through by staff is particularly relevant to the driver *Staff kept their promises – that is, they did what they said they would do*. Of all the drivers, this is the one that is most likely to damage trust in public services as doing what you say you will do was regarded as a verbal contract particularly by Māori and Pacific People respondents. The best way to improve this driver is to for public servants to do what they say they will do. For managers, it will be important to establish service delivery expectations that staff can deliver on and to ensure staff are well informed about them, so unrealistic expectations are not made. Any failures to meet a promise should be accompanied by an apology, and an explanation about what happened and what has been done to ensure it does not recur.

- The satisfaction driver that stood out as quite distinct from the rest was *It's an example of good value for tax dollars spent*. When respondents were asked to give examples of other drivers they easily cited personal examples. However, with this driver the predominant examples given were not personal experiences, but generic services of a particular type. Some respondents found it particularly difficult to assess 'value' without clear, quantitative data. Other respondents said that if their service expectations are met that will demonstrate good value for money. This is consistent with the sense of accountability that some respondents attach to the driver, for instance, when the phrase 'I pay taxes, I expect a certain level of service' is used. However, the most common way of explaining what was good value for tax dollars spent was to identify examples of core public services, like health, education, and those important to public safety and security. These services were considered to be 'free', that is, they were not paid for directly by individuals and available to all. Frontline public servants in these services were generally seen to be highly committed, despite being underfunded and working in stressful situations. Improvements to this driver are likely to result from increasing public awareness of the extent of the work departments do, meeting service expectations and the availability of financial data that demonstrates where tax dollars are spent.
- The satisfaction driver *They [public servants] admitted responsibility when they made mistakes* is unique to Pacific People and, as such, was only explored in these groups. The majority of Pacific People reported that they had not experienced this. On the rare occasion that it had been experienced, it sent a powerful signal of respect that Pacific People appreciated. Public servants may need to be more aware that Pacific People, particularly first generation migrants, tend to have low levels of confidence and knowledge in dealing with New Zealand public services. As a result, they are less likely to question when a mistake may have been made, suggesting the need for public servants to be more pro-active in checking for mistakes. As in the case of broken promises, there is an expectation that mistakes should be acknowledged, apologised for and full explanations given.
- The satisfaction driver *You were aware of what to do every step of the process* is also unique to Pacific People. There is a need to recognise that for some, particularly first generation Pacific People, there may be shame felt in admitting to not understanding something. Public servants need to be conscious of this and explain things as simply as possible, ideally in the first language of the individual. The provision of information programmes through community networks and working through close friends and family as intermediaries will go some way to helping people to be better informed. Such initiatives would be equally applicable to first generation Asians for whom English is a second language and those who have low levels of confidence in dealing with public services in general.

2.3 The drivers of trust

- This research shows that a person's trust in the Public Service is largely based on perceptions. Respondents' views were strongly influenced by media reports and anecdotal accounts as well as stereotypes of the Public Service which may be a product of an earlier time. Trust is therefore more difficult to earn. While levels of trust may improve over a longer period of time as satisfaction with personal experiences improve, other influences, such as, media reports and stereotypes mean that improving trust will remain a challenge.

- The most important trust driver is *You have confidence that public servants do a good job*. The driver has strong links to the satisfaction drivers *The service experience met your expectations* and *Staff were competent*. Improving the competency of staff in a way that better meets service expectations will therefore improve trust that public servants do a good job. Key competencies to focus on are to ensure staff are helpful, knowledgeable, listen, understand and are customer/solutions focused.
- In general, respondents saw significant overlap between the satisfaction driver *You were treated fairly* and its companion trust driver, *Public servants treat people fairly*. Respondents tended to bring up personal experiences, as opposed to general perceptions, when discussing this driver. As a result, the sorts of things that are likely to improve the satisfaction driver may improve the trust driver, such as, treating people non-judgmentally.
- Respondents also saw considerable overlap between the satisfaction driver *Staff kept their promises – that is they did what they said they would do* and the trust driver *The Public Service keeps its promises, that is, it does what it says it will do*. Again, improvements which apply to the satisfaction driver, such as, ensuring public servants do what they say they will do and managing realistic expectations, are likely to improve levels of trust in this driver.
- The driver *The Public Service provides services that meet your needs* is somewhat more complex as it is understood in two different, but not mutually exclusive ways. At one level, 'your needs' are interpreted as personal and refer to meeting service expectations, such as, being listened to and understood by public servants with the knowledge to help. This means that improving trust may be improved if Public Service meets service expectations. However, 'your needs' is also understood in a more universal sense for society as a whole. In that case, trust may improve if it is perceived that essential core services, such as, those that provide health, education, safety and security are met. This is why, for example, negative media stories about service shortcomings in these areas can weaken trust.
- The trust driver *The Public Service provides you with all information you need* is unique to Māori and as such was only explored in these groups. The meaning of this driver was frequently illustrated by reference to not being provided with full information to entitlements. The driver was also explained in terms of difficulty understanding how 'the system works' and insufficient explanations for decisions. Improvements to levels of trust in this driver may result from a strong focus on treating people as individuals, taking time to understand their needs and being able to communicate and explain things in a simple and clear manner.
- There is strong support for the Public Service's standards of integrity and conduct to be well publicised so the public can hold staff accountable for them. There is very limited awareness of the standards and there is a perception gap between the words and the delivery at present. Although these standards are used for internal purposes, respondents felt it would be important for there to be increased awareness of them among the public because they said it would lead to greater accountability.
- There is a perception that the Public Service does not tend to admit responsibility for its mistakes. There is also a perception that high profile breaches of ethics by senior public servants are indicative of further problems that have not seen the light of day. It is important that action is taken swiftly to address breaches.

2.4 Unique perspectives

- Māori, Asian and Pacific People respondents stress the need for cultural sensitivity. Perceptions of racism are voiced across these three populations.
- Some Māori view fair treatment by the Public Service through the lens of past injustices from a failure to honour the Treaty of Waitangi. This can lead to a blurring of perceptions of the role of the Crown, government and the Public Service.
- When dealing with Māori the Public Service need to be sensitive to *whakama* (shame or embarrassment), which may prevent some Māori from accessing the services they are entitled to. This may be because they are too ashamed to admit their knowledge is lacking and to save face will simply say they understand when in fact they do not. A similar issue exists for some Pacific People, particularly those who have migrated or for whom English is a second language.
- First generation Pacific People tend to demonstrate a lack of confidence in dealing with public services. There appears to be a need for widely used public services to communicate through the Pacific People's community channels to build understanding and trust in using these services.
- Pacific People and Asian respondents who have migrated tend to assess the merits of New Zealand's public services against their own international experiences. Generally, the New Zealand public services compare favourably.
- Asian respondents appear to place more stress on speed and efficiency of services as important aspects of meeting their expectations.
- Asian respondents interpreted staff competency differently to other groups, tending to view it as implying outstanding as opposed to somewhat above average service which was the interpretation given by other groups.
- Young People appear to have a stronger preference for on-line service delivery and school aged students place a premium on being treated with respect. The speed of service is more important for the youngest respondents than for other groups.
- Rural-provincial dwellers perceive unfairness is demonstrated by the relative lack of public services available to them locally. The most trusted channel, face-to-face contact is less likely to be readily available, so there is more reliance on the phone. However, as this report shows, the most frustrating channel is the phone. This may be a more pronounced issue for rural-provincial people. They also have concerns about access to emergency services and dislike centralised call-centres being unaware of local place names.

2.5 Perceptions of the Public Service

- Perceptions of the Public Service can generally be placed into four broad categories covering the type of relationship the public have with it, the dominant traits of the service, the quality of services it provides and the role it plays in society. The extent to which individuals perceive the Public Service in each of these categories can have a direct bearing on their expectations of public services and the way they interact with them.
- Some respondents characterised their relationship with the Public Service as very powerful relative to themselves and some feel threatened as a result.
- Respondents perceived the Public Service as complex, closed, difficult to deal with, and rule-bound. Positive traits associated with the Public Service included being helpful, culturally sensitive and accessible.
- The Public Service is generally perceived to provide poorer quality services than the private sector. Respondents reported that the Public Service lacked a strong customer focus and did not appear to be accountable to the public it serves. As the sole provider of many services to the public respondents felt they had little ability to influence service improvements. These perceptions appeared to reinforce feelings of disempowerment.
- A small number of respondents had a more benign impression of the Public Service reflecting their view of its role as a provider of services including essential services that everyone needs.

3. Methodology

3.1 Qualitative research and focus groups

Qualitative research is the most appropriate methodology to use in order to understand what people mean by each driver. It essentially involves an exploration of the subjective perceptions of respondents based on their experiences using their constructs and language. It focuses on underlying drivers of perception, identifies the range of issues involved, allows an assessment of the intensity with which views and attitudes are held, and gives a feeling for the language used. Typically, it is characterised as research concerned with open-ended questions like “What are the reasons?”, “What is the thinking behind that? etc”. In contrast, quantitative research is concerned with measurement and is necessary to establish, with some certainty, the extent to which views and attitudes expressed in qualitative research are held throughout wider populations. Typically, it focuses on questions of measurement, such as, “How many, how often, what proportion ...?” Qualitative research is suited for exploratory research that seeks to gain understanding while quantitative research can subsequently be used to confirm and measure qualitative findings. Qualitative research can also provide insight to quantitative findings, such as in this research, where respondents explained what they understood by the satisfaction and trust drivers.

Focus groups were chosen as the qualitative methodology for this study. They have the advantage of enabling the exploration of issues in a dynamic social setting which can provide exceptionally rich information from the interchange of ideas in a group discussion. It is through the group interaction that each respondent adds their own perceptions to the shared circumstances of the group and in this way atypical factors can be better tested and identified through group experiences. Similarly, the group environment ensures that a full range of perceptions are identified and the differences between them explored. This is best achieved by exploring such issues among groups with similar demographic characteristics.

3.2 Matrix of focus groups by type and location

The State Services Commission in its brief determined the eight locations where it wanted focus groups held. UMR recommended the distribution of groups by location based primarily on those locations where a significant minority of the sub-populations of Māori, Asian and Pacific People were located. Another factor that influenced selection was the need to ensure a representation of rural areas that was broadly reflective of the general population. A total of nine groups were held in rural areas, five in the Far North and four in the Clutha and Waitaki Districts. The following table shows where the groups were located and the populations and sub-populations in each area sourced from Statistics New Zealand’s 2006 Census data.

Location	General Pop	Māori	Pacific	Asian	Young people 15-30
Far North District	1 x group Total Pop: 55,845	3 x groups Total Pop: 22,113 (40%)	1 x group Total Pop: 1,572 (3%)	Total Pop: 783 (1%)	
North Shore City	2 x groups Total Pop: 205,605	Total Pop: 12,519 (6%)	Total Pop: 6,537 (3%)	3 x groups Total Pop: 55,845 (18%)	1 x group (Younger working 18-23 years)
Manukau City	2 x groups Total Pop: 328,968	2 x groups Total Pop: 47,346 (14%)	2 x groups Total Pop: 86,616 (26%)	2 x groups Total Pop: 66,720 (20%)	
Hamilton City	2 x groups Total Pop: 129,249	2 x groups Total Pop: 24,576 (19%)	Total Pop: 5,139 (4%)	1 x group Total Pop: 13,047 (10%)	1 x group (Older Working 24-30 years)
Lower Hutt City	2 x groups Total Pop: 55,845	1 x group Total Pop: 16,281 (14%)	2 x groups Total Pop: 10,095 (10%)	1 x group Total Pop: 8,361 (9%)	1 x group (School 15-17 years)
Dunedin City	1 x group Total Pop: 118,683	1 x group Total Pop: 7,362 (6%)	Total Pop: 2,535 (2%)	1 x group Total Pop: 6,129 (5%)	1 x group (Tertiary)
Waitaki District	2 x groups Total Pop: 20,223	Total Pop: 1,089 (5%)	Total Pop: 222 (1%)	Total Pop: 354 (2%)	
Clutha District	1 x group Total Pop: 16,839	Total Pop: 1,482 (9%)	Total Pop: 135 (1%)	Total Pop: 123 (1%)	1 x group (Young Family with dependent children)
Total Groups	13	9	5	8	5

3.3 Satisfaction and trust drivers by population

The table (following) outlines the satisfaction (S) and trust (T) drivers that were explored by each population group. All the drivers were covered during the course of this work. A small number of groups discussed the wider concept of trust and how it applied to the Public Service.

A further adjustment was made to the discussion guide after the first wave of 12 groups had been conducted. This was to introduce a projective exercise to gain more understanding into general impressions of the Public Service as it was apparent that the original discussion guide was not providing the depth of insight sought. The discussion guides are appended to this report.

General population	Māori	Pacific	Asian	Young People (15-30)
The service experience met your expectations (S)			The service experience met your expectations (S)	The service experience met your expectations (S)
You have confidence that public servants do a good job (T)	You have confidence that public servants do a good job (T)		You have confidence that public servants do a good job (T)	
Staff were competent (S)	Staff were competent (S)	Staff were competent (S)	Staff were competent (S)	Staff were competent (S)
The Public Service provides services that meet your needs (T)	The Public Service provides services that meet your needs (T)		The Public Service provides services that meet your needs (T)	
Staff kept their promises – that is, they did what they said they would do/The Public Service keeps its promises – that is, it does what it says it will do (S+T)	Staff kept their promises – that is, they did what they said they would do (S)	Staff kept their promises – that is, they did what they said they would do (S)	Staff kept their promises – that is, they did what they said they would do/The Public Service keeps its promises – that is, it does what it says it will do (S+T)	Staff kept their promises – that is, they did what they said they would do (S)
You were treated fairly/Public servants treat people fairly (S+T)	You were treated fairly/Public servants treat people fairly (S+T)		You were treated fairly (S)	You were treated fairly (S)
Your individual circumstances were taken into account (S)	The Public Service provides you with all information you need (T)	They [public servants] admitted responsibility when they made mistakes (S)		
The Public Service admits responsibility when it makes mistakes (T)		You were aware of what you needed to do every step of the process (S)		
It's an example of good value for tax dollars spent (S)	It's an example of good value for tax dollars spent (S)	It's an example of good value for tax dollars spent (S)	It's an example of good value for tax dollars spent (S)	It's an example of good value for tax dollars spent (S)

3.4 Satisfaction and trust drivers by population

As it was not possible to cover all drivers in all groups, it was decided that in almost all cases only three drivers would be covered in any one group. The exceptions were that where a satisfaction driver and a trust driver were obviously closely linked, such as, *Staff kept their promises – that is, they did what they said they would do (S)* and *The Public Service keeps its promises – that is, it does what it says it will do (T)* and *You were treated fairly* and *Public servants treat people fairly* they were discussed in the same group. Some also included additional discussion on *general trust*.

Some drivers were explored across more groups than others. The rationale for this was that there were some drivers the State Services Commission had indicated it knew least about, such as, *It's an example of good value for tax dollars spent* and those that were more likely to take longer to discuss, such as, *The service experience met your expectations*. It was also important to ensure key drivers like these were covered in both urban and rural groups as well as across population groups where applicable.

The information below outlines the drivers that were explored in each group and summarises the number of urban and rural groups in which the drivers were covered.

■ Satisfaction drivers by population

➤ General public (13 groups)

	Met Expectations	Treated Fairly	Competent Staff	Kept Promises	Good Value	Individual Circumstances
Far North	✓	✓	✓			
North Shore	✓		✓	✓		
		✓			✓	
Manukau		✓				✓
Hamilton			✓		✓	
		✓				
Lower Hutt		✓				
						✓
Dunedin	✓			✓	✓	
Waitaki	✓					
				✓	✓	
Clutha	✓				✓	
No. Urban	2	4	2	2	3	2
No. Rural/ Provincial	3	1	1	1	2	-
TOTAL	5	5	3	3	5	2

➤ **Māori (9 groups)**

	Treated Fairly	Competent Staff	Kept Promises	Good Value	Individual Circumstances
Far North	✓		✓		
		✓		✓	
Manukau	✓		✓	✓	✓
		✓			
Hamilton				✓	
				✓	✓
Lower Hutt	✓		✓		
Dunedin				✓	
No. Urban	3	2	2	5	2
No. Rural/ Provincial	1	-	1	-	-
TOTAL	4	2	3	5	2

➤ **Asian (8 groups)**

	Met Expectations	Treated Fairly	Competent Staff	Kept Promises	Good Value	Individual Circumstances
North Shore	✓	✓		✓		
					✓	
Manukau	✓					✓
		✓		✓		
Manukau			✓		✓	
Hamilton		✓	✓			
Lower Hutt	✓	✓				
Dunedin					✓	✓
No. Urban	4	4	2	2	3	2
No. Rural/ Provincial	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	4	4	2	2	3	2

➤ **Pacific People (5 groups)**

	Competent Staff	Kept Promises	Good Value	Admitted Mistakes	Understood Process
Far North			✓	✓	✓
Manukau		✓	✓	✓	
	✓	✓			✓
Lower Hutt	✓	✓			✓
		✓	✓	✓	
No. Urban	2	4	2	2	2
No. Rural/ Provincial	-	-	1	1	1
TOTAL	2	4	3	3	3

➤ **Young People (5 groups)**

	Met Expectations	Treated Fairly	Competent Staff	Kept Promises	Good Value
North Shore	✓	✓			✓
Hamilton	✓			✓	✓
Lower Hutt	✓	✓	✓		
Dunedin	✓	✓		✓	
Clutha	✓	✓			✓
No. Urban	5	4	1	2	3
No. Rural/ Provincial	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	5	4	1	2	3

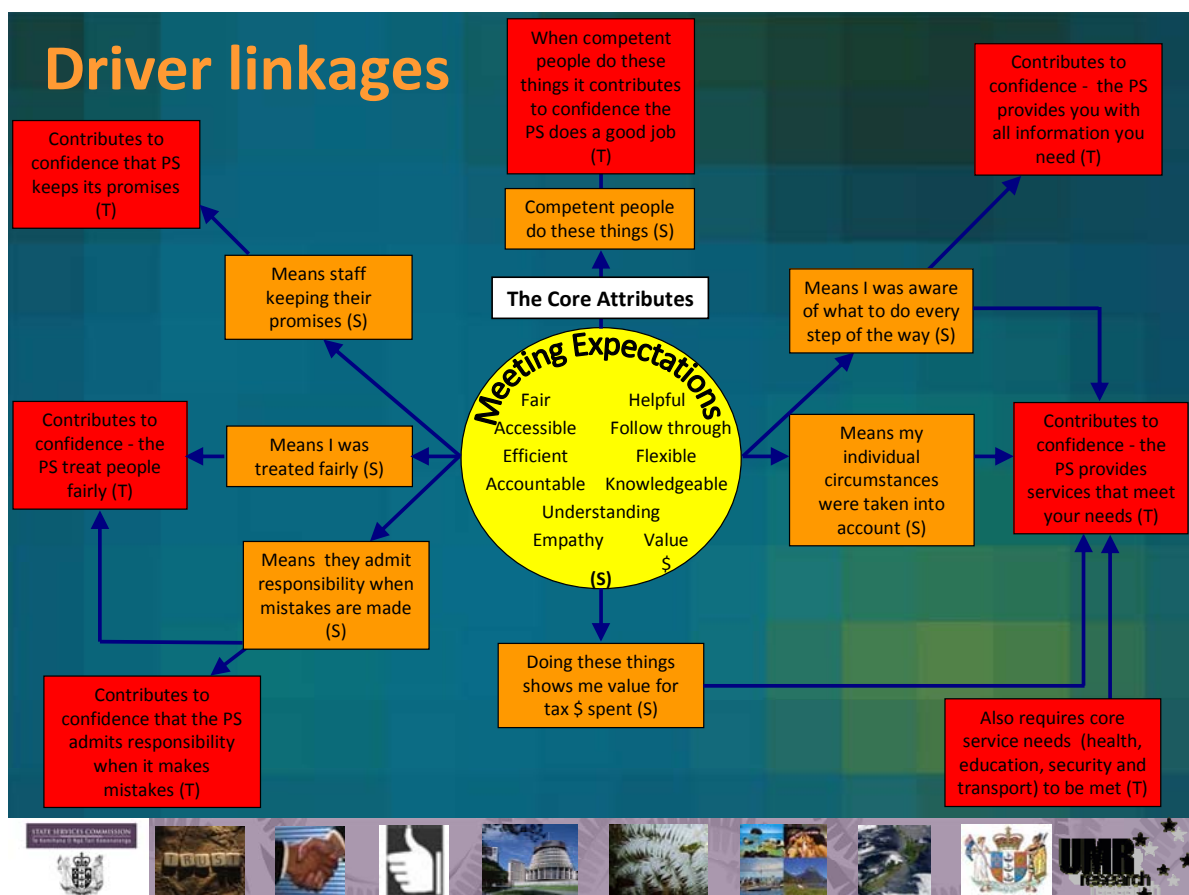
■ Trust drivers (and general trust discussion) by population

	Confidence Do Good Job	Meet Your Needs	Treat People Fairly	Keeps Its Promises	Provides All Information Needed	Admits Responsibility When Makes Mistakes	General Trust
General Public (13 Groups)							
Far North			✓				
North Shore				✓			
Manukau	✓	✓	✓				
Hamilton		✓				✓	✓
Lower Hutt	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Dunedin		✓		✓			✓
Waitaki	✓	✓					✓
Clutha	✓						
No. Urban	3	4	4	2		3	3
No. Rural/ Provincial	2	2	1	1		-	1
TOTAL	5	6	5	3		3	4
Māori (9 Groups)							
Far North		✓	✓	✓			
		✓			✓		
Manukau		✓	✓	✓	✓		
Hamilton	✓	✓				✓	
Lower Hutt		✓	✓	✓			✓
Dunedin	✓				✓		
No. Urban	2	3	2	2	3		1
No. Rural/ Provincial	-	2	1	1	1		-
TOTAL	2	5	3	3	4		1
Asian (8 groups)							
North Shore			✓	✓			
	✓	✓					
Manukau			✓	✓			
Hamilton	✓		✓				
Lower Hutt			✓				✓
Dunedin		✓					
No. Urban	3	3	4	2			1
No. Rural/ Provincial	-	-	-	-			-
TOTAL	3	3	4	2			1
Young People (5 Groups)							
North Shore							
Hamilton				✓			
Lower Hutt							
Dunedin				✓			
Clutha							
No. Urban				2			
No. Rural/ Provincial				-			
TOTAL				2			

4. The driver model – How individual drivers are linked

The diagram below shows how the drivers are linked. The core driver in the centre is the *satisfaction* driver *The service experience met your expectations* because if this is comprehensively achieved all other satisfaction drivers will also be achieved. That does not mean everyone expects all the aspects of meeting expectations identified in the central circle to be met. It may be that just being helpful may be sufficient to meet some people's expectations, though for many respondents public servants who listen, are understanding, knowledgeable and results focused are crucial to being helpful.

The *trust* drivers lie on the outer parameter of the model because achieving high levels of trust in each of these drivers is to an extent but not exclusively, dependent on being satisfied with the corresponding personal experience. Thus, people need to experience staff keeping their promises if they are to have confidence that the Public Service keeps its promises.



There is a direct connection between the most important *satisfaction* driver and the most important *trust* driver. For people to trust the Public Service to do a good job, they need to experience public servants being competent and competent public servants are those that meet service expectations. Trust is also influenced by third party reports. However, negative media coverage of public services may weaken trust in the Public Service to do a good job even though personal experiences suggest otherwise.



5. Drivers of satisfaction

This section of the report devotes a chapter to each of the satisfaction drivers apart from the two drivers that were explored only with Pacific People which will be covered in the Pacific People's section of the report. In these following chapters the focus will primarily be on what was common to all population groups. Any findings that were unique or particular to Māori, Asian, Pacific People and Young People are covered in separate sections specific to those populations later in the report.

5.1 The service experience met your expectations

This driver was explored in the general public, Asian and in all the Young People groups. This is the most important driver for these groups. The following table shows where groups were held:

	Far North		Auckland		Hamilton	Lower Hutt	Otago		
	Kaitaia	Kaikohe	North Shore	Manukau			Dunedin	Waitaki	Clutha
General public	1		1				1	1	1
Asian				1		1	1		
Young People			1		1	1	1		1

5.1.1 Overview

Respondents explain what this driver means in terms of personal experiences that typically describe trying to get help to meet a particular need. This is generally the provision of information or a solution to a problem. In most cases this requires the public servant to understand the individual's circumstances and to have the knowledge or expertise to provide the service. This may require public servants to be aware of cultural differences when interacting with the public and it may also mean some discretion or flexibility should be exercised where possible. Where the outcome sought cannot be met, people expect to have an explanation, or an apology if appropriate, as to why the service cannot be provided. There is a strong preference for honesty and transparency about whether the outcome sought can be achieved which can go a long way toward meeting expectations even if the outcome cannot be met.

The service experience has several dimensions. It can include how accessible the public service was, how friendly, polite and approachable staff were or how quickly and efficiently the service agency was performed. Respondents also want the transaction to be simple and straight-forward, so phone delays, speaking to computerised voices and being passed from one staff member to another are common bug-bears to be addressed. A few consider it important the service is provided in a way that assures them their tax dollars are being well spent.

There is also an expectation to receive consistent service and to be treated non-judgmentally and fairly. It is important to ensure promises are kept, that is, public servants do what they say they will do.

Expectations of public services are rated a little above average, but are considered to be somewhat inferior to the private sector. This is generally because of choice and competition in the private sector and that expectations of service are higher when they are paid for directly as opposed to those paid for from general taxation. To improve expectations, front-line public servants need to be strongly customer-focused, good listeners, knowledgeable about the service they provide. In complex cases, having better connections with other public services will also help. Upholding the standards of integrity of the Public Service by being fair, impartial, responsible and trustworthy is also important. It is expected that to improve expectations will require more and better trained front-line staff.

It is important for public servants to be aware of the signals they send to the public depending on the channel used. Body language is important in face-to-face contact, a welcoming and clear voice is critical for the phone, speed and simplicity for the Internet and simplicity for mail. The availability of multiple communication channels is important. There is a preference for face-to-face contact, particularly for complex interactions and where the phone channel is regarded as providing a poorer service though some respondents experience satisfaction using phone and the Internet. And with respect to mail and the Internet these channels can provide documentary evidence of the contact they have had which some find useful. Channels are discussed more fully in Chapter 5.7

5.1.2 Key themes

■ The service experience is broad

The service experience encompasses a very wide range of interactions with public servants. It is usually described as any contact or need that an individual initiates, but in the groups this covered examples from care following an accident, phoning up about tax matters, calling the police for help, applying for a student loan, renewing a driver's licence, obtaining a passport through to buying postage stamps. In all these cases, the service experience boils down to an individual with a need that in almost all instances only the Public Service can provide.

The role of the public servant in the service experience is therefore to help meet that individual's need and the amount of help that is required may be more for those for whom English is a second language or are recent migrants.

In my experience they should be helpful, there should be proper guidance, if there is something I want they have to guide me. (Lower Hutt, Asian, male)

■ Accessible services

A common complaint about public services where expectations are not met is the difficulty in accessing them when someone needs to talk to a public servant. The greatest frustration centres on contact made by phone. Delays on the phone are an issue as respondents complain about being time poor.

If I want to ring ... I have got to set aside half an hour and I don't have half an hour. (Balclutha, general public, male)

There is also a strong dislike of negotiating computer-generated voice answering systems.

You press button 1 and you get through, then you press button 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and then you go back and you think “well I’ll pick 1, we’ll see if we get this” so you pick 1, you pick 3 and you push that and it says a recorded voice and you go along backwards and forwards and I tell you this, I actually experienced it and I went to see my local MP because I was that furious. (North Shore, general public, male)

For those living outside of main centres a phone-call is often the only practical option available to talk to someone as there are no local offices to visit.

■ Listen, understand and explain

A common refrain from respondents is that they want to be treated as a person rather than ‘a number’. This is because they often see their situation as unique even though it may seem to a public servant dealing with many similar situations as just one of a type. For this reason, respondents feel that it is important for public servants to first of all listen and understand each individual’s situation.

Feeling that you have actually been listened to first of all. (Kaitaia, general public, female)

Respondents also expect public servants to acknowledge not only that they understand their needs, but also cared about meeting them. This is conveyed by showing empathy or that they care about achieving the best outcome for them.

For those people providing the service too, having your best interests at heart. They actually really do care about what your problem is. [Is that the same as empathy?] Yes, probably. Other people have said this as well, but treated as a human being and not a client or a number. (North Shore, general public, male)

I like talking to people who are friendly on the other side of the phone and who show that they actually care about your enquiry. (North Shore, young people, younger working, male)

Understanding though also extends to the public servant being conscious of the need to ensure the member of the public they are dealing with understands what they may need to do or the process they may have to follow. The ability to listen, understand and explain are critical traits for effectively taking into account individual circumstances (see Chapter 5.3) and for competent staff (see chapter 5.2).

■ Knowledge

Public servants are also expected to have the knowledge to meet information needs.

Having reached the right person they have knowledge in what they give to you, they’re not guessing. (North Shore, general public, male)

Knowledge and experience to help people are critical to the driver, *Staff were competent* (see Chapter 5.2), and some more detail on this is covered in the discussion of linkages across other drivers in 5.1.3.

■ Clear communications

The expectation to be listened to and understood flows through to the desire for communications from public servants to be clear and simple. This applies to either the written word or spoken word, and particularly over the phone.

That they actually write to you something which is meaningful and they know how to put a document together, not gobbledegook. Clear communication, well written. (North Shore, general public, male)

Hopefully they don't use jargon that's unknown to you. (Manukau, Asian, male)

■ Flexibility

A key theme that flows through from treating people based on their individual circumstances is the expectation that there should be flexibility to reflect that not everyone can or should be treated exactly the same because each person's circumstances are different.

I think they need to start looking at things as individuals instead of just putting you in a box and saying no you just can't do that because this is how big the box is and you don't get to go out of it. You have to stay in the box. (Dunedin, general public, female)

Some more detail on this is covered in the discussion of linkages across other drivers in 5.1.3 as well as in Chapter 5.3.

■ Consistency of service

Flowing on from the expectation that public servants will be knowledgeable is the expectation that the service, particularly the information provided, will be consistent. Respondents spoke about how they might receive different or contradictory information when dealing with two or more public servants.

The ideal situation for many is to be able to have a single point of contact with a public service so there is no need to re-explain a situation and to receive consistent service. An example of this working well was cited in the case of an accident victim.

My son had an accident and had to have an operation because of it. They couldn't do more for me, they were brilliant, they actually gave me a name of a person I needed to ring and each time I rung I spoke to him and he couldn't have done more for us, he was brilliant. And I think that is what made the difference, you knew who you were going to talk to and you didn't have to go back through the whole bloody thing. It just made a huge difference. (Oamaru, general public, female)

There is an expectation that if a case management system is not practical that public servants have access to and are familiar with an individual's previous case history when contact is made.

You don't have to repeat yourself 100 times. If they have your information in front of them they can read that. (Kaitaia, general public, male)

And that if multiple points of contact are made with a public service that there is consistency between them.

I am saying intra-department, so for example if you are in this organisation you give me some advice I can go to someone else and then they should give me the same advice as well. (Dunedin, Asian, male)

■ Promises

The need for follow through or to keep a promise to do something were seen as important aspects of ensuring the service was completed to ensure expectations were met.

[What makes you satisfied?] *Things are done as they should be. What they promise to provide they should provide.* (Dunedin, Asian, female)

Some more detail on this is covered in the discussion of linkages across other drivers in 5.1.3. and in Chapter 5.5.

■ Customer focus

First impressions on coming into contact with a public servant are important in setting expectations.

Friendly service. Smiling. The first impression is the best impression. (Manukau, Asian, male)

Respondents talked about the need to have a welcoming voice on the phone and some need to be put at their ease in what may seem an intimidating environment to them.

I would approach government departments probably with fear and trepidation and think oh no this is going to be a horrible experience and it's going to take me a long time. (Dunedin, general public, male)

It's a master-slave relationship is how it feels. They're the master and we're the slave. (North Shore, general public, male)

Politeness was expected as it was fundamental to customer service.

I guess friendliness/rudeness if somebody is rude or friendly that makes a big difference. (Hamilton, young people, older working, male)

Train their frontline staff in basic customer service - politeness. (North Shore, general public, female)

And people also wanted to be treated with respect. That can be achieved by being friendly and polite, but it also means being respectful in dealing with special situations.

My wife miscarried about four weeks ago My wife was scanned and they saw up on the TV screen and she said “oh it’s dead, it’s small, just go home”. Not that “I am sorry and there looks like there is a bit of a problem, looks like the wee baby is deceased, it might pay if you stayed in town ...” they just said “go home it will all carry on naturally”. (Balclutha, general public, male)

Expectations of friendliness, politeness and respectfulness are part of establishing a strong customer focus and have implications for staff training (see 5.1.5).

■ Promptness

As indicated earlier, respondents do not like delays in accessing services and phone contact is particularly problematic in this regard. This often translated into a theme that prompt service was expected, but it also extended to other examples like transport services or being placed on waiting-lists. In general, those from Asian groups and young people placed more emphasis on the speed of service as an expectation.

Same as health, the hospital needs to stick to their bookings or any operations that are booked 6 months in advance they might ring you up a month later we have cancelled you and rebooked you for the end of the year. (Lower Hutt, Asian, male)

■ Fairness

Fair treatment is another firm expectation. This includes the need to be treated in a non-judgmental way by public servants regardless of who you are. Sometimes respondents describe this as being treated with respect.

I expect to be treated fairly. [What do you mean by that?] ... I don’t want to be treated like I’m a criminal or an idiot. (North Shore, general public, female)

Some more detail on this is covered in the discussion of linkages across other drivers in 5.1.3 as well as in Chapter 5.4.

■ Value for tax dollars spent

Although it was not a top-of-mind service experience, it was notable that some respondents asserted that as taxpayers they had certain expectations about the quality of the service they received. This was expressed as an expectation of value for money which for this respondent was provided by efficient service.

Value for my taxes. [What do you mean by that?] When I do need to avail myself of the services of some government department, then I expect them to be run well, that the people there know what they’re doing and that they treat you right. I expect a good service for all those taxes I pay. Good value for money. (North Shore, general public, male)

Some more detail on this is covered in the discussion of linkages across other drivers in 5.1.3 and in Chapter 5.6

■ Expectations of public services versus private

Across all groups it was evident that service expectations were generally lower for the Public Service than in the private sector.

I think it's unfortunate perhaps that our expectations in the Public Service aren't as high as they are in private. So, sometimes our expectations are met, but that is because they were really low to start with. (Kaitaia, general public, female)

From the Public Service my expectation is actually lower than any other service I get. I actually have a lower expectation of it. (Oamaru, general public, female)

One of the main reasons for this perception is that public services are not regarded as facing competitive pressures to do better. The public have nowhere else to go for many of the services the Public Service provides. There is also a higher level of expectation about services that are paid for directly than those paid for from general taxation.

They don't have to fight for survival like most other companies do. (North Shore, general public, male)

The fact that if you don't like what you are getting you would go somewhere else, public services you don't necessarily have that choice. (Oamaru, general public, female)

Of course if you pay for something you definitely feel you deserve more. But if it is free some people say, "oh it is free I don't expect much". (Dunedin, Asian, male)

However, respondent's expectations of public services could be exceeded by staff doing the job thoroughly. Compared with other groups young people tended to have unformed expectations of public services.

It exceeded my expectations because I didn't have any expectations to start off with. Like I pretty much said I'd be lucky if I get this and they do everything and you don't have to worry about it. (North Shore, young people, younger working, female)

5.1.3 Linkages across drivers and links to trust

As is evident from the themes identified in the previous section, respondents' expectations of the service experience, although unprompted, cover all the other satisfaction drivers that were explored in the focus groups. The following only looks briefly at the linkage with each driver as separate chapters in this report explain in far more detail what each means.

■ Staff were competent

There is a consistent link between what a service needs to be like to meet service expectations and what a competent public servant is expected to do. This is particularly where competent staff are expected to be able to listen and understand an individual's needs and have the experience or knowledge to be able to provide them with an answer or a solution. This goes further than just answering a request for information, but ensuring that people know what they need to do to achieve an outcome, so it could involve an explanation of a process, such as, how to apply for something and the information that might need to be provided.

My service expectations when dealing with government agencies is to get clear answers. You tend to ring them up and talk to people who don't really know what they are doing. (Balclutha, general public, male)

A staff member can still behave competently even if they do not have the knowledge or experience to provide the information needed. They can do this by either referring the inquiry to someone who does know or find out the information required. Respondents get frustrated when this does not occur.

I was always taught being in the service industry to say "sorry I am not too sure about that but please give me your name and number and I will get back to you". Now tell me when have you had that said to you. (Kaitaia, general public, female)

If the service cannot be provided within a reasonable level of expectations, there should be an explanation and an apology. People would far rather public servants be open and honest if they do not have the knowledge.

Competent staff are considered helpful and are generally seen to be empathetic and take ownership of the problem or request and actively seek solutions. It is competent staff therefore who enable key service expectations to be met and contribute to confidence that public servants do a good job. Chapter 5.2 discusses competent staff more fully and Chapter 6.1 discusses confidence in public servants doing a good job.

■ Your individual circumstances were taken into account

As with the previous driver, there are similar linkages between this and the core expectations of *The service experience met your expectations* driver. This is largely because in order for a public servant to know what an individual's circumstances are they have to listen and understand what an individual's need is, so they know what may be taken into account. As discussed, the ability to listen and understand are fundamental to being a competent public servant.

The ability to take into account individual circumstances led respondents to say staff needed to have some discretion or ability to be flexible in their dealings with customers. There was a strong perception that public servants were too tightly bound by rules and regulations which could be counter-productive.

I think with the council they have just got themselves tied up in so many knots and rules and regulations. (Balclutha, general public, female)

The desire for greater flexibility was not a call to disregard rules and regulations. Rather respondents felt that staff should be able to exercise some discretion where a standard approach was not appropriate, but generally more by exception.

A few respondents also included among their service expectations that public servants should provide advice about other options that might be available to them. In this way, public servants would also show that they were taking into account individual circumstances.

Having different options I would say like not just having one option which everyone has to meet because I know some people can't meet it and there should be another option where the service should be almost equal in a sense. Although it won't result in the same ending but there should be different options that is what I feel. (Dunedin, Asian, male)

By applying greater discretion and indicating options, public servants are likely to help dispel a commonly held perception among respondents that the Public Service is inflexible.

Chapter 5.3 discusses taking individual circumstances into account more fully.

■ You were treated fairly

The most identifiable linkage between this and *The service experience met your expectations* is that that respondents regard it as unfair as taxpayers, who have by implication paid for a service, to be delivered it in a way that does not meet their expectations. Even so, when discussing *The service experience met your expectations* respondents generally rated their expectations of public services a little above average which suggests that it takes particularly poor service to be perceived as unfair.

As noted, there was an expectation for people's individual circumstances to be taken into account. In order to treat people fairly staff need to treat their customers according to their needs and that not all needs are the same.

Generally, there is a presumption that public services are fair. Even so, there were examples of where respondents felt they had been discriminated against. In this example, the Asian respondent had been born in New Zealand though he felt on occasions that he was not treated the same as others.

Some bus drivers are nice, other bus drivers they say hi to everyone in front of you, but not you. I don't know if it is a racist thing. And you are white, I am sorry but racism is prevalent even in Dunedin (Dunedin, Asian, male)

Other examples of being treated unfairly included feelings of being treated differently because of one's income or age. Thus, the expectation that a public servant will be non-judgmental in providing a service relates directly to treating people fairly.

Fair treatment is discussed more fully in Chapters 5.4 and 6.4.

■ Staff kept their promises – that is, they did what they said they would do

Exploration of *The service experience met your expectations* shows that there is a strong expectation of follow-through by public servants when dealing with an issue. This is directly linked to public servants doing what they say they will do. And it was evident from exploration of the promises drivers (see Chapter 5.5 and 6.5) that almost any commitment a public servant makes to a member of the public to do something for them can be considered a promise.

Do what they say they are going to do to help, even if it means calling back, etc. Don't just say "okay, we're going to do something" and that's it, you're out of there. (North Shore, Asian, male)

Breaches of promises are very damaging to trust in public services.

■ It's an example of good value for tax dollars spent

A few respondents in discussing the service expectations driver asserted that as taxpayers they had certain expectations if not a right to receive the quality of service they expected. Evidence for this was given by examples where respondents cited examples of poor service experiences, which in this example was getting the run-around when making a phone inquiry.

If you are a tax-payer because we all pay our taxes and if it's a service provided by the government then we pay for them to be able to give us the run around on the phone. (Balclutha, general public, female)

While this was the most direct linkage to the good value for tax dollars spent driver, there were some respondents who, when they were discussing that driver, said they received value for money when their service expectations were met. This tended to be seen as ensuring the completion of the service in an efficient or effective and seamless manner as a result of the public servant taking ownership and accountability for ensuring matters are followed through to provide a result.

In the full discussion on value for tax dollars spent in Chapter 5.6, it is clear that the way some respondents determine that value is on the basis of how well their service expectations are met. Thus, raising service to better meet service expectations is likely to increase satisfaction with good value for tax dollars spent.

■ Trust

There is a strong linkage between meeting service expectations and trust in public services. If public services do not do what people expect of them, then the services are no longer relied upon or trusted to do a good job. That means confidence that public servants do a good job is lost (see Chapter 6.1). Also, it was evident that providing services that meet 'your needs' includes meeting many service expectations (see Chapter 6.2). And the reliability that service expectations will be met encompasses keeping promises and treating people fairly both of which have a direct bearing on whether respondents trust the Public Service to keep its promises or that public servants treat people fairly (see Chapters 6.4 and 6.5).

5.1.4 Differences across groups

There was a high degree of similarity across the groups with very few differences emerging particularly in respect to the core elements of service expectations – listening, understanding, showing empathy and being knowledgeable and solutions-focused. The following differences were noted:

■ Asian groups

Chapter 9 in this report identifies unique findings to emerge from the Asian groups where some of these differences are addressed in more detail.

➤ Assistance to understand

Asian respondents for whom English was a second language had more of an expectation that public servants would help them to understand things. This is important to enable better access to services.

➤ Fairness

There was an expectation from these groups that they would not be discriminated against. Examples of what respondents felt were racial discrimination were provided in the groups. Racial discrimination was not raised as an issue in the general public groups.

➤ Speed and efficiency

Respondents in the Asian groups placed a higher level of expectation on the speed and efficiency of services.

You'll be more happy with a faster rate, rather than waiting for a long time. If I compare it to something like maybe when I ring my Internet company up, which is a private service, I get really angry when I have to wait for a long time, whereas with the student loan it's kind of like "oh yeah, I'm just going to have to wait until someone picks up". (Manukau, Asian, male)

Things done in a timely manner like if they say it's a week then it should be just a week instead of three weeks. (Dunedin, Asian, female)

■ Young People

➤ Speed and efficiency

This was also an important expectation for young people who showed more inclination to use the Internet as a channel.

➤ **Fairness**

For the school students, it was particularly important for them to be treated fairly and with respect. This referred most directly to their sensitivity to being treated differently due to their age or the way they dressed or looked, for instance, those who dye their hair or pierce their body feel they are not treated fairly or with respect.

■ **Rural-Provincial groups**

➤ **Access to services**

Those in rural-provincial areas noted the limited opportunities they had for face-to-face contact and their reliance on interaction over the phone. Given that the phone channel was the most problematic channel with respect to service expectations this may have special implications for rural people. For instance, face-to-face contact is the most trusted and most favoured channel to use when complex situations arise.

A lot of these places we don't have the choice of face-to-face. (Kaitaia, general public, female)

Rural-provincial respondents also raised the lack of access to services locally relative to those from urban areas.

[Any other comments on how things could be improved in terms of services and the likes to meet expectations?] *I think sometimes particularly at government level the bottom half of the South Island doesn't really exist. You feel as if a lot of the policy is geared towards Auckland.* [Are you thinking of anything in particular?] *Probably their emphasis on public transport ...we haven't even got public transport here. It doesn't exist.* (Balclutha, general public, female)

➤ **Fairness**

Some respondents from rural-provincial areas noted that services were unfairly allocated to their detriment. They said they were taxpayers like anyone else, but received fewer services relative to those in urban centres and this they felt was unfair. For instance, in the quote above, local taxpayer's money was seen as helping to fund public transport in Auckland when none existed locally. Respondents also spoke about how the rural sector was the backbone of the economy, yet it received fewer public services. This was considered unfair.

5.1.5 Areas to focus on to improve satisfaction levels

Respondents in the groups were asked to think of ways in which the Public Service could improve service expectations. Their views contribute heavily to the suggestions outlined below.

➤ ***Recruitment***

Most groups placed stress on the need to increase the number of front-line staff who were seen to be under-resourced as demonstrated by delays and waiting-times to access services. It was important though that the right people should be recruited for front-line staff work. These had to be people who wanted to help others.

➤ ***Customer service training***

It is important for all front-line staff to be adequately trained and an important aspect of this training is how to deal with customers. This would cover how to greet customers, politeness and respect. It would also need to include training in techniques for learning how to find out what people's needs are and how to deal with difficult customers as well as how to treat each customer as new irrespective of how demanding the previous one has been.

➤ ***Knowledge training***

As people contact public services for information or to have problems solved, public servants have to have the knowledge and experience to meet those needs. It is critical therefore that those new to the front-line are well trained across the range of inquiries they are likely to receive and that there are support systems in place for all on the front-line to cover other contingencies that may arise. Equally, it means being adept at asking the right questions to understand what people need as that might not always be apparent. This could require sufficient supervisors or those with higher levels of experience and knowledge being available to provide support when needed. In the event that the public cannot be helped at the time, it is absolutely essential that arrangements are made to follow-through so an individual's needs are met.

➤ ***Seamless services and interconnections***

When more complex situations arise, which may require someone to interact with more than one public service, public servants need to be aware of the interconnections that may exist. For instance, a person's income entitlements may also indicate potential issues around housing or child-care needs and household circumstances may have implications for tax and entitlements for the individual and others in the family. While staff training should incorporate awareness and knowledge of the more likely interconnections that might exist, public services themselves should endeavour to engage in cross-departmental collaboration with the aim of providing a one-stop-shop for interconnected services.

➤ ***Communication training***

It is critical for people to understand how to deal with public sector processes and its requirements. They also want explanations when an outcome they seek cannot be achieved. These expectations mean front-line public servants need to be able to communicate clearly and simply to ensure all members of the public can understand. This will require the ability to provide information in the main second languages used in New Zealand. Information should be provided which is as accessible as possible and special care should be taken to ensure the written word is jargon-free.

➤ ***Service standards***

Improvements to overall expectations can only be objectively measured if service standards are set, so staff know what is expected of them and the public are aware of the standards they can expect to receive. Key service standards, such as realistic and achievable response times, should be set and be publicly available to ensure expectations are transparent and there is accountability for fulfilling them. This will help ensure that public servants do what they say they will do.

➤ ***Apologise, explain and fix***

It is inevitable that not all expectations and service standards will be met all the time. When they are not met, the public should be provided with an apology, an explanation as to why it occurred and how the problem will be fixed in future. This should be standard and will signal that there is a commitment to meeting expectations and accountability for doing so.

➤ ***Standards of integrity and conduct***

Standards of integrity and conduct already exists for public servants. While this was not discussed in the context of exploring this driver, it was discussed in other groups and it was apparent that there is very low awareness among the public that these standards exist. However, as the standards specifically cover critical service expectations with respect to fairness, accessibility, impartiality and working to the best of people's abilities, they have a role in ensuring expectations are met. As discussed in the general trust section of this report (see Chapter 6.6), the standards need to be easily accessible to the public to ensure commitment and accountability to them.

➤ ***Flexibility within fixed guidelines***

As respondents expected individual circumstances to be taken into account, some discretion or flexibility is required. This should not be at the expense of fairness to others. Nor does it imply that some people are different under the law. It simply needs public services to recognise that not all needs are the same. Therefore, where possible, guidelines should be established that provide for some flexibility in the way policies are implemented and people are helped.

➤ ***Multi-cultural sensitivity***

It was evident in the Asian groups that people from minority cultures in New Zealand are sensitive to issues like discrimination and will have different cultural practices and beliefs that may mean they take offence in situations that may not easily be foreseen by others. Customer training should ensure front-line staff are attuned to these issues when dealing with members of the public from minority cultures.

➤ ***Rural needs***

Rural respondents have fewer opportunities to interact face-to-face with public servants, yet this is the preferred channel for many. Consideration should be given to providing mobile services and this underscores the need for quality phone services (see below).

➤ **Channels**

The predominant channels used by the public are face-to-face and phone with the latter being the most problematic. Significant improvements to service expectations will result from more customer-focused, front-line staff, but attempts need to be made to reduce common frustrations such as delays in obtaining a response over the phone. There is a fuller discussion of channels in Chapter 5.7

5.2 Staff were competent

This driver was explored in all population groups. The Young People's group was held with school students aged 15-17 years. The following table shows where groups were held:

	Far North		Auckland		Hamilton	Lower Hutt	Otago		
	Kaitaia	Kaikohe	North Shore	Manukau			Dunedin	Waitaki	Clutha
General public	1		1		1				
Māori	1			1					
Asian				1	1				
Pacific				1		1			
Young People						1			

5.2.1 Overview

As noted in the previous chapter, there is considerable over-lap between many aspects of meeting service expectations and what it means to be a competent staff member because it is competent staff who help people to enable their expectations to be met. To be competent in a job was regarded by most respondents as being capable of doing the job required and a competent person was seen as somewhat above average in their job, but not outstanding.

The job was done, maybe it could have been done a bit better but it was done.
(Kaitaia, Māori, male)

If all the core attributes of being understanding, knowledgeable, customer and solutions focused and a clear communicator are demonstrated by staff, then this would far exceed competency for most.

That's beyond competent to me. That's a dream public service. (Manukau, Pacific People, male)

A core attribute of competent staff is that they are knowledgeable or capable of helping meet the public's needs. There is an expectation that staff are honest about their limitations, but can refer people to a staff member who has the knowledge or experience to meet their needs. In order for competent staff to be able to meet the public's needs, they must have the ability to listen and understand what those needs are. And competent staff are motivated to provide solutions and be helpful.

There is another set of attributes that competent staff are expected to possess. They are expected to be approachable, friendly and polite as this gives people more confidence in dealing with a public servant. At the same time, there is an expectation that a public servant will convey confidence as this is an indicator that they are able to meet the needs sought.

- As was found in discussion about the previous driver, there is a higher level of expectation about the competence that is demonstrated when a direct payment is made for a public service.
- Those from rural areas speak positively about the level of personal service they receive when dealing with public servants face-to-face as staff are known to them in the community.
- Māori talk about the need for staff to be reliable which encompasses a positive attitude and commitment as well as capability to do the job required. The reliability to do a job is also closely related to general trust in public services.
- Pacific People stress the need for staff to be culturally sensitive and place more emphasis on the need to ensure staff are helpful and explain things.
- Asian respondents appear more inclined to regard being competent as being outstanding. They also placed more emphasis on competent staff being speedy and efficient. They also had higher expectations that staff should be approachable and able to communicate well.

5.2.2 Key themes

■ Knowledge

The most recurring theme across all groups was that competent staff should be knowledgeable. The knowledge that is required has several dimensions to it. Ideally, staff members need to know what to do or have the capability of meeting the public's need. A common phrase used across different groups to describe knowledgeable people was that they knew what they were talking about.

It's knowledge. They know what they're talking about. If you've got anything that you want to query they've got the answers for you. (Manukau, Māori, female)

It was also desirable that competent staff were empowered to make a decision.

■ Referral

The first contact point does not necessarily have to be the person with the knowledge to provide a solution, but that person is expected to know who to direct the inquiry to without giving people the run-around.

A competent person would know when to refer to the appropriate resources if they didn't know what was happening or they think you need some other referrals. (Hamilton, Asian, female)

This requires competent staff to be trained so they know who exactly does what in their organisation and are able to advise the public who they are being referred to and why.

[You mentioned that they know people within the organisation is that as important as the knowledge of the job?] I think they go together, they know who is responsible for a particular job, so they can refer you to Mary or John or whoever because that is their area of responsibility. (Kaitaia, general public, male)

Knowledgeable staff were also expected to know the interconnections that may exist with other government agencies, particularly where needs may be complex.

They have access to tools that they can use like Internet and stuff like that, having access to other government agencies to help them answer complicated questions that might involve more than one government department. (Lower Hutt, Pacific People, female)

■ Listen, understand and explain

The ability to listen and understand what someone's needs are was another important aspect of competence.

I'd say understanding because when you mentioned public services, when I normally think of the staff there, it's like they just follow the law, black and white, so they're not understanding to your situation. For someone to be competent they'd be understanding to your situation and able to relate to the customer. (Manukau, Asian, male)

A critical aspect of understanding was to understand that each individual's needs are often different.

They need to be able to understand your needs. [Now what do you mean by that?] Some people might have different ways of learning compared to others so they need to be able to recognize that and be able to teach for that need. (Lower Hutt, 16-18 years, male)

They actually process what you're saying. They listen. (Manukau, Māori, male)

Competent staff were also expected to be proactive in explaining to people what they needed to do or what their entitlements were to ensure people were not put to unnecessary trouble or missed out on entitlements. The need to be helped in this way emerged more strongly for those for whom English was a second language.

They're able to explain the policy and what you're entitled to, or what you should be doing. That's what I would call competence. That straight away you've got the right answer of what you should be doing, what you're entitled to. (Manukau, Pacific People, male)

If their communication with us was clearer in the first place and you knew what you had to do and what steps you had to take I think lots of time would be saved. (Kaitaia, general public, female)

It was important for competent staff to be aware of the breadth of needs they might encounter in the community.

It's understanding the different types of people ... and being able to relate to them no matter what creed and what gender, what age. (Manukau, Pacific People, female)

■ Customer focused

Customer focus was also a dimension of competency and is an essential part of understanding clients' needs.

For me customer service means being able to gauge what different clients' needs are. Every client is different obviously and you need to be able to be gentle with some clients and more assertive with others. You've got to gauge what each client needs. (North Shore, general public, female)

To be customer focused also meant to follow through and be solutions-focused.

Job gets done. Customer service skills. Feel like they care. (North Shore, general public, female)

A part of customer focus relates to having empathy. This can involve providing a personal touch to the service; something that was identified as more common in small communities where people knew each other.

Somebody knew who I was and they were most concerned about what happened. They actually heard it through the grapevine about the assault and all the rest of it and they were personally concerned and they expedited the whole process for me and they were the ones that helped. (Kaitaia, general public, male)

A friendlier approach was seen as a means of enabling staff to be better positioned to understand people's needs.

If they were friendly you would relax with them and tell them a lot more and they might pick up on a lot more things you should or shouldn't be doing. Rather than everyone be guarded. (Kaitaia, general public, female)

On the other hand, rudeness was seen as a sign of potential incompetence and lack of customer focus.

I just don't like rudeness, if you deal with the public you can't be rude to them and that is what you do get from people over the phone and face-to-face ... you expect politeness. (Hamilton, general public, female)

■ Confidence

Staff who are confident in their manner inspire confidence that they know what they are doing.

I think you need to feel confident ... if you have a person who is a mature person and you feel confident you feel this is good. These are people who know what they are talking about. (Kaitaia, general public, female)

Confidence also inspires trust that the job will be done or that what you are told is correct.

If someone is competent they know what they are doing they are going to be confident about the way they do it. You will know straight away in body language if someone is confident. If you get someone who doesn't have the right body language you think okay how much trust am I going to have that you are going to be competent. (Hamilton, Asian, male)

■ Competency and paid services

As was the case with respect to service expectations in the last chapter, respondents overwhelmingly said they expected higher levels of competency for public services they paid for directly as opposed to those funded through direct taxation.

[Does it make a difference when you're paying for a service how you feel about staff being competent?] *Yes, I expect probably more if I'm paying for the service. I'm expecting the person who's dealing with me knows what they're doing and they can answer my questions. If I have some issues to be clarified I'm expecting them to give me the right answer. (Manukau, Asian, female)*

I just think your expectations would be higher because you put your money down, your own hard-earned money. If you end up paying for these services, I think you expect a whole lot more. Less room for error. (Lower Hutt, Pacific People, female)

There was, however, an exception to this in the Hamilton general public group where expectations were generally said to be the same by most respondents.

I still expect the same because it is still my government department and I pay the taxes in the first place. (Hamilton, general public, female)

5.2.3 Linkages across drivers and links to trust

There are many linkages between the attributes of competent staff and the other satisfaction drivers. This should be no surprise as a reading of the previous chapter showed that meeting service expectations entails delivering on a wide range of expectations and competent staff deliver many of those expectations.

■ The service experience met expectations

There are several direct linkages between the attributes of a competent public servant and this driver. The service experience expectations that are most sought after are the ones that competent staff demonstrate, such as getting the job done (including follow-through), being knowledgeable, the ability to listen, to understand individual needs and where appropriate the ability to explain. As noted, being customer focused, which encompasses having empathy and being friendly and polite, were aspects of competence. In other words, competent staff are generally helpful which was how respondents envisaged what a public servant doing a good job would be like (see Trust below and the discussion in Chapter 6.1 on *You have confidence public servants do a good job.*)

Other aspects of service expectations also emerged, but were more pronounced in some of the population groups as indicated in the next section, such as showing efficiency and being fair in a cultural sense.

■ Your individual circumstances were taken into account

In some groups, understanding people's needs and having the knowledge or experience to provide solutions, which are key attributes of competency, involved taking into account their circumstances, such as the need to explain things to those who might have difficulty understanding what to do or ensuring people in need knew of their entitlements. Chapter 5.3 shows how important the ability to listen, understand and be knowledgeable are to ensuring individual circumstances are taken into account.

■ Staff kept their promises – that is, they did what they said they would do

This driver has a strong link with competence. Competent staff are those who are able to do the job which often means delivering on the outcome sought by ensuring they follow through. The following quote captures the link between promises (see Chapters 5.5 and 6.5) and competence.

I rang up Wellington and he said send me \$25 or \$26 and you'll get it in three days. So I send the money and bang on, the conversation was just as short as that, put your address etc, send a \$25 cheque and we'll send you the thing ... I don't expect any more. That to me, the delivery, the policy, the money, told me the time, the date, when it was going to be arriving, sent the money and the thing was delivered. To me that is a very competent service. (Manukau, Pacific People, male)

By the same token, a failure to keep to commitments is interpreted as a sign of incompetence.

When we applied for student loans, sometimes they say "oh yeah, you're going to get it within two weeks". Sometimes it's like it goes more than two weeks and there's still ... ring up again and they say "oh we forgot to do this and that and you have to bring in this information about yourself". (Manukau, Pacific People, male)

■ Trust

In the previous chapter, it was noted that there was a strong linkage between meeting service expectations and trust in public services. If public services do not deliver what people expect of them, then they are no longer relied upon or trusted to do a good job. Meeting service expectations directly reflects on whether the Public Service is trusted to do a good job. As competent staff do those things which meet service expectations, many of the strong linkages that exist between meeting service expectations and trust in public services apply here too. In the discussion in Chapter 6.1 on the trust driver, *You have confidence public servants do a good job*, those things that give respondents confidence that public servants do a good job include being understanding, knowledgeable and customer focused. These are key traits of competency too.

5.2.4 Differences across groups

While being knowledgeable, understanding and customer as well as solutions focused were common attributes of competence identified across all groups, several differences did emerge in some groups. The following differences are noted briefly as Chapters 7-11 in this report address unique findings to emerge from each of the population groups.

■ Māori groups

➤ *Reliability and trustworthy*

The trustworthiness of staff and the ability to rely upon staff to do a job properly were more significant dimensions to competence in the Māori groups. These aspects of competence were unique to the Māori groups and was particularly evident in Kaitaia.

Reliable covers a lot more, so if you are reliable you know what your job is about, you know it is going to get done not just left. (Kaitaia, Māori, female)

If someone is reliable they don't have a blasé attitude about whether they are going to go to work. (Kaitaia, Māori, female)

➤ *Clear communications*

Māori and Pacific People and Asian groups identified competent staff as those who fully explained their entitlements to them.

■ Asian groups

➤ **Speed and efficiency**

The Asian groups stressed speed and efficiency of service as more significant attributes of competence than other groups.

I just know personally if someone asks me to do something that I know how to do it properly then I would know how to get from A to B as quick as possible. (Hamilton, Asian, male)

They should be efficient in their work. (Manukau, Asian, female)

➤ **Interpretation of competency**

While other groups interpreted competent staff as performing somewhat above average, the Asian groups, regarded competency as providing a much higher level of capability than somewhat above average.

I think a competent person would be outstanding because not everyone can deliver any kind of service to the best of their ability because in New Zealand we have all kinds of cultures coming together and in order to get satisfaction from it you must be able to gain that kind of knowledge and the skill that comes with the job satisfaction. (Hamilton, Asian, female)

I think competent is the minimum standard you should be aiming for. (Hamilton, Asian, male)

➤ **Clear communications**

This aspect of competence was also raised more strongly in the Asian groups than the general public particularly by those for whom English was a second language.

■ Pacific People groups

➤ **Cultural sensitivity**

The Pacific People respondents were the only ones to raise the need for cultural understanding as a mark of competence.

Know a bit about cultural things, Pacific Island cultures ... it would be nice if there's a Pacific Islander serving you but it's not necessary. If the department has some sort of course about Pacific Island matters ... in terms of the culture, structure, where these people are coming from. (Manukau, Pacific People, male)

➤ **Clear communications**

As with the Māori and Asian groups, there was a greater emphasis placed by Pacific People on competent staff being able to communicate in a way that helped people to understand what they had to do or what their entitlements were.

■ Young People groups

➤ *Clear communications*

The ability to communicate so things are clearly understood was particularly important to the school students though these comments were weighted toward the proxy of what a good or competent teacher was like. Clear communications though was a common aspect of competence to all groups.

[What does a good teacher do?] *Knowing the work and knowing how to communicate it. How to get us to know it.* [Making sure that you learn?] *Yes.*
(Lower Hutt, 16-18 years, female)

➤ *Fairness*

Although not directly an issue of competence, a recurring theme in the school student group, which emerged spontaneously in the discussion about competent staff, was the desire to be respected and treated as an adult. To them, good staff are those who treat them with the same respect they would show to anyone else. Thus, while being non-judgmental was a weak aspect of competence across all groups, it was a more significant factor for the students.

What was also important to students of this age was that they wanted to be treated with respect or as equals. This sensitivity about their age was a recurring theme for the school students in discussions on other drivers.

■ Rural-Provincial groups

➤ *Personal service*

Those from rural areas described how they personally knew many of the public servants they dealt with in their community. This resulted in personal service which tended to be service that was more customer and solutions focused and more enjoyable. This somewhat unique perspective lends force to the recommendation that a stronger customer focus will improve satisfaction levels.

5.2.5 Areas to focus on to improve satisfaction levels

It was clear from discussion of the staff competency driver that the most important attributes to have are to be knowledgeable, to be able to listen, understand and explain. This also requires competent staff to be good communicators and pro-active with the provision of information as well as generally customer focused. These attributes support the following suggestions to improve satisfaction levels.

■ Knowledge training

Competent staff are expected to have the knowledge and experience to meet information needs or to solve problems for the public. It is critical therefore that those dealing with those issues are well trained across the range of inquiries they are likely to receive and that there are support systems in place for all

on the front-line to cover other contingencies that may arise. The training should cover the need to ensure that staff know either who to refer inquirers to or where they can obtain the information required to help the public. This may require the design of information bases that are easy for inexperienced staff to retrieve or the presence of a sufficient number of experienced staff who can offer support.

While knowledge is important, it should be remembered that the public are not generally familiar with public service processes, rules and requirements. This lack of familiarity may lead them to be unaware of what to do or the range of entitlements open to them. This can lead to more interactions with public services than is necessary to access what they need. For these reasons, competent staff need to know how to understand what someone's needs may be and to ascertain whether members of the public know what they need to do.

■ Seamless services and interconnections

Following on from the last point, complex situations may require someone to interact with more than one public service. In these instances, public servants need to be aware of the interconnections that may exist across public service agencies. Staff training should incorporate awareness and knowledge of the more likely interconnections that might exist. Where possible, 'one-stop-shops' where agencies are co-located would be another option to improve for the provision of interconnected services.

■ Communication training

If the public are to understand how to deal with Public Service processes and its requirements, staff will need to have the ability to explain matters to them. Explanations though need to go beyond matters of process, but should also encompass the ability to explain why certain outcomes a member of the public seeks cannot be achieved, for instance, because rules or regulations do not permit the outcome or the resources are not available to meet the outcome in the time sought. These sorts of explanations are important because an inability to get the job done is a sign of incompetency and a good explanation may prevent creating that impression. Communications training for front-line staff may be one means of achieving better service in these areas.

Front-line public servants need to be able to communicate clearly and simply to ensure all members of the public can understand. This will require the ability to provide information in the main second languages used in New Zealand. Information should be provided which is as accessible as possible and special care should be taken to ensure the written word is jargon-free.

■ Solutions focused

Front-line staff who first accept an inquiry from the public need to take full ownership of the inquiry with a focus on providing a solution even if that means seeking assistance from others. This is because respondents were critical of being given the 'run-around', particularly when accessing services over the phone. An important aspect of being competent is the ability for the public service provider to get the job done. In the event that a front-line staff member cannot help a member of the public at the time an inquiry is made, it is essential that arrangements are made to follow-through, so an individual's needs are met.

■ Customer service training

All the suggested improvements mentioned up to this point are predicated on competent staff having a strong customer focus. Front-line staff should be trained in how to deal with the public as their customers. Apart from the basic courtesies of being polite and respectful, training would need to incorporate techniques for learning how to find out what people's needs are and how to deal with difficult customers as well as how to treat each customer as new irrespective of how demanding the previous one has been. Specialised training for interactions over the phone, where many service problems are identified, is also important.

5.3 Your individual circumstances were taken into account

This driver was explored in the general public, Māori and Asian groups. The following table shows where groups were held:

	Far North		Auckland		Hamilton	Lower Hutt	Otago		
	Kaitaia	Kaikohe	North Shore	Manukau			Dunedin	Waitaki	Clutha
General public				1		1			
Māori		1			1				
Asian			1						

5.3.1 Overview

This driver is generally understood in terms of a public servant making some kind of exception to the norm due to relevant, extenuating circumstances. The scope of individual circumstances this driver could potentially cover is broad enough that taking things into account should not be considered a rarity, but something that public servants need to be conscious of with each person they deal with.

Even though this driver has a strong focus on the individual, respondents felt that in considering the types of circumstances that should be taken into account greater priority should be placed on taking into account the circumstances of those with disabilities or significant household pressures. However, other factors that should be taken into account depending on circumstances were one's age, income, culture, mental state and also relative lack of knowledge of public service rules, regulations and processes. It may even include making allowances for people's time and other commitments they may have. The circumstances are therefore quite extensive.

To ensure individual circumstances are taken into account, public servants must first understand what an individual's needs are as well as their context. This will require skills associated with listening and asking questions. Then, knowledge and experience are required to assess whether those needs can be met in the normal manner or if not, how they can be met given whatever flexibility might be applicable. This means recognising that a one-size-fits-all approach is not always appropriate nor desirable.

Some care needs to be taken when finding out what should be taken into account. Inquiries about a person's ethnicity or income, factors a public servant may consider important to take into account, can cause offence for some respondents. In these circumstances a simple explanation as to why this information is required should suffice. Some respondents reported occasions where the most relevant factors were not taken into account while less relevant ones were.

Taking circumstances into account is not just confined to exercising discretion with respect to established processes. At times, it may require providing extra help or assistance for someone to engage with or to access public services. It may require flexibility to be exercised or even a degree of pragmatism or commonsense to be applied, and on occasions it may involve acting with compassion. In short, the actions required to take individual circumstances into account are ones that put a human face on the Public Service as opposed to the faceless and rule-bound impression which this study found was a common perception.

On the occasions when some flexibility is expected and it does not occur, this can convey a strong sense of being treated unfairly. That is why it is critical that when individual circumstances cannot or will not be taken into account, such as due to a requirement of the law, a full and clear explanation is provided. If the inability to take individual circumstances into account is due to shortcomings of the public service organisation and they would normally have been taken into account, for example, due to a lack of resources at the time, then an explanation of why things cannot be taken into account should be accompanied by an apology.

Unlike some other drivers, like being treated fairly or having promises kept, there is not a presumption that this driver should always apply to everyone. It can therefore make quite a powerful, positive impression on individuals when it is applied.

5.3.2 Key themes

■ Listen, understand and explain

It was fundamental to this driver that public servants knew how to find out what an individual's circumstances were by asking people the right questions and listening to the answers.

[First of all let's look at taken into account, what does taken into account mean to you?] *Well they find out from you, you see going back to when I have helped people I ask them a lot of questions to see exactly what they need so I know where to direct them. So it's about getting to know. Because if you don't know what to ask for, if you don't know what you need you don't ask the right questions. The other person who knows what they have to offer needs to ask enough questions of you. That means getting to know you, asking the questions. Asking you questions so they know what the fit is.* (Hamilton, Māori, female)

Some care though may be needed when inquiring into an individual's circumstances. People can be sensitive to being categorised when questioned, particularly if they feel some information being asked of them is not relevant to what they need.

The first question they ask you is what ethnicity are you and you feel like you are automatically categorised on that. It is one of the standard questions almost every time. And what income bracket you come in. (Lower Hutt, general public, female)

Meeting individual circumstances can occur simply by acting with compassion.

You expect compassion in terms of how you treat someone and with respect. Integrity - you want someone to treat you as a person not as a number and that is huge. And the moment someone treats you as a person you may have waited 5 hours, but suddenly that 5 hours isn't an issue anymore because you are being treated as someone who matters. (Manukau, general public, female)

In this example the hospital recognised there was nowhere for the father to stay as he waited for his partner to give birth.

When my partner was having a baby a couple of years ago [the] hospital was really, really helpful. They took into account there was no place to stay out there and they let us stay in the same room and they basically help you out. (Kaikohe, Māori, male)

In this example, an Asian respondent's mother, a sickness beneficiary, had to return to China urgently for a funeral. Even though the respondent gave authorities an assurance that she had paid for the airfare no compassion was given for her mother's special circumstances. They remained dubious about how a sickness beneficiary could afford the airfare.

I provided a written statement saying I provided my mother the plane ticket to go back to China to deal with this very sad and sudden situation. Then should they really be questioning it and hounding her? They need to go back, what else are you going to do, let her rot? That really pisses me off because people don't think about how the way they do things affects people in special circumstances. There is no empathy. (North Shore, Asian, female)

■ Flexibility

Being flexible is often an important aspect of taking an individual's circumstances into account. However, there is no expectation that there should be a wide degree of discretion, but enough where appropriate to make a difference.

They have to have some discretion, they have to have a little bit of discretion or flexibility around what they can or can't do. (Lower Hutt, general public, male)

Exercising discretion can have quite a powerful positive effect on impressions of the Public Service as it is not necessarily expected. Demonstrating flexibility does not have to mean applying different rules, it can simply mean accelerating process where it makes sense to do so.

Previous to my job I temped for about a year or so, so some weeks you worked, some weeks you won't and I was off for about a month and obviously needed to supplement my income. So we approached ... and the guy was brilliant he said we can make you an appointment, the nearest appointment is in two weeks time and I said that is effectively useless because I will probably be working in two weeks. So he brought it forward, he managed to find me an appointment the next day and we had the benefit within two weeks and they actually back paid it to when I spoke to the guy. And then I was back at work but he was really good, really fast, really effective. (Manukau, general public, female)

Another respondent gave an example where he had been driving with sub-standard tyres, but had been allowed to continue on his way un-ticketed because he had shown clear intent to change the tyres. It seemed fair not to penalise someone who was going to do the right thing.

Exercising discretion therefore can mean no more than having a can-do attitude to see how something can be achieved within the scope of one's responsibility.

In another example, a respondent wished to challenge in Court a ticket he had received for allegedly not wearing a seatbelt while he was visiting Dunedin from Lower Hutt. The lack of flexibility in not allowing the case to be heard in Wellington meant it was not worth the cost of trying to defend himself against a ticket that he felt had been unfairly given to him.

And in another example it was important for one woman in Kaikohe that the council took into account her pay day, so she was in a position to pay her rates by the due date.

In this example, attempts by whanau to look after elderly parents in their home were obstructed.

Our dad is 91 ... and mum turned 88 ... they refuse to go to a home or go anywhere, they have the homestead there and they just want to stay there. And we have tried to work around the whanau that different ones support them and get some home help in but the rules just seem to be designed to stop anyone going there and even when my sister tossed her job at Otago University to come up and stay with mum but because she brought her computer up and put it in the room next door that was an office so she didn't qualify and all weird things went on. So we were conscious as a family we wanted to do our bit to look after mum and dad and minimize what it costs the State if you send them in to a home. But they wouldn't recognize that. So maybe there needs to be greater recognition of options and solutions that the client might come up with. Not saying do them but entertain a range of options to get a solution that is cost effective for the State and acceptable to the clients and the clients' family. [So pragmatic, practical?] Something that works. (Hamilton, Māori, male)

In this example, the respondent felt that both he and the public service agency would have been better to have assisted him with accommodation close to work rather than bus him daily at considerable cost and inconvenience.

I commuted from Taupiri to Auckland on a daily basis. [They were] quite prepared to pay for me to jump on the intercity bus to get to my work because I couldn't drive. And then pay for me to jump on other transport to get to the office where I worked ... I had to leave at 4 o'clock in the morning and I arrived back in Hamilton at 10 o'clock at night. Which was unsustainable for 6 weeks on a personal basis. They didn't have the ability to say this is going to cost us too much and we can minimise this by putting him into some kind of accommodation close to his office for the short term. (Hamilton, Māori, male)

When flexibility is not shown it leaves a strong, negative impression.

My son was in hospital and I asked for a Panadol and they said you will have to go down to A&E and wait 5 hours or whatever the current waiting time is for a Panadol for me. (Manukau, general public, female)

■ Clear communications

It is also important to take into account the need to advise people of timeframes for the delivery of a service they expect.

You need to inform the people, “Okay I have received your application, I have received your issue and I will get to it within the next two weeks”. You actually need to give people a time frame so that okay two weeks is up and they haven’t done anything. Rather than it hangs there. (North Shore, Asian, female)

■ One-size does not always fit all

From gaining an understanding of an individual’s circumstances it is expected that public servants should then realise that not everyone should always be treated the same. One-size does not fit all.

You are considered as an individual rather than a case number because everybody’s circumstances are different although we are all part of the same things. It is that you are a human being and you have circumstances that are different. (North Shore, Asian, female)

■ Priority circumstances

➤ Disability or illness

There was a general assumption in the groups that those who were at a particular disadvantage, such as someone with a disability or who was ill should have their circumstances taken into account more than others.

Isn’t taking into account accepting that someone might have certain limitations or abilities? So you can look at someone and judge their effectiveness, but then you have also got to take into account they have got one arm and one leg. So you have to accept that as part of their limitations. (Kaikohe, Māori, male)

➤ Age and household circumstances

One’s age or household pressures were included among those things that also needed to be taken into account depending on context. It may be a lot more difficult for a very old person to travel to an appointment or someone looking after children might only be able to meet an appointment at limited times during the day.

[Other things that are important?] I think that the age or the family circumstances of the person is important whether they be dealing with a superannuitant, an 80 plus year old might not have a license any more to be able to do something to be able to go to a government department. Whereas somebody younger might only be available during certain times in the day because the rest of the time they might have 16 kids around. (Lower Hutt, general public, female)

➤ **Public's lack of knowledge**

Another important factor to be taken into account was the public's lack of knowledge about public service processes and rules. This placed an even greater onus on staff to ensure people understood what they needed to know.

It was particularly important to take into account that those on low incomes need their entitlements and need to be informed about them. In this example, a woman had to learn about an entitlement from a third party.

I found out people with disabilities have got an allowance which can pay for things like doctors bills and prescriptions and stuff like that. And a lot of people weren't utilising it and it wasn't until I went along and talked to this person ... they told me about it and then I went back to the ... office and all of a sudden they go yeah, yeah you can get all this stuff. [Why do you think they didn't tell you that?] I don't know, someone has told me it is their policy to purposely not tell you but then I don't know how reliable that information would be. But maybe they didn't know, maybe it is not part of training. But the information should be at least available I would think. (Kaikohe, Māori, female)

And it was also important to take into account that those for whom English is a second language will have difficulty knowing what to do, such as, when needing to access entitlements.

Lack of knowledge of public services can mean that public servants need to take into account that people need re-directing to the right services. This underscores the need for public servants to be aware of the interconnections across services.

Some departments you contact sometimes and it is not the right department and I have rung some people up thinking that is the right department and some of them have not directed me to the correct one. Because some of those government departments in the front of the telephone book you want to ring someone up and you can't find them. It doesn't come under the list. (Lower Hutt, general public, male)

5.3.3 Linkages across drivers and links to trust

The following linkages with other drivers are noted:

■ **The service experience met expectations**

As noted in Chapter 5.1, *The service experience met your expectations* driver links directly to all the other satisfaction drivers. Fundamental aspects of the service experience driver are that people are listened to, their circumstances understood and knowledge and expertise are applied to meet their needs which is precisely what has to happen when someone's individual needs are taken into account. A common expectation to take into account is the need to advise people of timeframes for the delivery of a service they expect.

■ Staff were competent

The *Staff were competent* driver (see Chapter 5.2) showed that competent staff listen and understand a person's needs and have the knowledge and experience to exercise discretion in order to take an individual's circumstances into account.

■ You were treated fairly

This driver has the strongest linkage to taking into account individual circumstances. This is because findings from discussion of the treated fairly drivers (see Chapters 5.4 and 6.4) showed that an important meaning respondents ascribe to treating people fairly is to treat them according to their needs and that not all needs are the same. This is a direct fit with the discussion around taking an individual's circumstances into account as firm views were expressed about those with disabilities or at significant disadvantage needing to have those factors taken into account. Respondents also provided examples of how it had been unfair when flexibility had not been exercised.

■ Trust

One of the most important linkages to trust is to the driver *Public servants treat people fairly* (see Chapter 6.4). As has been explained, this is because taking into account individual circumstances means where appropriate treating people differently, for example, if they have some form of disability or if they are under pressure due to income needs or have difficult household circumstances, or if they have difficulty understanding public service processes. A critical aspect of fairness that respondents describe is to treat people according to their needs and to recognise that not all needs are the same.

Another link to trust is the influence this driver has on perceptions as to whether the Public Service provides services that meet your needs (see Chapter 6.2). While that trust driver is interpreted in one sense as meeting the needs of everyone, it is also understood as meeting an individual's particular needs. In that context, it is essential that individual circumstances are taken into account.

5.3.4 Differences across groups

The following differences are noted briefly as section 7-11 in this report address unique findings to emerge from each of the population groups.

■ Māori groups

➤ Cultural sensitivity

The clearest difference between the groups was the need to take into account someone's culture which was raised in the Māori and Asian groups. In the Māori groups, this manifested itself in a variety of ways.

It was important to Māori to take into account culturally appropriate ways of doing things at meetings, particularly when a significant number of those involved were Māori.

Had a karakia before our meeting and a karakia at the end ... it was great, positive ... because they take into account who you are and recognising. Up here the majority are Māori. Council - you can go in and my mum speaks Māori, I understand it. (Kaikohe, Māori, female)

Some Māori were too ashamed to receive assistance that might be due to them. In the Hamilton group, the example of an elderly woman who was too *whakama* to accept assistance to help her husband into a rest home was given.

My granddad went into a rest home and she was paying something ridiculous, close to \$1000 a week, a lot of money that she was putting in from her own retirement or their retirement to keep him going. The family just went hang on here I am pretty sure there are ways that you can have it paid for by the State. But she took it more as a pride thing and her love for her husband she didn't really want to go down that avenue. But yet it was accessible and other people did it so why not. I don't see any shame in it but she did, she saw it as shame like she didn't love her husband enough. (Hamilton, Māori, female)

Also in the medical arena it was important to take into account that the donation of body parts would raise matters of particular cultural significance.

Taking into account cultural factors does not necessarily mean a person of the same cultural background must provide the service. The most important factor is that the public servant can help. In this example, the respondent is a Māori and she is describing how a Māori child with behavioural problems at her school was assigned a Māori person from Group Special Education to assist him.

Some things are taken into account and it is a waste of time them being taken into account like a child in my class he is Māori, he has behavioural problems at home and at school ... they sent a Māori woman from GSE to come and help him and she doesn't know what she is doing. They have taken into account that he is Māori but it is the stupidest thing they could have done because the best person to help him is this English woman who I have dealt with before ... it doesn't actually matter a damn whether he is Māori or not. But for that what mattered was that the person knows what they are talking about. (Manukau, general public, female)

■ Asian groups

➤ Cultural sensitivity

As noted above, the need to take into account one's culture, background and fluency in English were raised by Asian respondents particularly with respect to the difficulties that might be encountered in understanding public service requirements and processes.

Care needs to be taken though as in this example the intent was there, but unfortunately misdirected at this Chinese respondent describes.

It is very rude, I go up to you and say hi how is it going and they start talking in Mandarin or they assume you are Korean which is even worse. Because you can't understand a word of what they are saying. And it is making an assumption that because you come from an ethnic background we have to use a different language. (North Shore, Asian, female)

■ Rural-Provincial groups

➤ Rural access and keeping appointments

The accessibility of services and the travel distances involved to access services and keep appointments were issues raised by rural-provincial respondents. Often such areas have limited public transport which can make things more difficult. Respondents felt these circumstances needed to be taken into account, particularly when setting up appointment times and ensuring those times were kept.

We used to come into town ... sometimes you have only got a limited amount of time to do something, so you get an appointment and book in for an appointment and you turn up on time, 10 minutes early and then sit there and you wait and wait and wait. And then half an hour has gone past your appointment time and someone needs to talk to you and by that time you have got another appointment. If they took it into account that you were going to have a very busy day for the one day that you came into town then they would be on time. (Kaikohe, Māori, male)

5.3.5 Areas to focus on to improve satisfaction levels

Discussion of this driver showed that the most important things for respondents are to be listened to and understood by a public servant who has the knowledge or experience to ensure their individual circumstances can be taken into account. Often this requires public servants to have empathy and to be able to exercise flexibility. These considerations support the following suggestions to improve satisfaction levels.

■ Listen and understand

The first skills a public servant has to possess are to be able to listen and understand an individual's circumstances. This will require staff to be adept at questioning and gaining the trust of individuals so they can share relevant information. Showing empathy and demonstrating a willingness to help resolve matters will assist in this regard, so customer service training needs to ensure front-line staff have respect for each individual they serve. Having respect should mean that exercising compassion and treating everyone as an individual and not 'as a number'.

■ Identify key things to take into account

While there are a wide range of circumstances that may need to be taken into account some circumstances are considered a priority. These include whether an individual has disabilities relevant to their needs and household circumstances that require special attention.

There may also be special difficulties understanding public service processes or how to deal with public services. Staff need to be sensitive to those who may have limited literacy or numeric ability or those from whom English is a second language.

■ Guidelines for exercising flexibility

As there are clear priority areas where there is a high expectation that flexibility is exercised, consideration should be given to develop systems, including guidelines, where it can be exercised to assist people in such circumstances. Front-line staff will need to be trained in how to apply any guidelines.

As noted, individual circumstances are broad in their range. Consequently, it will be difficult to anticipate all circumstances where flexibility could reasonably be exercised. Senior, experienced staff with the authority to authorise discretion to meet individual circumstances should be easily contactable to provide support for front-line staff to manage such situations.

■ Cultural sensitivity

Customer training should ensure front-line staff are attuned to any special needs that may arise from the culture of the individual they are dealing with. As far as possible, public services should inform themselves of the key issues that are likely to arise, so front-line staff can be sensitive to them.

5.4 You were treated fairly

This driver was explored in the general public, Māori and Asian groups as well as with Young People - (younger working 18-23 years) respondents from Hamilton, school students (15-17 years) from Lower Hutt, tertiary students from Dunedin and those with young families from Clutha (Balclutha). In the general public and Māori groups the trust driver *Public servants treat people fairly* was also discussed at the same time and some of those issues are covered in this chapter.

The following table shows where groups were held:

	Far North		Auckland		Hamilton	Lower Hutt	Otago		
	Kaitaia	Kaikohe	North Shore	Manukau			Dunedin	Waitaki	Clutha
General public	1		1	1		1			
Māori	1	1		1		1			
Asian			1		1	1			
Young People					1	1	1		1

5.4.1 Overview

There are several different ways in which being treated fairly is interpreted, but whichever way it is interpreted being treated fairly is regarded as a fundamental right.

The first and most common interpretation of fairness focuses on the principle of equitable treatment relative to other people, but this too is interpreted in two different ways. There are those who spontaneously say that to be treated fairly is to be treated the same as everyone else and that the same rules should apply to all. Others, who often give their interpretation after some consideration, talk about treating people the same in the same circumstances, but add that not everyone is the same. This latter view is the one that predominates across the groups and is sometimes expressed as “treat me as you would want to be treated” or treat people according to their individual circumstances recognising that not everyone is the same.

A second most common type of interpretation respondents give to fairness relates to the quality of the service provided. Respondents give as an example of fair treatment services they received that comprehensively met their expectations. Similarly, examples of unfair treatment are where the service has been poor, or people have not been informed of their entitlements or where service quality has been inconsistent. It is conceded that people can be treated fairly even if the service quality may be poor, for instance, due to lack of resources, as long as staff have tried their best within the means available to them. Occasionally, people will feel unfairly treated because their expectation of the service does not match actual delivery rightly or wrongly.

A third interpretation is based on the feeling that a just outcome occurred. This requires that people are listened to and heard and irrespective of the outcome as long as they have had a full explanation for it, they feel that they have been treated fairly.

The fourth type of interpretation is one that stresses the need to be non-judgmental and respectful of others and was more commonly raised in the population groups. For the Asian groups this is most closely associated with racial discrimination. This arises a little in the Māori groups too. For young people at school it is most closely associated with discrimination on the basis of age.

Among Māori, fairness can have a special meaning related to historical treatment and injustices related to the Treaty of Waitangi.

It is generally assumed that public servants are fair and that people are treated fairly. Unfair treatment can often be as a result of an individual's attitude, but equally it is recognised that a poor attitude by members of the public can attract poor treatment. There is therefore an expectation that fairness should result where reasonableness is exercised.

5.4.2 Key themes

Being treated fairly is regarded as fundamentally important even though people interpret fair treatment differently.

I think it is a basic human right to be treated fairly. (Manukau, general public, female)

■ Equal treatment

The most common way in which the groups understood being treated fairly was relative to the equitable treatment that others received. The spontaneous interpretation of being treated fairly was that everyone was treated the same. Those who took this view tended to look at fairness in the context of the same law applying for everyone.

Well the same as everyone else really. (Manukau, general public, male)

I like rules and everyone should be treated the same. It shouldn't be up to others to decide. (Lower Hutt, general public, male)

■ Flexibility

Even so such examples were countered by others where the exercise of some flexibility or what was regarded as commonsense bearing in mind an individual's circumstances was seen as the fair thing to do.

When they decided to put fences around pools we had a slider that went out onto our pool. I had the council pool man come around who told me that we had to have a pool fence put across the slider with a gate so I could open the slider of my room and then open the gate to get out onto the pool. We had a lot of arguments with this guy. Eventually we had another pool man come around and he said “no, you’ve got no children in your house, you’ve got a lock on the inside of your slider, the rest of your pool is totally fenced, that’s fine”. We got our certificate to say that our pool was safe. I think probably the first person was working to the rigidity of the law. (North Shore, general public, female)

■ Treat according to needs

The prevailing view in the groups was a more considered response that people should be treated the same under the same circumstances. However each individual’s needs and circumstances may be different and this should to be taken into account.

Treating you as a person and actually realising that your situation is different to everyone else’s because everyone is different. (Balclutha, young family, male)

This was sometimes expressed as public servants needing to treat people in the same way they would want to be treated.

Treat people how you want to be treated. (Manukau, general public, female)

■ Non-judgmental, respectful and non-discriminatory

The desire to be treated as an individual brought with it the need to be treated without judgement as to a person’s age, income or race. These views emerged most strongly, but not exclusively in the Māori and Asian groups.

Being treated fairly, keeping a standard consistent of age, colour, race, accent. I should look at you as being someone who needs help with a service not as female or as Asian or old, young, poor, rich, that sort of thing. (Lower Hutt, Asian, male)

One respondent in the Māori group in Kaitaia described himself as looking like an aggressive Māori because of his build and tattoos. Once, when he had taken his daughter into hospital because she had broken her arm playing netball, staff treated him with accusatory looks.

They looked at me. It was just going through that non smacking bill that went through and to me I look like a prime candidate and I felt quite uncomfortable and the people I could just tell by the tone in their voice and it wasn’t until my daughter they said how did it happen and she said I did it at school and then their attitude changed. I don’t know whether I was stereotyped, Māori get a pretty bad thing on TV. (Kaitaia, Māori, male)

Treating people non-judgmentally was often accompanied by the need for people to be treated with respect.

Being treated with respect because if you are needing to use [those services] you are there often not through choice. It is circumstances that have put you there and so it doesn't make you a lesser person which often you are made to feel like a lesser person because often it's a stage in your life and if you are given the help and assistance you will get through it. (Manukau, general public, female)

■ Consistency

Service quality and the consistency of service experienced both contribute to perceptions of fair treatment.

Consistency that is the main thing. If you don't have consistency you feel that is not right. (Lower Hutt, Asian, male)

Consistency can be a particular issue for young people where they may feel that they are being targeted by authorities because of the kind of vehicles they drive or the clothes they wear.

Where there are inconsistencies in the delivery of services, unfairness can be perceived. These can range from major systemic issues through to everyday occurrences.

I work in early childhood and if we see a child who is within the autistic spectrum we try and get as much help pumped into them while they are in early childhood because it is so much easier to access. Once they hit school it disappears and you are fighting tooth and nail to get help for that child whose needs haven't changed, probably increased, but that help that is available is just not there. (Manukau, general public, female)

You say public servants treat people fairly, that there depends on the type of day they are having. (Lower Hutt, Māori, female)

The challenge for the front-line public servant was to avoid bringing their 'bad day' down on the next person they dealt with. Consistent service needs to be provided despite having a bad day personally.

You just kind of pick up the body language of she had a hard night or no thank you. And there are some out there who genuinely would help you and go out of their way to help you but some it's their job, they are there to do a job they are not there to make you happy. They are just there to do their job, get paid and go home. Some days you get it good and some days you don't. (Lower Hutt, Māori, female)

Equally, a poor attitude by members of the public can attract poor treatment. There is therefore an expectation that fairness should result where reasonableness is exercised.

[Any more thoughts on treating people fairly?] It is a two-way street if you want to be treated with respect then you talk to them with respect and they are more likely to treat you back with respect. (Manukau, general public, female)

■ Achieving a fair outcome

Fair treatment can occur even when people do not obtain the result they wanted. This can occur, for example, when an application is made for permission to do something, such as, a building permit. People can feel they were treated fairly as long as they understand the reasons for the decision by having it explained in a reasonable way.

She said “you need 20 metres for your clothesline and 40 metres for recreation and things like that, can’t be done”. Fair enough. She actually went through all the processes and said that basically we’d be too close from the front section, we had to be five metres from the boundary. We had a good old chat and said okay those are the rules and regulations. I didn’t argue with it. Those were the rules and regulations. (North Shore, general public, male)

It is important for people to feel assured that their case has been given due consideration.

I don’t always expect for it to be 100% my way, but I feel that if I have provided everything that you have asked of me then please provide me with some sort or resolve or a level of satisfaction for my efforts. (Kaikohe, Māori, female)

Fair treatment is recognised when staff are seen to be trying to do their best for people despite circumstances, such as, staff shortages or the rules within which they have to work, which may limit their ability to deliver the service expected.

I went into the local hospital for an operation about 10 years ago and the nurses were so good to me but the poor things they were run ragged. It was the system that was wrong but the nurses were so nice. (Kaitaia, general public, male)

To do the best they can within their means. (Lower Hutt, general public, female)

■ Fairness assumed

Public servants are generally assumed to treat people fairly.

I think the majority of the time people do get treated fairly you just don’t really remember it. (Lower Hutt, 16-18 years, female)

5.4.3 Linkages across drivers and links to trust

The following linkages with other drivers are noted:

■ The service experience met expectations

As noted in earlier chapters, *The service experience met your expectations* driver links directly to all the other satisfaction drivers. The strongest linkage to this driver is that as part of the service experience treating people fairly entails treating people according to their needs and that not all needs are the same. So, exercising discretion or flexibility can be ways of achieving fairness.

In another sense, if people receive poor service well below their expectation they feel that they have been treated unfairly.

However, as public servants were generally assumed to treat people fairly, being treated fairly was not a strongly expressed service expectation.

■ Your individual circumstances were taken into account

There is a strong linkage between this driver and *You were treated fairly* because as has been pointed out fair treatment is seen as treating people according to their needs and that not all needs are the same depending on an individual's circumstances.

■ Trust

The most direct link between *You were treated fairly* and trust is with the driver *Public servants treat people fairly*. There was some ambivalence over whether it was public servants or the 'system' that was the source of unfairness when it occurred.

I think the system is there I think it is the people who can make it seem fair or unfair. Because I think the system is the same for everybody it is the system that is carried out or a face of the system that can sometimes make it seem like fair and unfair. (Kaitaia, general public, female)

Sometimes the poor public servant is just up against it. They may want to be fair but they just can't be. (North Shore, general public, female)

And for some there was no clear difference at all between the satisfaction driver *You were treated fairly* and the trust driver *Public servants treat people fairly*.

What that says to me is the first one is the institute treats you fairly and the second one says the person themselves treats another person fairly. And that is really the culture of the institute again. Does it reinforce that sort of treatment or not? (Manukau, general public, female)

The discussion of *Public servants treat people fairly* in Chapter 6.4 deals with the blurring of these two drivers.

For Māori there are special issues linked to the Treaty of Waitangi that drive to the heart of whether the Public Service is fair and these address some fundamentally different views on trust.

5.4.4 Differences across groups

■ Māori groups

Concerns about racial discrimination emerged in the Māori groups, though it was less pronounced than in the Asian groups.

➤ *Treaty of Waitangi*

The unique difference in the Māori groups was reference to the Treaty of Waitangi in the context of public servants treating people fairly. Prior quantitative research had shown that this driver was particularly important to Māori, so the reasons for this were probed further. In the Kaitaia group the facilitator said that some Māori found this driver particularly important which drew spontaneous laughter from respondents. One was asked to explain what had made her laugh.

I cracked up laughing because you are talking about Māori people being treated fairly and since the Treaty we have felt victimised so that is just a joke really. And considering you are dealing with public services it is all going to keep flowing from that. So I think it needs to get it right at the top and then maybe it will filter into all the other services coming down...I can definitely see where if it was honoured, if the promises were kept there, there wouldn't be this constant pushing for fairness in all these other areas. Because there would already be that sense of equality.
(Kaitaia, Māori, female)

Another respondent in the group also pointed to the relative lack of some social services in the local area for Māori as an indicator of unfairness.

Views on how effectively the Treaty is being honoured over-lap with how fairly Māori feel they have been or are being treated by the Crown and the public servants responsible for delivering the Government's policies. Public servants were seen as representatives of the Government and therefore had a stronger obligation than others to treat people fairly.

They are getting paid to do it. They represent the government, they represent the people who govern our land in authority over us. They above all people should be walking their talk. (Kaitaia, Māori, female)

■ Asian groups

The sharpest difference across the groups was the strong focus in the Asian groups on fair treatment being seen as the absence of racial discrimination.

That probably means there shouldn't be any bias, that you can't discriminate or your colour or something like that. (Lower Hutt, Asian, male)

It was evident that Asian respondents are sensitive to subtle body language signals that may indicate to them that they may be treated differently to others in similar circumstances. This could amount to a simple hesitation on hearing an Asian person's name or a look that suggests that someone is being regarded differently to others.

[Instances where you felt you weren't treated fairly] Not fairly, it's just sometimes when you have face-to-face contact, you see a change in attitude. Or over the phone, when you say your last name which is an Asian name. (Manukau, Asian, male)

Sometimes more overt behaviour by exclusion is experienced.

[Do you feel like you get different treatment because you're Indian?] Yes, it's there. Even in the kindy also where my daughter was, if you're an Indian it's like they don't have the teachers or whoever are monitoring that, they don't show the same interest in bringing them up education-wise or activity-wise the same way that they spend with other children (Manukau, Asian, female)

[Other examples of where you might have been treated fairly or not fairly in accessing public services] People who can't speak good English, they're very impatient with them and they get real frustrated, but if you're going to have customers like that obviously you have to understand. I sometimes have to go with my parents and I always have to help them. I think it's quite rude when they're real impatient. [So they're not treated fairly you think] Yeah. (North Shore, Asian, female)

Across the Asian groups the most frequently cited examples where they felt they had been unfairly treated was when they entered New Zealand at the border. Most felt they were targeted. For example, in the first quote, an Iranian, who has New Zealand citizenship, encounters rigorous checking every time he returns from overseas.

[Any other examples, apart from the visa application, where you feel like you've not been treated fairly?] The airport, every time I go overseas, when I come I get checked... [Are you always checked when you come through?] Yeah, for a couple of hours coming from Middle East, even going to Australia, come back, go there, for hours there, checking. (North Shore, Asian, male)

■ Young people

The younger groups – school students, tertiary and younger working - had relatively unformed views on fair treatment because of what appeared to be a narrow set of experiences with public services.

Young people at school felt more strongly than other groups that being treated fairly is to be treated with respect. For them this effectively means being treated as an adult. Being treated with respect covered discrimination on the basis of age or how one is dressed.

Like I said before at the canteen she is real nice to people in front of you but then she just kind of lashes out at me. What makes me any different, I am still paying like everyone else, I am saying please and thank you. [Why is she rude to you?] Because I have piercings. Discriminating. My mate who wears a bit of foundation she wasn't too polite to her either. (Lower Hutt, 16-18 years, male)

People stereotype you as typical teenagers. (Lower Hutt, 16-18 years, female)

There were examples where the absence of full explanations created a sense of injustice and unfairness. This was the case for three respondents in the tertiary students group who had been in Year 11 when NCEA was introduced. They felt they had been unfairly treated as guinea-pigs through their last three years at school and had felt their education had suffered as a result.

5.4.5 Areas to focus on to improve satisfaction levels

Specific areas of training that are important for delivering on this driver are outlined below.

■ Listen, understand and explain

Fair treatment entails taking into account an individual's circumstances. As the previous chapter described to do this effectively front-line public servants need to be able to listen and understand what those circumstances and individual needs are.

If it is not possible to meet someone's needs, then care is required to explain the reasons why this cannot be done. The ability to explain the rationale for decisions in a reasonable manner is an important aspect of demonstrating fairness. Where a need is met, people generally consider they have been fairly treated.

■ Individual circumstances

Issues of fairness are more likely to be present where circumstances are more complex and are less likely to arise over straight forward transactional interactions unless errors or delays are experienced. Systems need to be in place to assist front-line staff if they do encounter more complex circumstances particularly for those on low incomes, in a difficult household situation or with disabilities. And where entitlements are available to people, the onus should be to inform them of their rights.

■ Flexibility

The ability to meet individuals' needs with different circumstances will give rise at times to the need to exercise some flexibility. As stated in Chapter 5.3, public service agencies need to establish guidelines for front-line staff when discretion within specified guidelines can be exercised.

■ Treat with respect and non-judgmental

The perception of unfairness is easily created if individuals feel that they are being treated differently to others in similar circumstances because of their age, income, gender or race. A focus of training for front-line staff needs to be on instilling a positive, professional attitude in dealing with all individuals consistently.

■ Cultural sensitivity

Ethnic minorities are particularly sensitive to feeling they may be discriminated against. Asian groups expressed the need for cultural sensitivity to be applied to them too.

5.5 Staff kept their promises – that is, they did what they said they would do

This driver was explored in the general public, Māori, Asian and Pacific Peoples groups as well as Young People (older working 24-30 years) respondents from Hamilton and tertiary students from Dunedin. In the general public and Asian groups the trust driver *The Public Service keeps its promises – that is, it does what it says it will do* was also discussed at the same time and some of those issues are covered in this chapter.

The following table shows where groups were held:

	Far North		Auckland		Hamilton	Lower Hutt	Otago		
	Kaitaia	Kaikohe	North Shore	Manukau			Dunedin	Waitaki	Clutha
General public			1		2		1	1	
Māori	1			1		1			
Asian			1			1			
Pacific				1		1			
Young People					1		1		

5.5.1 Overview

A 'promise' is not something that respondents normally associate a public servant making, but there is a strong expectation that public servants do what they say they will do. Even so, a 'promise' is most commonly understood as a commitment to do what one said one would do, so the driver is aptly described in the way it is.

An important aspect of making a promise is the expectation of 'follow-through' it creates to ensure completion of what has been promised. A strong sense of accountability attaches to promises once they have been made. Staff are expected to take personal ownership of the commitment and pride in doing the job they said they would do.

The most common promise is a commitment to do something by a certain time. Doing a job properly or thoroughly is an aspect too, but this was mentioned by fewer respondents.

Promises should not be made lightly. It is better to be honest and be unsure whether something can be achieved than to say it will be. It is also far better to under-promise and over-deliver. And if a promise has been broken, it should be accompanied by an apology and an explanation as to why it happened.

Compensation is not generally expected, but it may be warranted in some instances. In general though, promises should not be made unless they can be delivered.

Few respondents said they had heard a public servant make 'a promise' using that term, though most had heard public servants state an intention to do something for them. In the Māori, Pacific People and Asian groups a promise was seen more as a matter of trust.

Of the satisfaction drivers, this is the one that can most easily damage trust if promises are broken.

Staff are regarded as representatives of the Public Service, so if a staff member breaks or keeps a promise it reflects on whether the Public Service keeps its promises. However, it is acknowledged that staff may try their best to keep a promise, but they can be let down by systems and processes within the organisation. To that extent there is a difference between staff keeping their promises and the Public Service keeping its promises.

There is also some weak blurring of perceptions about what the Public Service promises and what the Government or politicians promise. When this occurs promises are treated with some scepticism.

5.5.2 Key themes

■ What is a promise?

Prior to informing respondents of the driver, they were asked to say what a promise was. Unprompted, respondents more or less described a promise in terms of people doing what they said they would do. Occasionally a promise was described word-for-word as it was in the driver. This gives a high degree of confidence that the driver is appropriately worded.

[What is a promise?] *They do what they say they're going to do.* (North Shore, Asian, male)

For some respondents, particularly Maori, Pacific and Asian groups, a promise was a matter of trust.

[If someone makes a promise, what does that mean to you?] *A commitment. Got to be done. Follow through. Giving an assurance that it will be done. You trust that it will happen. You rely on them. There's an expectation.* (Manukau, Pacific People, females/male)

Respondents said the word 'promise' was not one they associated with public servants using.

It's quite a loose term used in the Public Service I would say, for me anyway, the word 'promise'. It's too loose. [You don't hear it a lot?] Definitely not. (Manukau, Pacific People, female)

In one of the general public groups there were some who wanted to distinguish between a promise and a public servant declaring an intention to do something as this was a better reflection of reality since promises should not be broken, but were.

I consider a promise a promise. I promise I will do this. Anything other than that is an intention. They intend to call me tomorrow but if something happens then they won't. They haven't broken their promise. So anything other than "I promise to do this" is an intention. (North Shore, general public, female)

➤ **Follow-through**

Follow-through was another frequently used term to describe what people expect to happen when a promise is kept.

[So what is a promise in the context of public service?] *Providing they honour their word it is all good, if they say we will do this if they follow that through then you can't get any better.* (Oamaru, general public, male)

People taking responsibility to follow through. You're dealing with one person rather than being shoved down the line so just take responsibility, coming back to you, and being efficient. It's all time pressures. (Manukau, Asian, male)

Promises carry with them a clear sense of accountability to the public. Without a commitment to do something there would not be any accountability.

The ones I have dealt with are very good at not making a promise. [Is that a good thing?] For them, but I just feel run around but for them it is good because they don't have to be accountable to me for anything that doesn't line up with what they have said. (Kaitaia, Māori, female)

The experience for some is that direct responsibility is not necessarily taken on board.

There is an element of hiding behind the organisation and not being accountable as a representative of the organisation that they work for. (Oamaru, general public, female)

Some members of the public will establish their own ways of ensuring accountability for promises that have been made.

Maybe it is my expectations because I am dealing with government departments especially and they make me a promise, also if they make promises I tend to ask for their name, a bit of extra accountability. [So for you if a promise is made to you?] Then I expect it to be kept. [So you get the name of the person?] Yes. (Lower Hutt, Māori, female)

■ When promises are broken

Accountability requires that failures to keep promises are acknowledged.

Accountability is pretty big, it is better that they acknowledge that something bad has happened and you know they know they did something wrong. (Hamilton, young people, older working, female)

When promises are broken there is a strong expectation that an apology and an explanation must be provided.

At the least an apology. And maybe an explanation of why. I think that is just courteous. (Dunedin, general public, male)

Acknowledging that a promise has been broken by making an apology and explanation leads people to be less critical and can go some way toward restoring the relationship.

If someone rings up and says "sorry I didn't call you on the day I was supposed to", you'd be a bit miffed, but if they said "sorry I didn't call you on the day I was supposed to because this happened and this happened" then I think you're more understanding. (North Shore, general public, female)

There is also an expectation that if an explanation is provided that there is an assurance that there will not be a recurrence.

Guarantees that it won't happen again. (Manukau, Pacific People, female)

Expectations of compensation when promises were broken were not strongly articulated though in situations where a promise had not been fulfilled and a payment of service was made the case was made for some recompense.

If you pay for it depending on what kind of promise it was maybe a refund or something. (Dunedin, general public, male)

■ Types of promises

The most common type of promise that respondents experience are promises to deliver a service by a particular time.

When I sent my applications away there was one for my daughter and one for myself and I got my daughter's one back. They actually said to give it 12 to 14 days but I actually got it back before then. (Kaitiāia, Māori, female)

Timeframes are specific and are expected to be kept.

If you say you will do something, especially if you put a time on it, then you must do it. (North Shore, general public, female)

A common type of promise that respondents complained about not being kept was not getting back to people.

I think the most common one though is I will phone you back and you just never hear from them again and you are having to always do it. (Dunedin, general public, male)

Another promise encountered on the phone is to be promised to be referred to the right person for help.

They keep transferring you to the wrong person. (North Shore, Asian, female)

Occasionally, examples were given where service quality was promised and not delivered.

5.5.3 Linkages across drivers and links to trust

There were fewer linkages between *Staff keep their promises* and the other key drivers of satisfaction that have been discussed so far.

■ The service experience met your expectations

Chapter 5.1 identified that service expectations include that staff will do what they say they will do and that there is follow-through to help and resolve matters for the public. There is therefore a direct linkage to this driver. It is also apparent that there is a strong expectation that public servants should not make promises unless they are going to be kept.

■ Staff were competent

Following on from that observation, Chapter 5.2 also identified that competent staff are customer-focused with an attitude to provide solutions and be helpful. This carries with it the inference that such staff do what they say they will do.

■ Trust

This driver has a strong linkage with trust as keeping a promise is regarded as a matter of trust and to break a promise is to break a trust. Of all the satisfaction drivers in this study, staff keeping their promises had the strongest association with trust. This was particularly important for the Māori, Pacific People and Asian groups. Keeping promises was also not just a matter of trust, but a way of developing a relationship based on trust.

By getting back to you with what they say they will and then after that you realise that you trust them and will go back to them. (North Shore, Asian, female)

It is because of the strong trust element and the hope and expectation a promise conveys that damage to *trust* occurs if a promise is broken. Respondents said they wanted public servants to be open and honest about whether a promise can be fulfilled.

It's easier to be honest and say "I actually don't know" than to pretend you know but you have to find it. So that's like worse because you kind of expect them – because you have the false pretence, the false assumption that they will be able to help you. (North Shore, Asian, female)

I would much rather be under-promised and over-delivered than over-promised and under-delivered. (Manukau, Māori, male)

■ Staff versus Public Service keeping promises

Most respondents in the general public and Asian groups did not see a significant difference between the satisfaction driver *Staff keep their promises – that is, they do what they say they will do* and the trust driver *the Public Service keeps its promises – that is, it does what it says it will do*. Staff were seen as representatives of their organisations, so if a staff member broke their promise that reflected on the organisation too. The Public Service was seen to determine the boundaries of a promise for staff, so staff were simply seen to some extent as being the enforcers of policy.

Allowances were made for staff, in situations where staff might try their best to keep a promise, but other factors within the organisation might prevent it from being fulfilled.

It could be where the staff member is willing to help but the Public Service and its bureaucracy doesn't permit them to do that because they've got so many checks and balances they have to go through to actually get what you want. The business itself is restricted so they can only do what they do against a set of rules. (Manukau, Asian, male)

5.5.4 Differences across groups

The groups were all very similar in describing that a promise was doing what one said one would do and that it entailed follow through and accountability on behalf of the public servant who made the promise. Where differences existed they were about how highly a promise was regarded.

■ Māori, Pacific People and Asian groups

Among Māori, Pacific People and the Asian groups the word promise consistently carried a strong expectation of fulfilment.

Giving an assurance that it will be done. You trust that it will happen. You rely on them. There's an expectation. (Manukau, Pacific People, females/male)

5.5.5 Areas to focus on to improve satisfaction levels

Specific areas of training that are important for delivering on this driver are outlined below.

■ Establish realistic service delivery expectations

Public sector organisations should establish standard, realistic service expectations, particularly for response and delivery times. These should be capable of being met all the time under normal circumstances. Staff should be informed about these measures, so they have clear guidance about what they can expect to promise the public.

■ Measure performance

Periodically measuring actual performance of the service expectations will identify if and where failures are occurring, so they can be addressed.

■ Apologise, explain and mitigate

In the event that a promise has been broken, it should be a standard procedure for an apology to be given together with an explanation of what happened and if possible the steps that have been taken to ensure there is no recurrence. These steps are critical to giving effect to the expectation that a promise carries with it accountability.

■ Compensate in some way if a loss has been incurred

While an apology and an explanation are sufficient in most cases, there may be a need to consider compensation when a promise has been made that results in some form of financial loss to an individual. This may be relevant when a fee has been paid for a public service.

■ Have a transparent and open complaints process

If public servants make promises, then they need to be held accountable for keeping them. A transparent and open complaints process, which should be a mechanism available to handle other complaints about service, would provide an opportunity to resolve disputes about broken promises if they are not acknowledged.

5.6 It's an example of good value for tax dollars spent

This driver was explored in the general public, Māori, Asian and Pacific Peoples groups as well as with Young People (older working 24-30 years) respondents from Hamilton, younger working (18-23 years) respondents from the North Shore and those with young families from Clutha (Balclutha).

	Far North		Auckland		Hamilton	Lower Hutt	Otago		
	Kaitaia	Kaikohe	North Shore	Manukau			Dunedin	Waitaki	Clutha
General public			1		1		1	1	1
Māori	1			1	1		1		
Asian			1	1			1		
Pacific				1		1			
Young People			1		1				1

5.6.1 Overview

This driver is distinctly different from the other satisfaction drivers as unlike the others, which respondents easily understand in terms of their service experiences, this one is interpreted as requiring a more challenging judgement. A few even question how they can make such an assessment. That kind of comment did not emerge in discussions about any other driver.

When respondents were asked to give examples of other drivers they easily cited personal examples. However, with this driver the predominant examples given are not personal experiences, but generic services of a particular type. These are invariably core services – health, education, police, emergency services and to a lesser extent infrastructural and environmental. The reasons why these are considered value for money are essentially that they are:

- 'free', that is, paid for out of direct taxation or rates;
- necessary and available to everyone;
- performing well despite being under-resourced;
- a demanding job for those on the front-line;
- providing excellent treatment based on personal experience.

Where personal experiences are retold as examples of good value for tax dollars spent, they often involve a high quality, comprehensive service experience suggesting value is perceived when expectations are exceeded.

Asian and Pacific People in particular made international comparisons with public services they had experienced elsewhere to gauge whether there was good value for tax dollars spent. Those from rural areas have concerns about value for the tax dollars they pay as they see a relative lack of services locally and disproportionately more services going to large urban centres. Among young people, those with young families place a strong emphasis on services for children as being of most value for tax dollars spent.

When respondents were asked to compare similar public and private sector services, they focused primarily on the health and to a lesser extent the education sectors exclusively. A consistently strong theme is that service expectations are higher for the equivalent private sector services in those two sectors. That did not necessarily mean though that the private sector provided a better service or value for money. However, respondents placed a very high value in the health sector, for instance, on access to services straight away rather than to be placed on a waiting-list. In general, though the existence of choice and competition as well as payment for service carried with it higher service expectations. For some respondents the fact that public services are provided for everyone inferred that service quality is diluted as a result.

Similarly, higher expectations are attached to public services that people pay for directly than those funded out of general taxation. This is primarily because when people consciously part with their own money they wish to see a return whereas services provided from taxation are seen as 'free.'

When people choose to pay for a public service they have higher expectations of value than when they must pay a fee for a public service. Mandatory payments tend to be paid with little thought as to their value and some respondents have little idea what some fees, for example, car registration cover.

Greater value for tax dollars spent is placed on front-line staff than advisory or administrative staff. This is due to perceptions that the latter are over-paid relative to the former and because the work that advisors do is somewhat of an unknown quantity. Respondents find it easier to assess value for tax dollars spent when the service is visible.

There is very strong support for value for tax dollars spent to be shown. Some say that as they find it difficult to make a judgment on value without being provided with information on how tax dollars are being spent, they would like to see data on how tax dollars are spent. Suggestions were made that such information could be available on a special website and information in libraries and local newspapers were frequently suggested ways of doing this. However, some scepticism was expressed over whether people would read such information. Others said that having good service experiences would demonstrate value for tax dollars spent, so visible improvements to service quality would be another means of demonstrating value. And it was also pointed out that television programmes about some public services had helped them to understand the value those services provided.

5.6.2 Key themes

■ Awareness of how money is being spent

Some respondents found it difficult to provide examples of good value for tax dollars spent. These people felt they needed to know how much was being spent and where in order to make an assessment.

I think I'd have to understand exactly where the money's going to and just see visually where my money's going. (Lower Hutt, Pacific People, female)

There's eight people here and we struggled to name what the public services are. So we don't even know what our tax dollars are being paid for. (Manukau, Pacific People, female)

■ Poor value versus good value

A few respondents found it easier to give examples of poor value for tax dollars spent. These were examples that had received widespread publicity in the past, some not always accurately recalled.

They were recently in the paper for going off to some swanky hotel and I mean to be honest not the best look. (Hamilton, young people, older working, male)

Others rated some services low because they did not know what a payment had been for. For example, car registration was seen as a mechanism for just raising revenue.

I think probably because you can't actually see where the money is going. You can't actually see it is like that whole bottomless pit, that consolidated fund idea where you are just putting money into the government to vaporize. (Balclutha, general public, female)

Those with multiple cars felt it was an unfair imposition.

Car registration I actually rated it the lowest because for me it doesn't work I have got a multitude of vehicles that I have to register but I can only drive one at a time. So why not register our license and pay x amount to be a driver each year, that to me makes more sense. (Oamaru, general public, male)

But it was the rare respondent who did not feel they received some value for tax dollars spent. For example, there was a sense of measurable value in the return that the quality of the New Zealand environment brought in attracting tourists to the country.

I think DOC does a great job, they are quite hamstrung a lot of the time but the results are these islands are getting predator free and that is going to bring in tourism from all over the world. That is great value for money, I can't talk about all the others I don't know about them. (Hamilton, general public, female)

Similarly, education was seen as an investment in the future of society.

I think with education it has a value in itself and it has the ability to contribute back into the system. (Hamilton, Māori, female)

■ Comparative assessment

Some respondents thought a comparative means of making a value assessment is required.

How do we know whether it's good value for whatever because we don't have anything to compare it with. (Hamilton, general public, female)

A number made comparisons based on international examples and by comparing the public sector with the private.

■ International comparisons

International comparisons were used to provide a sense of relative value for tax dollars spent. In almost all cases, New Zealand public services were compared more favourably.

I was in England for awhile and dealing with their health service makes New Zealand's look quite a bit better even though it has got its challenges and it's not perfect as a comparison it seems pretty good. (Hamilton, general public, male)

Such comparisons were most frequently provided by those from the Asian and Pacific People's groups.

I was born here but I went back to Tonga and they don't even have a public service, so I find gratitude for whatever we have here. Also in the States if you don't have medical insurance you're not going to be treated. In Thailand people live on tourists giving them stuff. I think we're lucky to have some kind of benefit coming in, but that's the only good thing I could say about the Public Service. (Manukau, Pacific People, female)

Some respondents noted that the price of a passport had doubled and the period of its validity had halved in recent years. The passport was therefore an example of poor value or less value for money.

Why don't you get a passport for life, the same as the drivers licenses our lifetime drivers licenses 15 years ago and then for some reason suddenly they weren't lifetime any more. And now we have to pay every 10 years. (Hamilton, general public, male)

However, Asian groups pointed out the comparative value of having a New Zealand passport as it reduced the cost of acquiring visas because of New Zealand's visa-free relationships with many countries.

It costs about \$200 for a passport and a passport is good quality, world class, hard to get forged and takes you through a very high number of places. Well respected. The \$200 that you're paying for it is hardly its cost. So yes it's rewarding. Everybody wouldn't complain about paying the \$200 for the privilege of having a New Zealand passport so it is money well spent. (Manukau, Asian, male)

■ Private sector comparisons

Some respondents compared public services with private sector services, and good value for money, driven by competitive pressures, was associated with the latter. For example, several respondents talked about being able to exercise a choice for their private sector provider and being able to take goods back.

With the public sector there is not the ability to shop around. Whereas with the private sector if I don't like this electrician then I can go to this electrician or I can go to this bank or this bank or this bank. (Balclutha, general public, female)

If you go to the Warehouse and you take the service back and say I don't like your service can I exchange it for something else and have a replacement but with government departments you can't do that. You have no second go at anything. (Balclutha, general public, male)

Others derived good value for money from the perception that competitive pressures require private providers to perform better.

The private sector always go back and examine themselves whether they're efficient or not because they have to be ahead of their competition. There is always competition in the private sector. But in the public sector there's no competition so it's up to us to judge them, and basically when there is no competition, they can put a man to race around a track to race by himself. He's not going to break any records, but you put someone with him and sometimes records might be broken. (Manukau, Asian, male)

There were some, however, who said that while they assumed there would be better value from the private sector, it did not necessarily mean that there would be a higher level of service. This related primarily to the health sector where most public-private comparisons were made. Respondents did not think that their medical treatment would be better in private care, but they placed a very high value on avoiding waiting-lists and they also expected to receive extra, non-medical attention.

You get the same service at the end but you are pushed to the front of the line. (Balclutha, young family, male)

■ Importance of showing value, and how

There was unanimous agreement across the groups that it was important for the Public Service to show value for tax dollars spent. This was exclusively based on the fact that the money spent was not the Public Service's money, but their own and as a result accountability for the spending was required.

They should show that we have done these things for you as the citizens of this country. The money that we are spending is on these areas - all the statistics and things like that, they should be all published and everything like that. Why not? (Manukau, Asian, male)

There was also a message to make such data simple and understandable from this commerce student who was familiar with public sector annual reports.

Even though I've studied accounting, I find it really hard. My other mates in the class, we can barely understand what's in their annual report. It's supposed to be for us. (Lower Hutt, Pacific People, female)

The information also needs to be relevant to taxpayers.

Every household has to have a sense that because the public sector was there it contributed to the betterment of the lives of the household and their advancement. How you measure it I am not quite sure. But there needs to be some tangible measure of that. Because unless all of that contributes to the aspirations of the family the system is pointless. (Hamilton, Māori, male)

In most groups, there were a common set of ways of showing how tax dollars are spent together with any relevant comparative data, including having the data available on a website or in schools or public places like libraries.

I guess they can provide information at libraries, schools, other public places where people can read, or a newspaper or on TV. (North Shore, Asian, female)

Some suggested it would be good to have success stories reported in the media too.

It comes out in the success stories rather than the other stories we hear. Through the local rag. Council newsletters. Internet. I mean there's so much they can do, but usually the local rag seems to be the way to go. (Manukau, Pacific People, male)

Television programmes can also influence perceptions of value as people become aware of the role and range of work some departments undertake.

Mine's Customs. I think they're very good. Like it's money well spent with Customs. [Expand?] Because they provide a really good service. Like I didn't realise actually what they did until you see the programmes on TV and stuff and they control all the mail that comes through. I just didn't know that, I didn't really think that anyone sort of looked at stuff like that. So I just think that that's really good service. (North Shore, young people, female)

There was, however, a warning from some that the publicity attached to showing value for tax dollars spent should be somewhat muted and should not in itself be expensive to produce.

[How would you feel if the government started running workshops or putting ads on TV saying "this is where your tax dollars have gone in the last year or so"?] I think the fact they're talking about it, and spending so much money just talking about it, is a waste of money. (Manukau, Asian, male)

It was also suggested that only a few people might be interested in checking the value for tax dollars spent. Having information available might only be of benefit to the few who would take the trouble to read it

None of us are probably interested either. (Balclutha, young family, male)

■ Core services

The most common examples of good value for tax dollars spent that did emerge were of core public services like health, education, policing, emergency services and local government and infrastructural services. This was because such services were seen as:

- necessary and available to everyone;
- 'free', that is paid for out of direct taxation or rates;
- generally performing well despite being under resourced;
- involving a demanding job for those on the frontline;
- providing excellent treatment, based on personal experience.

■ Necessary and available to everyone

The Police, Fire and Ambulance services were identified as good value for tax dollars spent primarily because they do a necessary job.

The Police I think, we can't do without them so the money put into them we obviously would benefit from. (Dunedin, general public, female)

I just think they risk their lives and they put their lives before everything else. They get to do a lot of the grizzly stuff like car accidents and things. They are the ones that cut them out and pick up the bodies and people forget that side of it. (Dunedin, general public, female)

Ambulance. [Why is the ambulance good value?] *Well, they turn up in emergencies often first.* (Balclutha, general public, male)

Welfare expenditure on those in need was also included among the core services where value was appreciated.

What benefits the majority of the people, especially the old people. (Manukau, Asian, female)

The availability of ACC for everyone and the provision of the appropriate level of service was a driver of value for that service.

[What would be an example of good value for tax dollars spent?] *ACC.* [Why?] *It's just a really good service and everyone's covered and for whatever you need it for. They're not biased, they don't give you more than you need, they don't give you less, they give you the right amount.* (North Shore, young people, female)

■ Free, that is, paid for out of direct taxation or rates

The fact that services were also regarded as 'free' was also a factor in determining perceived value for tax dollars spent, for example hospitals and education.

[Why do hospitals provide value for money?] Because I think the doctors and nurses also, they provide a free service for patients. I think it's good value for money. (North Shore, young people, male)

I think secondary school teachers are good value for money because they teach kids a lot of things and it's free education for the students. I think that's really good. (North Shore, young people, male)

Even those who noted that they paid something toward public education asserted it was good value. In this case the respondent was able to make a comparison with the costs of childcare.

Well schools I wouldn't say it's free but for the quality the kids get we don't actually pay a lot. If you had to pay the teacher weekly what it would really cost for him to look after your kids and teach them you would be paying quite a bit of money so I am satisfied with that. (Balclutha, young family, male)

■ Local government services

Local government services, for example libraries, were one of the second tier of examples of good value for tax dollars spent which were not mentioned nearly as much as the core services. And like core services what characterised value in these examples was their availability to all and the perception that they were 'free'.

Public library. Books are expensive, not everybody can afford books, opens the world up to your children and to yourself and there is the use of computers in there. (Balclutha, young family, female)

Infrastructural council services, particularly roading, also came in for mention as good value.

Probably just all your council and district councils are good value for money in general, the whole process really. [In what sort of way?] Once again they are so necessary, the infrastructure is important. They provide our every day facilities. Basically we wouldn't live the life we live without them. Roding, water, sewerage. (Hamilton, Māori, female)

And recreational services that were available for all were also mentioned.

Recreational services. [Good value?] Yes. [Why?] Because my whole family, we use like the pools and library and the rec centres. (Auckland, Pacific People, female)

■ Services funded from general taxation versus fees for service

Respondents had different expectations for services funded out of general taxation, sometimes described as 'free' services, from services where fees are paid, for example, passports or birth certificates.

I have just noticed that the things I have scored lowest are the things that I actually have to write a cheque out for like a passport which really gets up my nose because value for money is way down looking at it historically. So my expectations are really different if I have to physically pay for it from something that comes out of my taxes. (Oamaru, general public, female)

An additional issue around some fees for service is the cost of paying for information about oneself, such as a birth certificate.

Paying for your birth certificate that gets me, paying for a copy of your own details and they charge for somebody to sit up there on a computer and punch in print. (Balclutha, young family, female)

■ Performing well despite being under resourced

Good value was also derived from the perception that core services were performing well despite being under-funded or under-staffed, or having under-paid front-line staff.

I'm just looking from the outside into education but I think it's under-funded, but I think we get good value from what we do spend in there. We could get an even better result if we spent more. (North Shore, general public, male)

Hospitals I think you get reasonable value for a department that is under-funded and under-staffed. (Hamilton, young people, older working, male)

There was also the perception that the Police were under paid for the type of job they had to do.

They work very hard and they deal with all sorts of horrible, horrible things. They have to remain impartial and their hours are horrible and they do it and they don't get overly paid for it. (Balclutha, young family, female)

■ Frontline versus back-room

In several instances, the perceived under-payment to front-line hospital staff was contrasted with the view that hospital administrators were paid too much.

I don't think it is good value because I think too much is spent on administration and not as much on what it should be doing. (Dunedin, Māori, female)

There was a consistently strong view that more value for tax dollars spent was provided by front-line public sector staff than those behind the scenes providing advice and administering rules and regulations. This was principally because in the case of the latter it was hard to see what they did whereas with front-line staff respondents could see what had been done.

For some faceless bureaucrat down the road, you don't see what they're creating so you don't get a perception of value for money because you don't see what they're actually shovelling out the other side. (North Shore, general public, male)

There was a perception that those behind the scenes were better paid than those on the front-line.

There is too much money put into advisories and reports and lawyers. (Kaitaia, Māori, female)

And a few were clearly prejudiced against the 'bureaucrats' in Wellington.

I think that is a waste, I think that is the biggest waste. I think there are a lot of clowns in Wellington, they actually piss me off. (Dunedin, general public, male)

However, in one of the Asian groups a different perspective was provided where the need for advisors and front-line staff were equally recognised.

It's like a human body - it will not work without a heart. A heart will not function without a brain. A brain will not function without an eye. [So all those three parts are needed as part of the Public Service] Absolutely. (Manukau, Asian, male)

■ A demanding job for those on the frontline

Good value for tax dollars spent was also recognised in the tough job carried out by those on the front-line, some of which is highlighted in television programmes.

The police I think is good value for money. [Why do you say that?] I feel sorry for the cops actually with all the crap they have to put up with. Just looking at Police 10-7 and Police Ten, my goodness. (North Shore, Asian, female)

I chose the Police. A thankless task for many frontline men and women. (North Shore, general public, female)

[Teachers] Quite a lot of crap from students who don't respect them sometimes. So I think they have a hard job. (North Shore, young people, male)

There was a suggestion that an indicator of good value for tax dollars spent would be less stressed front-line staff.

I think we'd probably decide they were good value for money if the front-line people, the ones that we actually see like the doctor, the nurse, the receptionist, the case worker or whatever if they seem happy and not stressed out to the max – because if they're being well cared for and are caring for us well, then obviously it's working. (Dunedin, Māori, female)

■ Providing excellent treatment based on personal experience

Some people had experienced exceptional treatment in hospital which influenced their perception of value. For example, one woman in Clutha told how her young daughter, who had collapsed lungs, was flown together with her mother to Starship hospital with all travel costs paid for. Other examples were based on personal experiences and benefits of services.

Hospitals again, my experiences, personal family experiences, myself and my wife. We have been fortunate in the way that we've found the hospital following up on the patients, doing things for them, checking on them and so on. (North Shore, Asian, male)

The perception of value for tax dollars spent on ACC was also based around comprehensively good service.

ACC are good value for money [Why is that?] They offer a prompt and efficient service. [They have improved haven't they over the last few years. (Interjection.)] My personal experience they were actually very good. They put a name to a person, you get a case manager, they have good systems, they have good phone systems and you can contact the person, that is your only contact. (Balclutha, general public, male)

Some related to their own personal experiences of how State assistance helped them to work.

Childcare subsidy for working people. [Tell us [Name deleted] how come that is a good example?] Because I am a solo dad with two kids and one is at school, the other one is in day care all day so I wouldn't worry about going to work if it didn't get subsidised. (Balclutha, young family, male)

Good value for tax dollars spent emerged where people have experienced efficient or citizen-centred services.

Land Transport I deal with them quite a bit through my job and they are always let's make it easy, let's get it sorted. I work in car dealership so I have a lot of dealings with them and they are so, so helpful and it's keep it simple stupid which is what I like to operate on and they operate from that principle. (Hamilton, general public, female)

I can only think of our mobile clinic that comes every Monday. Comes out for us and I think that is a pretty good example of tax dollars well spent. [Why is that?] Well we don't have to pay anything we drive just to the next bay, if we were in the city and went to the hospital we would have to pay wouldn't we. (Kaitaia, Māori, male)

■ Value linked to quality of service

One means of demonstrating good value for tax dollars spent was to improve the quality of public services so service expectations were better met.

If you go somewhere and you get the service that you want, the results that you want in a quick, then aren't you getting good value for your tax dollar. (Hamilton, general public, female)

Your interaction with that particular agency you understood what was happening, the transaction was timely, you felt heard and of value. (Hamilton, Māori, female)

5.6.3 Linkages across drivers and links to trust

There were few direct linkages between *It's an example of good value for tax dollars spent* and the other key drivers of satisfaction. This is mainly because this driver was understood in terms of the provision of generic services more than as a personal experience unlike the other drivers which were understood almost exclusively on the basis of personal experience.

■ The service experience met your expectations

When respondents described personal experiences as examples of good value for tax dollars spent, they gave examples where expectations had been comprehensively met. Meeting or even exceeding service expectations results in people receiving good value for tax dollars spent.

■ Trust

This driver has a strong linkage with the trust driver *The Public Service provides services that meet your needs*. This is because one of the important ways that this trust driver is understood is in terms of the universal provision of core services, such as, health, education and safety. These are the same services that are cited first and foremost when respondents provide examples of good value for tax dollars spent.

5.6.4 Differences across groups

■ Māori

There was a suggestion by one or two Māori respondents that value for tax dollars spent had occurred as a result of consultation with Māori. This is only a tentative finding as there were only a couple of examples given, but such examples did not emerge in any other groups.

We have had some good dollars spent with consultation with DOC and the Far North District Council to get us to where we are now. [Why is that?] Probably because we understand a lot more than what we did before about those services. (Kaitaia, Māori, female)

■ Asian

➤ *International comparisons*

As was the case for Pacific People, Asian respondents who had migrated to New Zealand were more likely to draw on international comparisons to assess whether services were good value for tax dollars spent. The comparisons that they made were favourable.

➤ *Passport valued*

Asian respondents tended to place more value on the New Zealand passport than others. It was described as a high quality passport and one that had additional value because of the visa-free access it provided to many countries where otherwise visa charges would have applied.

■ Pacific People

➤ *International comparisons*

Like the Asian respondents, Pacific People were more likely to draw on comparisons with public services in the Pacific Islands to assess the value of services in New Zealand. The comparisons that they made were favourable.

■ Young People

➤ *Family focus*

The group with a young family focused almost exclusively on services that related to their families and their children as examples of good value for tax dollars spent. These included funding for childcare, working for families tax credits which enables extra things to be brought for the children, education and children's healthcare issues.

■ Rural-Provincial

Loss of services to urban centres was perceived as unfair and equated to poor value for tax dollars paid by some of those from rural-provincial centres. There was a desire to see more tax dollars spent locally.

I know that when you pay for a litre of petrol 65% of it goes to the government to provide a service back to me. And living in the deep south that money doesn't come here it goes north. That is just one wee example. If I pay my tax dollars I know it is paid out in the benefit, education, health and everything else and most of that is not paid back to my region it is paid back to north of the Bombay Hills... we generate a lot of money and most of that revenue is spent by government agencies up north with the services they provide. (Balclutha, general public, male)

The visibility of local government expenditure is far higher than for central government spend on services in provincial areas.

I think you see what is happening in your own community with your local council, where your rates are going as opposed to being able to see the total big picture of what is going on in New Zealand with every department of public service. So it's actually harder to see where the money is going or being spent. (Oamaru, general public, female)

5.6.5 Areas to focus on to improve satisfaction levels

The following suggestions are made to better enable good value for tax dollars spending to be recognised when it occurs.

■ Improve service delivery to meet expectations

One way in which people assess value for tax dollars spent is by having their expectations met. Implementing the set of recommendations to meet expectations in Chapter 5.1 will go a long way toward improving perceptions of value for tax dollars spent.

■ Raising public awareness

Raising public awareness of what public service agencies do, such as through television programmes, can be an effective way of reaching a large audience in an entertaining and informative way. Police and Customs have done this successfully and are likely to be more effective in improving satisfaction levels than publishing facts and figures around where the money is spent which may only be read by relatively few people.

■ Develop measures of value for money

It is evident from discussion of this driver that people struggle to assess value for tax dollars spent. They have no financial measures or comparative data to be able to base their assessments on. If people are to be expected to make such an assessment and it is clear from the groups that it is important to do so, then public services need to develop simple, understandable measures of value for money.

■ Inform what fees cover e.g. car registration

The value for some fees for service is not recognised because people do not know what they are paying for. Some think a car registration is a means of gathering tax and do not realise that it funds the cost of road accidents. Some think a passport is only used by the government to track a person's movements and provides no personal benefit. Informing people what fees cover and the benefits the services provide are important ways to enable people to see the value they receive for what they pay.

■ **Set measures for efficiency of core deliverables and publicise**

Key service standards, such as realistically achievable response times should be set and be publicly available to ensure expectations are transparent and there is accountability for fulfilling them. By enabling the public to see that there is accountability for service delivery there will be a parallel sense of accountability for tax dollars spent.

■ **Website and other public information**

There is strong support for the Public Service to show value for the tax dollars it spends. A suggested way to provide this accountability is to post data on a website. This may need to be a generic website for the Public Service and would include value for money measures, so people can view the total tax spend. However, individual departments should provide department specific data on their own websites. The information needs to be provided in a simple, easily understood manner and similar information should be available in other places where public information is available, for example, public libraries. Where appropriate success stories that demonstrate value for tax dollars spent should be publicised, though not advertised, in the general media.

5.7 Channels

■ Overview

Of the communication channels, phone and face-to-face are the most preferred because there is a strong desire to be able to explain one's circumstances and to be able to question public servants to gain more information. This is more pronounced where an individual's circumstances are complex. Face-to-face is also the most trusted channel.

The Internet and mail are valued for the documented evidence they provide. Both channels are important where it is felt proof may be required of the undertakings made by public servants. The Internet is convenient because it enables access to information at a time and place that suits the customer. Mail is considered slow and inflexible, but may suit those who are not computer literate. While both the Internet and mail are least suited to conveying emotion or enabling people to discern genuineness in the communication, written material is regarded as useful for those for whom English is a second language.

■ Face-to-face

Expectations are higher of face-to-face contact and it is often the preferred channel, particularly if an individual's service requirements are complex. Personal contact is also regarded as a more trustworthy guide to how committed a public servant is to the service as non-verbal factors such as body language can be read. Face-to-face contact can play an important role in building relationships with the public and is particularly important for Māori, Pacific People and those for whom English is a second language.

You can look at them and tell whether they are lying or not. (Balclutha, general public, male)

Face-to-face I have the opportunity to use non-verbal, which as you've already said is 95% of the decision. But over a phone I have to entirely rely on verbal and it must be clear. (Manukau, Māori, female)

This also means that expectations are generally higher in a face-to-face situation. Respondents say it increases their chances of getting something done.

You increase your chances of getting what you want done, completed, by going over the counter. (Manukau, Asian, male)

There is an expectation that the body language in a face-to-face meeting would be friendly and welcoming.

■ Phone

The phone is also a preferred channel for those that want to speak to a real person.

I would rather use the phone than email because I would rather talk to a person. With email you don't know if they have received it or not whereas if you are talking to a person you know they have got it. (Kaitaia, general public, male)

A competent phone channel is an accessible one, that is, people are able to get through to speak to a staff member promptly, and once through experience courtesy.

Over the phone you want their voice to sound interested and actually engage in a conversation and not just be human answering machines. (Hamilton, general public, female)

Many respondents reported that receiving service over the phone is problematic. This is principally due to delays in actually getting in touch with someone who could help. There is also less accountability as the public servant on the phone is not necessarily identifiable.

When you are on the phone you expect to be on hold for the first 15 minutes before they talk. Then they are bounced from one person to another and each time you call it is a different person who has no idea who you are on about. [So there is a different expectation on the phone, you expect to wait?] On the phone you expect it to be a painful experience. You don't want it to be. (Balclutha, young family, male)

However, for those in rural-provincial areas, the phone may be the only practical way in which to speak to someone as local offices do not exist.

The phone may also be avoided by those for whom English is a second language as they find it easier to understand and be understood through face-to-face contact. Even so, the phone was considered useful in removing prejudice that some felt they encountered in face-to-face contact.

Over the phone I can take away the prejudice. (Hamilton, Asian, female)

■ Internet and mail

Both the Internet and mail (including email) are important because they provide a written record that can be referred to later or used as proof of something if required. Both channels are the most trusted for making promises because the written word provides clear evidence that public servants can be held accountable for. Some respondents said the written word did not convey emotion well and did not enable them to discern genuineness.

I think if they write it people don't usually lie if they do it in writing because you have got something hard to go back to and you can actually take it further and further. It is more legal. (Dunedin, general public, female)

I actually like email better because I have it written in black and white what has occurred. Because I have had but I rang you on the 12th – we have no record of that. So I find that really frustrating. (Kaitaia, general public, female)

The Internet has obvious advantages because of its capacity to provide a quicker, written response and is easy to use.

The Internet I expect to be much easier to do. It should be really straightforward and really easy to use. (North Shore, young people, younger working, female)

Internet can also provide significant advantages for those who find it easy to access what they want. This conveys efficiency as the example below shows.

Lodging money in GST accounts used to be done by pen and paper in the past. Then all of a sudden the Internet came in and they said “from now on you can submit it over the Internet”. [How have you found that?] Perfect, beautiful. I can submit it at 3 am rather than having to put a stamp on it and having to walk to the Post Office and put it in the mail. I can lodge it on the Internet and I immediately get a response back and it’s done, thank you very much. That receipt I can show that it was done at that specific time which is an improvement that the post couldn’t have helped me with. (Manukau, Asian, male)

Email can become a default channel because of experiences of problems over the phone.

I use the Internet because I am sick and tired of getting somebody down the phone who doesn’t know and the other ones who are out at lunch so I will flick them an email [Is there anything different using the Internet in terms of competence or expectations?] Yes, because I have given them plenty of time, I haven’t rung up and put them on the spot and said you answer now. (Hamilton, general public, female)

Experiences of the Internet are somewhat uneven with some reporting that emails they had sent to public servants had not been replied to and some websites were difficult to navigate to find the information required. There is an expectation that emails should be responded to within 24-48 hours.

[Over the Internet, what sort of things to meet your expectations] A prompt reply. [What’s prompt?] Two days. Just acknowledgement I guess is important. [One to two days would be good. (Interjection.)] (North Shore, Asian, male)

In offering the Internet as a channel, public servants need to be mindful that not everyone either has access to a computer or is computer literate.

You look for your land references and they tell you to go to the computer over there and do this and do that. Excuse me I have never used a computer, you don’t get that personal attention like you used to before. You are supposed to be on the ball and be computer literate. (Kaikohe, Māori, male)

As with the Internet, mail has the benefit of providing documentation that may be needed later. And as with the Internet the written word removes doubts or misunderstandings that could arise over the phone. While convenient for people that are not computer literate, using mail was generally considered too slow to meet most needs and there was a concern that mail can get lost.

6. Drivers of trust

This part of the report will devote a section to each of the *trust* drivers apart from the driver that was explored only with Māori which will be covered in the Māori section of the report. As was the case with the previous section, what follows was common to all population groups with which trust was explored. Any findings that were unique or particular to Māori or Asian respondents are covered in separate sections specific to those populations. No trust drivers were explored with either Pacific People or Young People. As noted in the methodology, the general concept of trust in public services was discussed in some groups in an endeavour to gain more insights and a section is devoted to this at the end of the discussion on the trust drivers.

6.1 You have confidence that public servants do a good job

This driver was explored in the general public and Asian groups. The following table shows where groups were held:

	Auckland		Hamilton	Otago		
	North Shore	Manukau		Dunedin	Waitaki	Clutha
General public	1	1			1	1
Asian	2		1			

6.1.1 Overview

This driver is most closely linked to the satisfaction drivers *The service experience met your expectations* and *Staff were competent* and to a lesser extent with *Staff kept their promises – that is they did what they said they would do* and *Your individual needs were taken into account*.

When respondents describe what doing a good job means they identify almost all the expectations that emerged in Chapter 5.1 that contribute to service experiences meeting expectations and to the attributes of competent staff outlined in Chapter 5.2. Those most important attributes of both competent staff and of those who respondents have confidence in to do a good job are:

- helpful;
- knowledgeable or experienced;
- ability to listen and understand needs;
- being customer focused;
- empathy, and;
- that they follow through (solutions focused).

Respondents say they have confidence a public servant is doing a good job when they are motivated to help people, have the knowledge and ability to understand what people need, can provide a solution for them and obtain job satisfaction from doing that.

There were common perceptions across the groups that front-line staff were often not sufficiently empowered or knowledgeable to help people and that staff were generally under-resourced and under stress. Some staff were said to not have their heart in the job and were not helpful. This is consistent with the suggestions respondents made about ways to improve levels of satisfaction in service expectations when they identified the need for more front-line resources and better training of front-line staff.

Confidence levels that public servants do a good job differ between the types of public services being considered. For instance, the highest level of confidence is in emergency services due to absolute trust that they are committed to doing their very best job when called upon to help even to the point of putting their own lives at risk.

Of the channels, face-to-face contact is the one where respondents feel most confident that a good job will be done and the phone engenders the least confidence. The Internet and mail are impersonal and there are some concerns that mail can get lost which undermines confidence. The difference between channels is dealt with more fully in Chapter 5.7.

Confidence in public servants doing a good job may be lower in rural-provincial areas due to issues like more limited face-to-face contact and a less localised focus.

The Asian groups were distinguished from the general public groups because they placed a lot more emphasis on the ability of staff to explain and communicate information and on the need for cultural sensitivity. They were also more relaxed about staff they deal with thinking one thing and doing another while the general public groups saw this as inconsistent with having confidence in staff doing a good job.

6.1.2 Key themes

■ General confidence levels

Respondents tended to express qualified confidence that public servants do a good job.

Depends on who they are. I would assume that 70% of them would do a good job. And some of the rest are just having a bad day and some of them hate their job and they take it out on the world. (Oamaru, general public, female)

Only the emergency services enjoyed unqualified confidence that they do a good job.

Depends on the Public Service as well, you can pretty much trust a fireman to come and put your fire out, the evidence is the fire has gone out therefore he has done a good job. But as for the more fluffy stuff like ACC claims or whatever may or not be allowed that is more of a roll of a dice. (Manukau, general public, male)

The main reservations about expressing confidence were directly linked to experiences with front-line staff. Some felt that they were unable to get the answer they wanted from the person they spoke to over the phone.

Usually the person you deal with at the front-line is not the person who can actually give you an answer. They have to go to the next person. You don't know how many chains they have to go up to get the answer. Once they get an answer, it comes back down the same channel. It could get lost in the translation. (North Shore, general public, male)

Some felt front-line staff were under-resourced to do the job required.

I've seen nurses in tears because they can't do their job well enough. [They're under so much pressure for all sorts of reasons. It's terrible. (Interjection.)]
(North Shore, general public, female)

And some blamed staff attitudes.

Thinking about the people they are working with instead of their morning tea break. (Oamaru, general public, female)

I think some of them are really caring. They really do try their best. Others think "to hell with it", they're having a bad day. (North Shore, general public, female)

To a large extent whether a good job was being done depended on service expectations being met. This essentially meant public servants needed to be helpful.

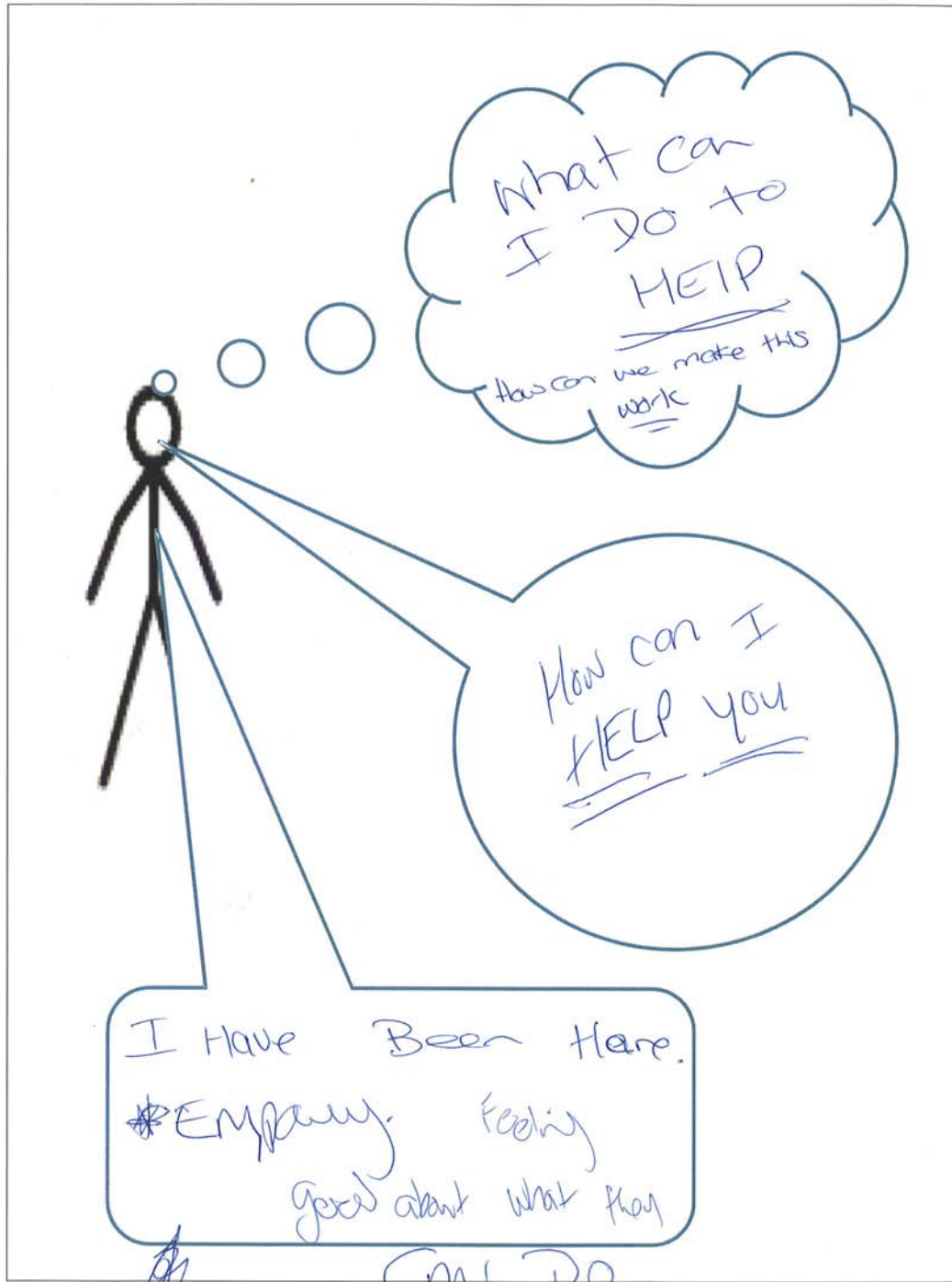
■ Helpfulness

Respondents were asked to do a projective exercise where they filled in what the ideal public servant would be thinking, saying and feeling if they were doing a good job. There was strong commonality across the groups that the ideal public servant wanted to help, actually helped and gained self satisfaction from helping. Over the page are two examples, one general public (Oamaru, male) and one Asian (North Shore female) that typically illustrate respondents' expectations about helpfulness. Other components of what it means to be helpful for these two respondents are also apparent in the exercise, such as, being efficient, fair and treating people as individuals.

Fundamental to being helpful was having a strong customer focus which was also one of the core service expectations identified in Chapter 5.1.

Thinking how are they best able to help or assist the person, saying how they are able to help or assist them in any way and feeling that they have done the best job possible. (Balclutha, general public, female)

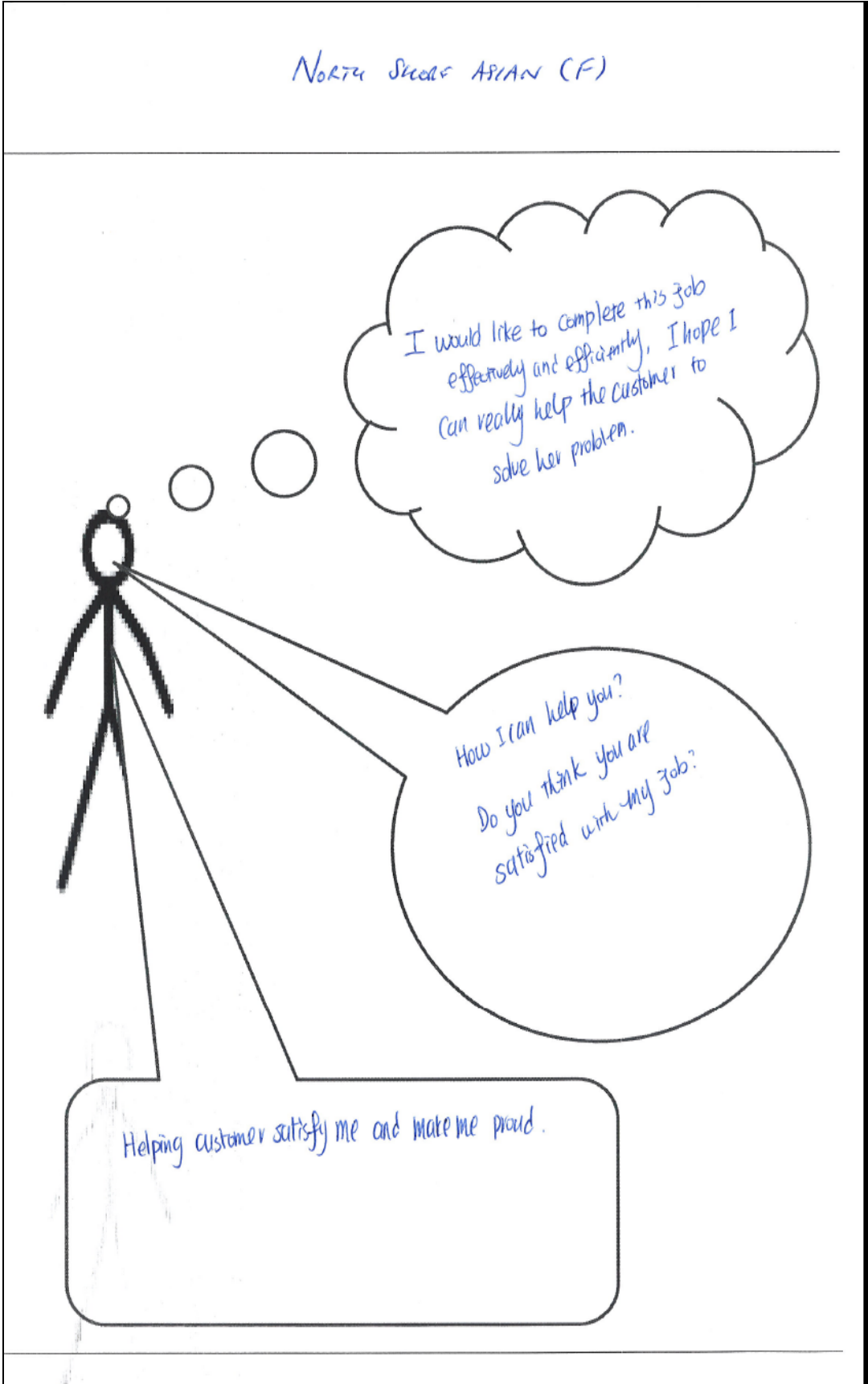
WAITAKI (OAMARU) GENERAL PUBLIC (F)



~~①~~
A Commitment to a Person they are working with

Waitaki (Oamaru), general public, female

NORTH SHORE ASIAN (F)



North Shore, Asian female

After respondents had written on their diagrams they were probed on how important it was for the public servant to be consistently thinking, saying and doing the same thing. The Asian groups were more inclined though to accept inconsistencies between what a public servant might be thinking and doing.

You cannot possibly say everything you think. (Hamilton, Asian, female)

You are not going to say something to offend a person. You can think it but you don't say it. (Hamilton, Asian, female)

■ Knowledge

In order to be helpful, one of the most important expectations respondents had of public servants they could have confidence in to do a good job was that they be knowledgeable, that is, they knew what they were talking about.

They very much have the knowledge on what they are doing. So you can tell him he is competent at that job. (North Shore, Asian, male)

The need for public servants to be knowledgeable and understanding (see below) are critical aspects of the satisfaction drivers *Staff were competent* and *Your individual circumstances were taken into account* which are discussed in Chapters 5.2 and 5.3.

■ Listen, understanding and explain

The ability to understand an individual's needs was also crucial to having confidence that a good job would be done.

Thinking what does this person need so how can I help you. (Balclutha, general public, female)

This can entail understanding an individual's circumstances and not treating everyone the same. This has obvious links to the satisfaction drivers *You were treated fairly* and *Your individual circumstances were taken into account*.

Maybe they need to know the information, not just about a job, also about the customer so how to – it's also just like understanding needs of clients. If they know the clients they will understand their need. If they don't really know anything about the clients, they won't know really what they need. [Need to know in some way] Like the information of the clients like what they really want, what is their background, and what is their like special need. (North Shore, Asian, female)

The ability to communicate effectively instilled confidence in those who could do that. This was particularly so for Asian respondents.

I work in the lab and you have different cultures that come in and a Kiwi can be pretty abrupt in the way they talk to them because they don't understand the language. And some Kiwi's do talk quite fast. And if you can't speak the language if English is not your first language you are going to battle to try and grasp what is being said. But they don't care about it. You know that you need to do this and that, go and get somebody else to speak the language and that kind of thing. (North Shore, Asian, male)

■ Empathy

Closely linked to the ability to understand someone's needs and to be helpful was the need to have empathy for the customer. Sometimes this was described as being compassionate, but the important thing is for the public servant to genuinely care. The need for empathy emerged as a service expectation in Chapter 5.1 as well as in the discussion on the satisfaction driver *Your individual circumstances were taken into account* in Chapter 5.3.

With the empathy thing, it's understanding who you are, what you're living in, that it's difficult getting to and from work, all that sort of stuff, yes so I understand the problem in the world that you're actually living in, not necessarily just your problem, but who you actually are. (North Shore, general public, male)

■ Keeping promises

One of the complaints respondents brought up about public servants that undermined confidence that public servants did a good job was lack of follow through which was often expressed as a public servant not doing what they said they would do. This underscores the need for public servants to keep their promises in order to create confidence that they do a good job (see Chapters 5.5 and 6.5 which discuss the relevant satisfaction and trust drivers that relate to keeping promises).

[What does doing a good job mean for a public servant? What are the main aspects of that?] *Doing what they say they're going to do. Follow through. (North Shore, general public, female)*

Within reason I mean they can't do everything, be honest if you don't know the answer don't give the line just say I don't know the answer. [But I will try and find out. (Interjection.)] And I will get back to you and actually get back to you. (Oamaru, general public, female)

■ Admitting mistakes

Acknowledging errors and omissions helps prevent confidence from being undermined. Accountability was demonstrated when public servants admitted responsibility for mistakes by apologising.

Just being accountable for their actions. If they do slip up, apologising and being professional about it. (North Shore, general public, male)

■ Judgmental

Confidence that public servants do a good job is undermined when they pre-judge people. Another form of unfairness, racial discrimination, emerged in the Asian groups.

[Has anyone else got an example where they felt like they have been prejudiced against?] I have sort of struck it visually. [In what way?] I have gone to council and waited to be served and I have been stared at rather than can I help you, looked up and stare and then carry on with what they are doing for another minute or so before they get up and say hello can I help you. I don't know whether it's just me I may feel more sensitive but when my husband is with me, I have a white Kiwi husband when he is with me we get attended to straight away. (Hamilton, Asian, female)

More detailed discussion about fair treatment can be found in the companion satisfaction and trust Chapters 5.4 and 6.4.

■ Best channels

While Chapter 5.7 discusses channels in more detail, it is important to note that face-to-face contact provides most confidence in a job being done well.

When you are face-to-face it's reality, that is a person just like you who has to go home at the end of the day. So I think if you want a good result it is best to do it in person. (Manukau, general public, female)

Respondents had least confidence in the phone which also presented more of a barrier for those for whom English was a second language.

I just feel more confidence because I can talk to that person face-to-face ... the problem sometimes over the phone I find it quite hard to communicate. I don't know why, maybe just my own personal reason or something like that, and sometimes because maybe my English sometimes it can be not really easy to understand through the phone or something like that. It would be easier to communicate face-to-face. (North Shore, Asian, female)

■ Asian perspective

Directly related to the need to appreciate the limitations of a member of the public for whom English is a second language is the need to exercise cultural sensitivity. This issue was raised only in the Asian groups, but was an important factor influencing whether they had confidence in public servants to do a good job.

It may be lack of understanding, given the diverse nature of the people that the agencies deal with. Sometimes that can be just a training issue where they do not fully understand a cultural group. (North Shore, Asian, male)

■ Rural-provincial perspectives

For rural-provincial areas confidence can be undermined by a lack of services.

We had a person come into our house, she was screaming she was being attacked, she came in and then her boyfriend or somebody came in after and threatened to push me through the walls, this is in my own place, we rang the Police and oh sorry there is nobody on duty in Balclutha or Milton tonight somebody is going to have to come from Dunedin. (Balclutha, general public, male)

There are also fewer opportunities for them to use the most trusted channel for communication, face-to-face contact.

Here you can't see anybody face-to-face in a region like ours. (Balclutha, general public, female)

6.2 The Public Service provides services that meet your needs

This driver was explored in the general public and Asian groups. The following table shows where groups were held:

	Auckland		Hamilton	Lower Hutt	Otago		
	North Shore	Manukau			Dunedin	Waitaki	Clutha
General public		1	1	2	1	2	
Asian	1	1			1		

6.2.1 Overview

This driver was seen as expounding an ideal rather than a reality that exists all the time for services that people need. While respondents concede that generally needs are met, there were several examples of poor core services and individual services to show that they felt there was plenty of room for improvement.

Respondents chose to interpret this driver in two quite different ways. Some understand 'your needs' to refer to the community or society's needs. These people identify those needs as core services, such as education, health, emergency services, policing and key infrastructural services like roading and sewerage.

Others understand 'your needs' as quite individual to themselves and as a result a wide range of needs are identified. Often these needs are closely linked to the core expectations of service, such as, being knowledgeable, helpful, understanding, accessible, providing fair treatment, being treated as an individual and solutions focused, all of which are important elements of meeting service expectations as discussed in Chapter 5.1 and in Chapter 5.3 which looked at *Your individual circumstances were taken into account*. Among the Asian groups there was a stronger focus on speed and efficiency.

6.2.2 Key themes

■ Driver seen as 'an ideal'

The driver was treated with cynicism when first presented without prompting in some groups. It was clear that respondents regarded this as a goal the Public Service might have, but it was certainly not being achieved.

Is that like a vision statement rather than a reality? (Manukau, general public, female)

Some respondents talked about the variable experience they had had with different public services.

I think a lot of it depends perhaps on the departments you use and what you are using them for and what your dealings are with them. (Oamaru, general public, female)

Some provided individual examples where they felt needs had not been met. This tended to arise either through errors, poor accountability or poor quality work.

The pressures of the system and poor staff training were blamed for a failure to meet needs.

I know sometimes it's the agencies fault new people come in and they are under so much pressure they are just kind of thrown in at the deep end, they are not actually taught the job properly, they don't have enough information and enough training. And it is their clients that suffer. (Manukau, general public, female)

And processes, including rules and regulations, were seen to frustrate needs being met at times.

I have two boys in wheelchairs and know the sheer amount of paper work as a family that we have to do to ensure that the kids get what they need just to be at the same level as other kids. Anything outside the norm doesn't work, there is always a lot of bureaucracy around it, there is always a lot of confusion, there is always interpretation on what should be or shouldn't be. (Oamaru, general public, female)

Although a specific service outcome may be met, some respondents said the service could be delivered more efficiently.

Yes, it met my needs in that I got out of the country, I got back into the country, it didn't exceed my expectations at all, but they provided basically the minimum service for you to achieve that outcome. So public services provided services I suppose that would meet your needs. They never exceed your expectations. (Lower Hutt, general public, male)

■ Universal needs

One of the principal ways in which people interpreted this driver, *The Public Service provides services that meet your needs*, was to see it as referring to meeting society's needs.

I saw the word 'your' meaning public. I didn't see it as a personal thing, but it could very well mean personal as well, but if it applies to me and it applies to all of us around the table, that 'your' applies to all of us. (North Shore, Asian, male)

Those that understood 'your needs' as the universal needs of those in society gave core services as examples of those needs the Public Service needed to provide. These were also the most important needs they felt had to be met. These included healthcare, Police, emergency services, welfare, education and other vital infrastructural services such as roading.

They are fulfilling basic human needs that everyone should have access to, like everyone should have access to education. (Manukau, general public, female)

All these services were seen as important for the Public Service to provide because individuals themselves could not do so.

■ Individual needs

The second way in which this driver was interpreted was that it referred to the individual service needs of respondents. These were wide ranging reflecting that everyone's needs were somewhat difference.

➤ *Taking account of individual circumstances*

Recognising that each individual had unique circumstances that should be taken into account was one need to be borne in mind. This was discussed more fully in Chapter 5.3.

The whole thing of providing a service is getting to know the unique circumstances and they don't seem to be doing that. (Manukau, general public, female)

They need to be knowledgeable and efficient, they need to be flexible and have some discretion without the need for a parliamentary inquiry as to why they made that specific decision. (Lower Hutt, general public, male)

➤ *Knowledge*

Staff were required to be knowledgeable in order to help. This requirement was critical to meeting expectations (see Chapter 5.1), important for competent staff (see Chapter 5.2) and for taking account of individual circumstances (see Chapter 5.3)

I believe you have trust if you feel they know what they are talking about. They are not just fobbing you off. (Lower Hutt, general public, female)

➤ *Listen, understand and explain*

It was important for people to know what they had to do or what would happen when dealing with a public servant. This need was particularly strong for those from Asian groups for whom English was a second language. The ability to listen, understand and explain were important features of competency as well as taking individual circumstances into account as detailed in Chapters 5.2 and 5.3 respectively.

You try and explain to them what you need and what you want and they should absorb that and try and figure out what the best option for you is. And they put up all the options they have, you having to ask for all the options isn't the right way to go about things. (Dunedin, Asian, female)

If you don't know something they should be professional enough to go through with you the process instead of hah, hah you don't know stuff. (Dunedin, Asian, male)

➤ **Customer focused**

To meet needs staff had to be customer focused which again is a core expectation that featured in Chapters 5.1-5.3. In terms of approachability, respondents in most groups talked about the need for staff to be friendly and that over the phone they should greet and identify themselves. Such courtesies make the interaction easier for the customer.

I put down being approachable because I think if it's a friendly face that you can go and talk to at a reception counter or whatever it makes you feel a bit more at ease that you are going to be listened to at whatever agency you are going to. I also put down that they would be able to sort the problem out quickly and not all this red tape of they have to have meetings or they are going to get back to you when they have talked to somebody else about it. (Lower Hutt, general public, female)

➤ **Follow through**

To get the desired result, requires staff to follow through to meet the public's needs and for staff to do what they say they will do. This requirement is also a general service expectation (see Chapter 5.1), a trait of competency (see Chapter 5.2), is a central focus of the promises driver discussions in Chapter 5.5 and 6.5 and helps provide confidence that public servants do a good job (see Chapter 6.1)

I don't like the idea of going to a lot of trouble to ring up a government department and talk earnestly to someone and then find out no one has done anything about it and just paid you lip service. (Lower Hutt, general public, male)

➤ **Empathy**

Associated with follow-through was the need for public servants to genuinely care and want to do their best for the public which required them to empathise with individuals and their situations. This is central to taking individual circumstances into account (see Chapter 5.3), but is also a component of meeting service expectations (see Chapter 5.1).

ACC I am almost permanently injured but they are pretty much brilliant as far as I am concerned in my dealings with them. They give me bits of paper that say go and get some free physio and they basically wish you luck with your rehabilitation in the letters which is actually quite nice. It is like you do feel a bit cared for and stuff like that and on the positive side it keeps the humanity side of things going as far as government departments go. (Hamilton, general public, male)

➤ **Fairness**

Fair treatment was also an expectation of service needs. This is discussed more fully in the discussion of the fairness drivers in Chapter 5.4 and 6.4.

If you make a mistake you pay interest but if it's the other way around – they sent me a letter to say there was child support owing from one of our workers and when I rung it was a mistake but they had owed us \$21 since 2004 so they said send them my bank account details and they would give it to me. They gave me the \$21 and whatever cents, there was no interest. What they expect from us we should be able to expect from them. (Hamilton, general public, female)

➤ **Asian perspectives**

The need for speed efficiency came through most strongly from the Asian groups. It is an aspect of meeting service expectations (see Chapter 5.1).

If I go somewhere and I want it done I want it done speedily, efficiently and competently. (Dunedin, Asian, male)

As the population increases, as the demands increase, there should be more efficiency, more promptness in the things, especially life and death scenarios. (Manukau, Asian, female)

Asian groups also drew on international examples to provide relative comparisons of needs being met.

Services are slower in New Zealand compared to other countries and I mean I don't mind it personally but as long as the job is done efficiently and competently, speed doesn't really matter to me but that is one thing that New Zealanders don't provide in most cases. (Dunedin, Asian, female)

6.3 The Public Service admits responsibility when it makes mistakes

This was explored in three general public groups in Manukau, Hamilton and Lower Hutt.

6.3.1 Overview

Respondents held the strong impression that the Public Service only begrudgingly admits responsibility when it makes mistakes and that often the admission occurs as a result of media publicity. Although perceptions of this driver are influenced by high profile incidents involving senior public servants, individual experiences also show that there is a reluctance to admit to mistakes at more junior levels in the service.

The scale of the mistake, which is judged by its impact on people, determines the level of response expected. Minor errors are expected to be acknowledged and fixed. In most instances, an apology is expected as well as an explanation to show that the mistake will not be repeated. In the case of serious mistakes, compensation and face-to-face reconciliation meetings are suggested.

Minor mistakes should be handled by the person who made the error and for more serious mistakes the responsibility should fall to a senior member of staff or the top public servant, possibly even the Minister in the most serious of cases. The scale of the mistake also impacts on whether there is a difference between a public servant making the mistake or the Public Service. The more serious the mistake, the more it is going to be viewed as the Public Service making the mistake. However, there is a degree of tolerance for mistakes on the grounds that it is human to err.

If a long period lapses between a serious mistake being made and the matter becoming public, it is likely to erode trust in the Public Service. Time lapses are interpreted as attempts to 'hush up' mistakes and lead people to wonder what else has occurred during that time.

6.3.2 Key themes

■ Begrudging admission

The Public Service is not regarded as being pro-active in admitting to its mistakes, rather the impression respondents have is a reluctance to admit to one unless the mistake has been publicised.

There is not a natural urge to admit responsibility unless the consequences or that are more severe. So it is almost like a reluctance of the admission of responsibility of some error. (Manukau, general public, male)

And it can seem that more emphasis is placed on the process of establishing whether a mistake has been made as a means of avoiding an admission.

They have an appeal process and you can have decisions reviewed but they do not make mistakes. (Hamilton, general public, male)

There is a perception that the Public Service admits to mistakes only as a result of media coverage.

An unsolicited admission that something had gone wrong, the learnings and the steps are taken to remedy it rather than waiting for it to be uncovered by whoever, be it the opposition, the media, a disgruntled public servant or what. Them being proactive rather than reactive. (Lower Hutt, general public, male)

■ Influence of high profile cases

In all three groups it was evident that respondents' perceptions of this driver had been influenced by several high profile cases where mistakes had been made by senior public servants. The time that had lapsed before the mistake had been brought to light also impacted on respondent's perceptions and their trust in the Public Service. It was clear this seeded doubts about whether this indicated other problems existed that had not been made public.

The problem is the time lag between when it is done and when it comes out is that if it's two years how do you know that in that two year period the same thing hasn't been done again and again and again? And that is the biggest problem with things not being made public sooner. Because it often happens that way. A perfect example is the Colonel that got Court-Marshalled he is only one of several and if it had come out when they first discovered it then maybe it wouldn't have gone on for so long. The judges were double dipping into funds a few years ago, if that had come out immediately maybe that would have been curtailed. (Manukau, general public, male)

High-profile mistakes can linger for years in people's minds.

When a person is dealt an injustice or aware of an injustice it hangs up in time, I just mentioned Arthur Allan Thomas and immediately you know what I am talking about because it hangs up in time. (Manukau, general public, male)

■ Repeated mistakes

The perceived regularity of reported, high-profile mistakes can build a picture of systemic problems that are not being addressed.

A lot of things that have happened ... Criminals being let out and people on bail and stuff, they all duck for cover and don't really take responsibility. (Manukau, general public, male)

■ Individual experiences

Respondents also drew on personal experiences to illustrate where mistakes had been made. For example:

They diagnosed my son with leukemia and he wasn't. He had a tumour on his lung instead which I am not sure was a good thing or a bad thing but at least one was inoperable and one was operable so he is fine. (Manukau, general public, female)

In the case of that misdiagnosis, a written apology was provided, but this meant nothing to the respondent because she did not have confidence that a similar mistake would not occur again. This points to the need to explain what steps have been taken to prevent a recurrence (see below).

■ What an admission entails

When the Public Service makes mistakes, the scale of the mistake determines the type of response expected. There is some tolerance for mistakes as human error is acknowledged as a fact of life. At one end of the scale, the most trivial mistakes are just expected to be corrected without necessarily requiring an apology. For some mistakes a simple apology will address matters for people.

However, in most instances an apology is expected to be accompanied by an explanation of what has happened and an assurance that steps have been taken to prevent a recurrence. The requirement for an apology and an explanation is important to keeping promises which is discussed in Chapters 5.5 and 6.5.

Apologise, acknowledge that they have done wrong and ensure that they will endeavour it does not happen again. (Manukau, general public, female)

➤ Who makes the apology?

Again the scale of the mistake sets the expectation as to who should apologise. In the case of minor mistakes it should be the public servant who made the mistake.

Where mistakes are more serious, then more senior staff should take responsibility for apologising.

If you have had to go up to your team leader and they have told you something wrong well then the team leader, maybe the both of you, I don't think it hurts to say hey I was wrong. (Manukau, general public, female)

And in the most serious of cases, the departmental head or Minister is expected to apologise.

Normally the Minister of that public department let's say minister of health he has to stand up in front because he is in parliament, we voted that person in and he has to explain his actions why he is the person responsible and how he has dealt with it. (Lower Hutt, general public, male)

➤ **Reconciliation**

It is not always the case though that an apology and an explanation are enough. In this case the respondent wanted a face-to-face meeting with those who had made the mistake.

They made a mistake in diagnosing my son and it made the wait for a proper diagnosis that much longer. And basically they admitted that they were wrong and they apologised in writing but really I mean it is meaningless the letter saying we are sorry... If we had less falling on the sword and more sitting around the table and actually facing the person. Two senior doctors sitting in a room with you and your entire family that were screwed up and them actually having to say look I am sorry this is what we did and then you say actually this is how it affected us. So next time that becomes really human then it is face-to-face and eyeball to eyeball. (Manukau, general public, female)

➤ **Rectifying the mistake**

There is also an expectation that if the Public Service makes a mistake that the error is fixed at their expense and not the public who have been affected.

I think set it right at their own expense as well, if they lost it they ought to pay for the person going around finding it again. [So there should be no expense to you if they made a mistake?] Their mistake shouldn't cost you any extra. (Hamilton, general public, male)

They expect you to go through paper work and fill out a whole pile of forms for a dog I never knew existed. I expect them to take it off our records. It doesn't really affect anyone but if we move suddenly we have another pile of paperwork to take our imaginary dog with us to our new home. It is a silly mistake, but it wasn't ours. (Manukau, general public, female)

➤ **Compensation**

In the most serious cases of errors being made there is an expectation of some form of compensation.

If you go into hospital and they cut the wrong leg off. If they can put it right I think they should put it right, if it is something that can't be put right then maybe compensation is in order. (Hamilton, general public, male)

■ **Public servants versus the Public Service making mistakes**

The scale of the mistake also influences whether people regard the responsibility for the mistake as attributable to the public servant in question or the Public Service.

Even so respondents were more inclined is to consider mistakes as ones that the Public Service is responsible for.

The public servant when they do their job they are acting in the name of the service. So whether they punch a wrong number on a calculator and stuff up your payments or whether it is to or from them really that is the whole service making that mistake. Even if it is just their computer failed. (Hamilton, general public, male)

6.4 Public servants treat people fairly

This driver was explored in the general public and Māori groups. In these groups the satisfaction driver *You were treated fairly* was also discussed at the same time (see Chapter 5.4). This has been comprehensively covered in Chapter 5.4 and as the distinctions respondents made between the companion satisfaction and trust drivers are few, this section will be brief to avoid repetition.

The following table shows where groups were held:

	Far North		Auckland		Lower Hutt
	Kaitaia	Kaikohe	North Shore	Manukau	
General public	1		1	1	1
Māori	1	1		1	1

6.4.1 Overview

There is a general presumption that public servants do treat people fairly though as exploration of the corresponding satisfaction driver showed in Chapter 5.4 individuals do experience unfair treatment at times and interpret fair treatment in quite different ways.

Respondents generally struggle to distinguish between the companion satisfaction and trust drivers *You were treated fairly* and *Public servants treat people fairly*. In the focus groups, initial discussion of the satisfaction driver focused on personal experiences of being treated fairly or unfairly before having a somewhat shorter discussion on the trust driver. Perhaps because of that and the fact the trust driver focuses on 'public servants', not the Public Service, interpretations of the trust driver were understood in terms of personal experiences with individual public servants. As the distinction between the two drivers was not clear to respondents, much of what was covered in Chapter 5.4 in terms of understanding fair treatment and how to improve satisfaction could be applied to *Public servants treat people fairly*.

Respondents did make allowances for individual staff working in stressful situations where the quality of service resulted in the perception of unfair treatment. For instance, the limited resources of a public service provider, or its systems or its culture were regarded as the reasons for the unfairness, not the staff member.

When the 'system' or rules and regulations, which are attributed to the public service providers, are perceived to provide unfair outcomes, respondents talk about the need for public servants to have flexibility (see also Chapters 5.3. and 5.4) in order to act fairly. The exercise of discretion is not something respondents trust will happen, but one they hope will happen depending on the individual public servant.

As noted in Chapter 5.4, Māori can attach a special interpretation to being treated fairly that relates to historical injustices since the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. In this sense, the distinction between the Crown as a distinct entity from the Public Service or indeed the public servants that implement Government policy is blurred.

6.4.2 Key themes

■ Trust and satisfaction drivers overlap

There was considerable over-lap between the companion satisfaction and trust drivers. For instance some respondents confirmed in their own words that the satisfaction driver *You were treated fairly* was about satisfaction.

[What does being treated fairly mean when it comes to public services?] *You're satisfied. If you think you've been treated fairly.* (North Shore, general public, male)

And it was largely understood as an experience with an individual public servant.

I equated being treated fairly with that I felt I mattered to the person I was dealing with. (North Shore, general public, male)

Numerous personal examples of fair and unfair treatment were given by respondents when discussing the satisfaction driver consistent with an individual public servant. However, when asked later in the discussion if there was a difference between the satisfaction driver and the trust driver, *Public servants treat people fairly*, respondents spoke about the satisfaction driver, *You were treated fairly*, in terms of the 'system' treating people fairly as opposed to individual public servants. This however only occurred when the two drivers were compared directly with each other as prior to that the satisfaction driver had elicited examples of fairness based on individual experiences with public servants.

In some cases a lack of resources influenced whether the treatment was fair.

Sometimes a public servant can be trying to do their best, like you're saying a nurse crying because she wants to do a great job but it's systematic, the way the system is that they can't because they're overworked or whatever. [Or they haven't got the resources. (Interjection.)] That's right. Sometimes the poor public servant is just up against it. They may want to be fair but they just can't be. (North Shore, general public, female)

However, even though the rules and regulations of the system may seem unfair, individual public servants can make a difference by trying to be fair themselves. Trust therefore was very much a reflection of the idiosyncrasies of the public servant in question.

[Is there a different reaction between you were treated fairly and public servants treat people fairly?] *They're working as a person or an individual, when working for the council, and as a person, would sympathise with you and would need to sort it out. But then stepping back, what are the rules about this? You'd have to go back and see but as a person I would treat you fairly.* (North Shore, general public, male)

However, consistent with the considerable over-lap between the two drivers some could provide a quite contrary interpretation of the trust driver. Again the satisfaction driver is referred to first.

[I have just put up another statement underneath that one along similar lines, what is the difference between the two statements, you will be treated fairly and public servants treat people fairly? What is your reaction to me putting that second one up?] *The first one could be pure dumb luck and the second one implies that everyone gets treated fairly.* (Manukau, general public, male)

For these reasons, much of what can be said of ways to improve satisfaction in Chapter 5.4 applies equally to ways of increasing trust.

■ Māori perspectives

Some Māori respondents interpreted an aspect of fair treatment in terms of injustices that resulted in a historic failure to uphold the Treaty of Waitangi which resulted in calls today for redress. This was described in one group as 'a constant push for fairness' which in the context of the discussion should reasonably be inferred to mean delivery of public services to Māori. This was particularly well articulated by one respondent in a Kaitaia group whose comments were agreed to by others in the group. Chapter 8 deals with unique Māori perspectives in more detail.

You are talking about Māori people being treated fairly and since the Treaty we have felt victimised so that is just a joke really. And considering you are dealing with public services it is all going to keep flowing from that. So I think it needs to get it right at the top and then maybe it will filter into all the other services coming down. [When you say get it right at the top what is the top?] I can see it slowly flowing in restoring what the Treaty originally meant and because a lot of that has really gotten quite cloudy for me really and I may not understand fully why there is so much tension but I can definitely see where if it was honoured, if the promises were kept there, there wouldn't be this constant pushing for fairness in all these other areas. Because there would already be that sense of equality. (Kaitaia, Māori, female)

There is recognition though that fairness is being restored as this personal example from the same respondent shows.

Some good points I have seen is with my children's school my daughter being Māori has been offered this opportunity to go to Auckland 3 days all expenses paid to sit in at a university to help her look at whether she wants to further a medical career. And when you are in a low income bracket to have something for 3 days totally taken care of is a real asset. So, on a positive side of being Māori that is because she was Māori that she was offered that. So in a sense the European students at that school missed out on the opportunity because they weren't. Which seems pretty fair considering in the past what I missed out on. But that is a positive for the schooling. (Kaitaia, Māori, female)

There was no sense that unfair treatment that related to the Treaty of Waitangi was directed at public servants per se, but rather to the Crown or even the Government of the day. The fact that this interpretation arose unprompted shows the distinction between being treated fairly and public servants treating people fairly and the Crown or the Government doing the same are blurred in this context.

6.5 The Public Service keeps its promises – that is, it does what it says it will do

This driver was explored in the general public and Asian groups. The satisfaction driver *Staff kept their promises – that is, they did what they said they would do* was also discussed at the same time. This has been comprehensively covered in Chapter 5.4 and as the distinctions respondents made between the companion satisfaction and trust drivers are few, this section will be brief to avoid repetition.

The following table shows where groups were held:

	Auckland		Hamilton	Lower Hutt	Otago		
	North Shore	Manukau			Dunedin	Waitaki	Clutha
General public	1		2		1	1	
Asian	1			1			

6.5.1 Overview

Much of what was covered in Chapter 5.5 on the satisfaction driver *Staff kept their promises – that is, they did what they said they would do* and how to improve satisfaction can be said of this trust driver to improve levels of trust. The main reason for this is that regardless of whether it is a public servant or the Public Service that breaks a promise, a broken promise is regarded by respondents as a breach of trust. For this reason, a distinction between the companion satisfaction and trust drivers is not always clear to respondents. Where respondents make a clear distinction between the two drivers is when they see that staff have tried to do what they said they would do, but have been let down by the 'system' or the Public Service provider they work for.

Respondents do not naturally associate the Public Service as making promises. They find it hard to think of examples where the Public Service has made a promise, but find it much easier to cite examples of staff doing or not doing what they said they would do.

This does not lessen the importance of the need for the Public Service to keep its promises. This is because it is the public service organisation - which often represents 'the Public Service' in respondents' minds - that sets the delivery goals that staff are required to achieve. And some respondents consider it more important for staff who serve them individually to deliver on their promises than the public service organisation.

Given the considerable over-lap between the satisfaction and trust drivers the most important things to focus on to improve trust are those identified in Chapter 5.5 to improve satisfaction. These are for public service organisations to establish standards of service expectation, measures of performance against these standards as well as apologising and explaining when promises are not kept. As it is clear that respondents are not aware of the promise the Public Service makes, public service organisations should clearly articulate what their service standards are. Setting clear, realistic service expectations that the public can hold public servants accountable for will also help engender trust.

6.5.2 Key themes

■ Trust and satisfaction drivers overlap

Due to the over-lap between the companion satisfaction and trust drivers, it is worth noting that the satisfaction driver is interpreted by some as a trust driver. A broken promise is a breach of trust.

[Staff keeping their promises. What is a promise?] *Earn your trust.* [How do they earn your trust?] *By getting back to you with what they say they will and then after that you realise that you trust them and will go back to them.* (North Shore, Asian, female)

And conversely some said a broken promise by the Public Service would lead to dissatisfaction.

[If the Public Service didn't keep its promises, what would happen?] *Be dissatisfied. We might get a bit more rude at the staff even though they might be doing their job but there might be wider things holding them back or whatever.* (Manukau, Asian, male)

➤ Promises not associated with the Public Service

Respondents found it hard to give any examples of the Public Service making promises though in earlier discussion of the satisfaction driver they had been able to provide examples of staff keeping promises. Discussion of the trust driver showed that there was a perception that the Public Service did not make promises or if it did they were not kept.

[Do you think the Public Service keeps its promises?] *No, but I don't have any concrete examples. It's just a feeling that you get. You get given the run around. You don't know who's pulling the strings behind. You've got no idea of why decisions are made or not made.* (North Shore, general public, female)

➤ Perceptions

Views were largely perceptions based.

I think in a lot of ways like none of us have specific concrete examples and what that's saying to me is it's an up-hill battle for the government because as soon as you say 'government' people go "ohhh" because there's this preconception and that's it. I don't know how you change the preconception, but there is because as soon as I think government service, I think dissatisfied. I don't know why, I don't have a concrete example, I just think that and I think a lot of people think that. (North Shore, general public, female)

For some, their lack of awareness of success stories suggested that the Public Service may not keep its promises.

I don't have a specific example, it's more just a perception. Sometimes, but I think the success rate is rather low for most people. [What makes you suspect that?] *Just from anecdotal evidence and from conversations with my associates and friends who have had dealings with them. You very rarely get any positive*

comments, like “oh wow, I went to [One department] the other day and they were great, they looked after my problem and they were really good”. You never hear that. (North Shore, general public, male)

And those that did trust the Public Service to keep its promises, based their view either on little or no specific knowledge, but a general presumption.

There is an element of trust that has to actually be involved here because none of us as citizens have expertise in every single role of public service in our community so therefore we don't know. (Oamaru, general public, female)

[Do you think the Public Service keeps its promises?] Most of the time. If they say they're going to do something like supply something, obviously they're going to do it. (North Shore, Asian, female)

➤ **Focus more on specific service than ‘the Public Service’**

Respondents found it challenging to make an objective assessment of whether the Public Service kept its promises. Whether the Public Service was perceived to be keeping its promise was largely put down to a particular public service organisation being able to meet service expectations.

When they say “I’m going to provide you with a scholarship if you go and do early childhood teaching”, on completion of your training and when you send in your transcript, they do actually pay for your fees. [So do you think about the Public Service as specific services like that, or were you thinking in broader terms?] Can you take all of that in just one view? The health system is not so good, so how do you say whether or not the Public Service has actually kept its promise. [How isn't health keeping its promise?] My grandmother was due for an X-ray. It took them five months for the waiting list to get down to her. Five months. In the end we just said “stuff this, I’m paying private”. (North Shore, Asian, female)

When the companion satisfaction and trust drivers were compared, the trust driver was understood in terms of what a specific organisation did than what individual staff did.

I think it's quite blurry. I guess the second statement [the trust driver] up there, probably in my mind if it's a hospital I'd be thinking it's the hospital providing the service to the wider public, keeping their promises to provide the service, providing health to the wider public, something like that, whereas with the staff I'd think are the staff being friendly, being efficient, things like that. (Manukau, Asian, male)

As the trust driver was associated with individual institutions rather than the generic Public Service, there was considerable variability in trust depending on which public service organisations were being rated.

■ **Relative importance of staff or the Public Service keeping promises**

Greater reliance is placed on the trust driver because staff are seen to be representatives of the Public Service organisation they are employed by and it ultimately carries the responsibility of delivering the promise. Further, it was the organisation that through lack of resources or other reasons could prevent staff from delivering on a promise.

[If all the staff kept their promises, would you feel that the Public Service keeps its promise then, or not?] *No, because if their feathers are clipped they can't do anything. Even if they want to keep their promise, they can't do nuts about it.* (North Shore, Asian, male)

However, due to over-lapping perceptions of the two drivers, a few saw it as more important for staff to keep their promises.

They're the ones that make contact and they're the ones that help you with your own solution. (North Shore, Asian, female)

■ Transparency

There is also a need to have transparency and openness of processes and rules as there was a view expressed that the Public Service could change the rules to suit itself.

I find like with the Public Service they're like judge, jury, executioner all rolled into one. They can make the rules and break them and do what they like. If they break promises it's just – often it seems to be par for the course. (North Shore, general public, male)

6.6 General trust

A discussion on general trust was added to the fieldwork after the first 14 groups had been completed in an attempt to gain more understanding about what people understood by trust when applied to the Public Service.

The following table shows where groups were held:

	Auckland		Lower Hutt	Otago		
	North Shore	Manukau		Dunedin	Waitaki	Clutha
General public		1		1	1	
Māori				1		
Asian	1		1			

6.6.1 Overview

Trust is understood in two broad ways by respondents. The first is values-based where ethical or moral standards need to be demonstrated to engender trust. The second is a functionally based interpretation which focuses on the ability to deliver the service expected and relates more to the reliability that a job will be done. There is a linkage between the two interpretations however as respondents regard it as a matter of integrity as to whether public servants do what they say they will do. This has obvious linkage to the promises satisfaction and trust drivers (see Chapters 5.5 and 6.5).

This research validates the trust drivers. As expected, trustworthy organisations are those that admit responsibility for and rectify their mistakes. They are also the ones that do what they say they will do, they treat people fairly and do a good job.

Trust is not universally applied to the Public Service. Some areas, such as the emergency services, enjoy a high level of trust, but others are less well trusted. Greater transparency, openness and accountability and codes of conduct are considered the key ways to improve levels of trust supported by staff training.

There is very little awareness of the standards of integrity and conduct for the Public Service. Once aware of it, respondents express concern that the standards are just words and should be actively implemented. Although these standards are used for internal purposes there is support for the standards to be made public and for there to be a means for the public to hold public servants to account for upholding them. This could extend to establishing a formal complaints procedure akin to the Broadcasting Standard Authority model.

High profile breaches of trust are regarded as suggestive of more problems that have not been brought to light. However, there is no sense that there is a significant problem of corruption or endemic breaches of conduct across the Public Service. It is just that breaches by a few can have far reaching consequences. Asian groups compare the New Zealand public service favourably with their experiences in other countries.

6.6.2 Key themes

■ Values-based and functional-based trust

Those who understood trust in terms of values often summed up their understanding of the concept in a single word like – values, ethics, morals, honesty or integrity. Others saw trust in terms of a commitment to the job at hand.

Taking ownership of a problem. We need to resolve this. (North Shore, Asian, male)

Their integrity to deliver the services they promise. (Oamaru, general public, male)

■ Promises

➤ Linking values and reliability

The linkage between the values and functional-based interpretations of trust was often having trust in the promise that a public servant will do what they said they would do. This, of course, is fundamental to keeping promises (see Chapters 5.5 and 6.5)

Reliable is more being there when they say they will be there, doing what they said they were going to do, calling you back when they say they will call you back. (North Shore, Asian, female)

Trust was also something that took time to build and had to be earned.

It's something that builds, it takes time. It is almost a life time thing especially with public service. (Dunedin, general public, male)

It can be harder to establish trust for those migrants who are less familiar with New Zealand and feel vulnerable.

It is pretty hard for immigrants, I am not sure about some of our seniors who have been here for 20 years, but if you haven't been here for more than 10 years it is pretty hard for you to truly count on something. (Lower Hutt, Asian, male)

■ Trusted services

Not all public services are trusted to the same extent. The most trusted services are the emergency services.

When you use the word reliability with regards to the ambulance or fire you certainly want to trust the 111 system. Those are the things that you trust if that service is reliable they will turn up. (Manukau, general public, male)

Although there have been high profile adverse media stories about some officers, the Police were nevertheless a highly trusted organisation. There was also a difference between the trust staff at some organisations were held in and the responsibilities they had.

Well I trust the military. [Why is it you trust the military, what is it about the military?] They have got honour. The Police are a bit further down. I think they have ethos about them that is different from say a rubber-stamper in births, deaths and marriages. [And what is that ethos?] Discipline. (Dunedin, general public, male)

From some comments, it was clear that building trust required reciprocity, that is, the public service provider needs to show it trusted its clients.

Because they don't trust their clients, they are really suspicious, there is that sense that people are just trying to do them over so they deliberately make it hard for the client. (Dunedin, general public, male)

■ Improving trust

Respondents in the groups were asked to work together in pairs to develop ways that the Public Service could use to improve trust. A strong and common theme across all groups was the need to be more open and accountable through guidelines and codes of practice as well as providers of good services.

For these places or institutions to be more open. More transparency, solid guidelines of codes of practice say for instance. (Manukau, general public, male)

We had a lot of the other things like openness, well trained, knowledgeable people, a human being to answer the phone. (Manukau, general public, female)

There was also a desire for more and better trained front-line staff to improve service delivery, a point that has been made on several occasions as important to improve satisfaction in public services.

Reallocation of some of the resources so they are actually put in the people on the ground who are providing the service rather than money being swallowed up by administration. (Dunedin, Māori, male)

Greater accountability in terms of objectively reporting on performance and improving performance were other ways of building trust as well as obtaining feedback from the public.

We were thinking more facts and figures we said if we called the fire brigade we expect they are going to come and they need to maybe not waste more rate payers money in leaflets telling us what they are supposed to be doing but publish their figures that we do arrive within 3 minutes or whatever. (Oamaru, general public, female)

Feedback from public and act on it. (North Shore, Asian, female)

■ Standards of integrity and conduct - Unprompted

There was limited awareness of whether standards of conduct existed for the Public Service.

[Okay, are you aware that there was a set of standards for public service to follow?]
No. (Dunedin, Māori, female)

Well if we don't know it exists, I have no faith that they know it exists, and you certainly have had many experiences that there's no way that they comply with this. (Dunedin, Māori, female)

Those who said they were aware had little knowledge of its contents.

I have seen codes of ethics or something, but I am not sure if the code of ethics is to do with the Public Service requirements. I don't remember actually. (North Shore, Asian, male)

There probably is - they have just been forgotten about for a while. (Dunedin, general public, female)

However, there was a common theme that if one existed it was not well known to public servants and certainly did not appear to be implemented.

I'm aware there is one, but I don't think they get given it. (Dunedin, Māori, female)

I would far rather someone had five guidelines than 25, five that they actually adhered to rather than 25 that just get ignored. (Manukau, general public, female)

If one key staff member resigns, who was probably the one who knew about them, and the next person may not even know they are tucked away in a file somewhere. (Dunedin, general public, female)

■ Standards of integrity and conduct - Prompted

When the standards of integrity and conduct for public servants was distributed to respondents, some expressed surprise at its contents.

Surprise, I never thought that anything like this existed. (Lower Hutt, Asian, male)

Some regarded it with cynicism.

This is a bunch of clichés, totally, a bunch of clichés, it doesn't mean anything. (Dunedin, general public, male)

It is just a piece of paper, it doesn't mean that they are going to do this. (Oamaru, general public, female)

Some had seen similar codes in hospitals advising of patients' rights and had found them reassuring.

The hospital now has all those on the walls. With the exception of that we have found them really good, it's having them there, it's a visual and they are everywhere so you can't miss it. (Manukau, general public, female)

It makes me think of those things in hospitals you know it says you have your rights and they are very well displayed. [Are those things important those signs in hospitals?] Absolutely. (Oamaru, general public, female)

What respondents wanted to see was the words translated into action.

If they turned around and did everything that was said on that piece of paper. Then a lot of people would have more trust in the service that they are supposed to get. (Dunedin, general public, female)

[But is it useful to have this?] It depends where it is, on a wall it does nothing, if it's in somebody's head then it is very effective. (Manukau, general public, male)

This has wonderful words in it and it has probably a set of guidelines and behavioural standards that we would aspire to and we would hope that the Public Service aspires to. But has something like this stopped for example the ongoing solace within the immigration department which is a joke to put it mildly. This talks about trustworthiness, integrity, everything like that, that is not being displayed time and again. It is not one incident it is repetitive. (Dunedin, general public, male)

And in terms of action that meant some ability to complain if the standards were not upheld, a point that some respondents noted was missing from the sheet that was distributed.

But there's also the thing that if everyone did know this, it still doesn't really tell you who you complain to and what would happen, what would the outcome be? (Dunedin, Māori, male)

■ Standards of integrity and conduct - Accountability

Despite some initial cynicism about the standards, it was seen as a way of holding public servants to account.

I think you can actually come back to them and say I don't think you are actually fulfilling your promise, I don't think you are actually doing what you say you do do. (Oamaru, general public, female)

Respondents wanted to see the standards made more visible because it was felt this would improve public servants' performance and make them more accountable to the public in terms of doing what the Public Service says it will do.

It's also something that they perhaps need even if you are dealing with them over the phone. On the wall of their cubicle or whatever, this is how we should treat people. We need to treat them fair. (Manukau, general public, female)

And the idea of an official complaints process, which emerged unprompted, received support.

Like on TV like what they do for the Broadcasting Standards Authority. You see this every now and then don't you. (Dunedin, Māori, female)

And if the standards were effectively implemented there was no doubt some felt that it would improve trust in the Public Service.

If this sets your expectations I mean if this is what I can expect from this service and then if you receive that then that would be trust. (Oamaru, general public, male)

■ High profile breaches of trust

High profile breaches of conduct by senior public servants are a key concern and damage trust in the Public Service. This point was also made in Chapter 6.3 in the discussion on the Public Service admitting to making mistakes.

It makes the whole system look bad even if it is just one individual person. It really makes a bad impression of the whole system, the whole service, the whole department. (Lower Hutt, Asian, male)

Your trust does drop off when you see something like that you think man that policeman shouldn't have been doing that because he swore an oath that he wouldn't do anything like that. But it does give you confidence that people who don't abide by the rules do get kicked out. (Oamaru, general public, male)

The media was acknowledged as quite influential over perceptions of trust in the way it presented high profile breaches of standards.

It takes time and also what the media does makes a difference. What they put in the papers, what they put on the TV has to be pretty balanced. [Does it influence the way you think about the Public Service at the moment the media?] Media always affects your way of thinking or your opinion. (Lower Hutt, Asian, male)

The balance of opinion among respondents was that media reports of serious breaches of conduct by senior public servants were indicative of other problems in the Public Service.

Tip of the iceberg because even in private companies, all of us have probably been in a company where something has happened and someone has done something wrong and while that person may be removed you still know that underneath there are about five or six people that aren't going to get any retribution or punishment. (Manukau, general public, female)

I think it's the tip of the iceberg because it seems to take so long. It takes years before they uncover it. And it is so well buried and there is so much covering, I will cover your back you cover mine. It is like the old boys' network. (Dunedin, general public, female)

I think it shows that certain parts of the system are working in that it is actually being identified but when it happens time and gain it shows that the underlying causes are not being dealt with. (Dunedin, general public, male)

Concerns are greater when some of these instances have taken some time to be made public, a point also brought out in the discussions the Public Service admitting responsibility for making mistakes (see Chapter 6.3).

It makes you quite paranoid what else has been going on I don't know about. (Dunedin, general public, female)

If the system was really working it would be uncovered say within a month or even less. When you hear about the latest immigration boss and then you hear that somebody actually knew about this when it happened a couple of years ago you start wondering what was the reason it wasn't actually taken any further (Dunedin, general public, male)

There was a desire for immediate action to be taken when high level breaches occurred.

I think another thing is there doesn't seem to be a high level of accountability. You hear on the news that something goes wrong and we are going to go and do a review and a year later here is the review, this is what we suggest you do but then the suggestions might not have to come into effect for another year or something. So from the time the issue has occurred to the time the issue is resolved it has been two years. So what does that do for us as the public thinking this is what is wrong but you are not fixing it straight away. (North Shore, Asian, female)

Some respondents accepted that breaches of the code would occur.

There are no laws or rules are perfect, there will always be someone getting caught, always someone breaking the law. (Lower Hutt, Asian, male)

■ Blurring of Public Service and political

It was evident from some comments made by respondents that there was some blurring of perceptions of the Public Service and politicians. Distrust of the latter could influence the level of trust attached to the former and this was an issue for new migrants.

In recent times one of the MPs said a few statements against Chinese and Asian immigrants and what happened, nothing they are still there in Parliament. No action has been taken. They deliver a couple of apologies on the news by the Prime Minister and that is it. No action has been taken so it makes no sense. (Lower Hutt, Asian, male)

■ International comparisons

Although respondents fell short of saying they trusted the Public Service, international comparisons were made that showed New Zealand's Public Service was a lot more trusted than many others respondents had experienced elsewhere.

From where I came to compare it New Zealand is better than my country. Less corruption, there is a lot of corruption. [But you don't think there is much corruption in New Zealand?] Services when you pay your taxes you see your roads no potholes, every month they check the roads. Philippines when you pay your taxes you don't get your roads done there. So basically from that it is good. (North Shore, Asian, male)

Honestly speaking there is no comparison. New Zealand is 200% better. [Than South Africa?] Yes. [In terms of trustworthiness you mean?] Yes. (North Shore, Asian, female)

To be honest with you I think one thing the Public Service is not is corrupt. There has been instances of individuals, I have worked in Jakarta and these guys are like squeaky clean. [So international comparisons.] The New Zealand public service for all its faults and the whinging they have done is in that regard pretty clean I feel. (Dunedin, general public, male)

7. General Public

7.1 Focus group locations

Thirteen focus groups were conducted with the general public drawn from the following locations:

- 1 x Far North (Kaitaia)
- 2 x North Shore
- 2x Manukau City
- 2x Hamilton
- 2 x Lower Hutt
- 1 x Dunedin
- 2 x Waitaki (Oamaru)
- 1 x Clutha (Balclutha).

All the satisfaction drivers were tested among the general public, namely:

- *The Service Experience Met Your Expectations.*
- *Staff Were Competent.*
- *Your Individual Circumstances Were Taken Into Account.*
- *You Were Treated Fairly.*
- *Staff Kept Their Promises – That is, They Did What They Said They Would Do.*
- *It's An Example of Good Value for Tax Dollars Spent.*

And all of the trust drivers were tested also, namely:

- *The Public Service Provides Services That Meet Your Needs.*
- *Public Servants Treat People Fairly.*
- *The Public Service Provides You With All the Information You Need.*
- *You Have Confidence Public Servants Do a Good Job.*
- *The Public Service Admits Responsibility When It Makes Mistakes.*
- *General Trust (not a driver, but discussed).*

The trust driver *The Public Service Admits Responsibility When It Makes Mistakes* was discussed only in the general public focus groups. This is because it was not a driver for other population groups.

The following chapters focus on the unique issues related to each population group. As this chapter is largely reflective of the earlier satisfaction driver chapters and trust driver sections, discussion in this chapter is brief and focuses on the main points only.

7.2 Key points

The following key points summarise essential traits of the drivers:

- The essential elements of a good service experience are to be listened to and understood by staff who know about the services their organisation offers and will follow through to find a solution. Over and above that, empathy, taking into account individual circumstances, clearly communicating information, politeness, respect and efficiency all add to the service experience.
- Competent staff are ones that deliver on those expectations. Confidence in public servants to do a good job is very much dependent upon the ability of staff to deliver on those expectations.
- Flexibility and discretion as well as knowledge, empathy and understanding are critical to taking into account individual circumstances. The most important circumstances to take into account are those with disabilities and income, social or household difficulties, particularly where children are involved.
- Being treated fairly is generally understood as treating according to needs, but also covers providing quality services, being non-judgmental and following due process. Little separates the companion satisfaction and trust drivers.
- Keeping promises is very much a question of follow through to do what one said one would do. Broken promises easily damage trust in public services. There is little to distinguish the companion satisfaction and trust drivers.
- Value for tax dollars spent is associated with core services like education, health and policing as well as to good, individual service experiences. Expectations are high for both private and public services where a direct payment is made. There is strong support for value for tax dollars spent to be demonstrated either through publicity about what departments do or publicly available financial data showing where tax dollars are spent. Respondents felt that increased investment to front-line services, as opposed to administrators, would also help.
- In terms of meeting 'your needs', the key ones the Public Service must meet are core services like education, health and policing and on an individual basis they are the service expectations outlined in the first bullet point above.
- There is a reasonable level of cynicism directed at the suggestion that public servants admit responsibility when they make mistakes. Admission is seen as somewhat begrudging, but an apology and an explanation are expected when mistakes do occur.
- Trust in the Public Service has a lot to do with being able to rely on public servants to do a job properly and with integrity. High profile incidents of misconduct undermines trust and leads to the view that there may be more that has not been brought to light. Greater openness and accountability to fully implemented standards of integrity and conduct may raise trust in public services.

7.3 The service experience met your expectations

This driver was discussed in two urban groups, North Shore and Dunedin, and three rural groups in the Far North (Kaitaia), Clutha (Balclutha) and Waitaki (Oamaru).

These groups expressed a wide range of expectations linked to the service experience. The most important of these are to be listened to, understood and to have contact with staff who have knowledge and the ability to follow through in order to achieve a result. Achievement of a solution can help mitigate failures to deliver on expectations in other areas.

If you have been mucked around to start with and someone comes along and sorts it for you then you feel okay. (Kaitaia, general public, female)

However, the importance of focusing on managing the process well for the public remains. Even if the desired outcome is achieved, the failure to meet expectations in other aspects of service may still mar the experience.

You can still perhaps get the outcome you were searching before but if a lot of these things aren't there you just probably feel negative about it. [So positive outcome being critical there?] But if it wasn't a pleasant experience getting there then you still end up resenting the whole process. (Dunedin, general public, female)

Other expectations include having a customer focus. These include the desire to be treated politely, respectfully and even for some with friendliness. Efficient service is also expected which covers promptness as well as an expectation to have matters dealt with in the minimum number of interactions, preferably a single one and the absence of errors.

Individual circumstances are also expected to be taken into account. These are seldom straightforward transactional interactions, but ones where some flexibility or discretion is expected. Respondents often spoke of being treated as an individual, not as a number.

Other expectations that link to having an individual focus are the need to show empathy, to treat people fairly and to ensure they understand what to do when dealing with public services.

I expect to be treated fairly. [What do you mean by that?] ... I don't want to be treated like I'm a criminal or an idiot. (North Shore, general public, female)

Helping you to understand the process. (Dunedin, general public, male)

Expectations of public services are generally slightly above average, not high, and expectations of private services are higher than for public services. This is largely explained by the existence of choice and competition in the private sector driving service levels higher. In addition, people tended to expect more from services that they had paid for. To raise expectations, respondents say more resources need to be put into front-line staff and their training.

Face-to-face contact is the most preferred channel, particularly for those who have more complex needs to be met because there is much higher trust that issues will be listened to, understood and addressed. Those in rural-provincial areas say that face-to-face is often not an option for them.

The phone channel is the one that attracts the most criticism. The most common criticisms of the phone are automatic voice systems, delays in waiting to talk to a real person, lack of continuity because of the need to repeat matters from the beginning with each new phone contact and failure to follow through effectively, such as, being passed from one person to another who is unable to assist.

Internet is regarded as an efficient channel and like mail has the ability to document transactions. Neither Internet nor mail have the ability to provide the level of interaction that is sometimes required to address complex issues.

7.4 Staff were competent

This driver was discussed in two urban groups, North Shore and Hamilton, and one rural-provincial group in the Far North (Kaitaia).

As noted in Chapter 5.2 and earlier, staff who are competent are those who meet expectations, so there is considerable over-lap between this and the previous section. To avoid repetition, the core expectation of competent staff is that they are helpful and helpful staff are those who listen, understand and are knowledgeable, capable and solutions focussed. Competent people do not necessarily need to have the knowledge to deal with someone's issues themselves, but they are knowledgeable enough to know who can assist and will follow through to ensure a connection with that person is made.

Important traits for competent staff to have include the ability to communicate and explain things that customers do not understand. It also includes treating people fairly.

It's them finding out what my issues are, or finding out the information, and if they don't know they'll go and find out. (North Shore, general public, female)

Respondents often associated confidence with competent staff and those who were polite and courteous. Correct spelling and grammar were indicators of competence in written communication channels.

7.5 Your individual circumstances were taken into account

This driver was discussed in three urban groups in Manukau City, Hamilton and Lower Hutt.

The need for people to be listened to is a critical first behaviour that respondents expect to encounter in order to deliver satisfaction with this driver. And in order to take individual circumstances into account it often requires the exercise of some discretion or flexibility.

Any rule has got a certain amount of wriggle in it, no two situations are exactly the same. (Hamilton, general public, male)

A general rule of thumb to satisfy people is to treat people the same way in similar circumstances.

Respondents expect an explanation when circumstances cannot be taken into account or where a desired outcome cannot be achieved. One important circumstance that respondents felt was important for public servants to take into account was lack of understanding about how to deal with public services and its procedures.

I want an explanation, a full and detailed explanation as to why it is you cannot have what it is you were told you should be able to get or what you expected to get. (Manukau, general public, female)

Knowledge, the public hasn't got the same knowledge that is one of the most important things that they should take into account. (Manukau, general public, male)

However, there are some respondents who believe the same rules should apply to everyone regardless.

The most important circumstances that respondents expect to have taken into account include physical or mental disabilities, emotional wellbeing, household circumstances particularly where children are involved, and financial circumstances.

7.6 You were treated fairly/Public servants treat people fairly

These drivers were discussed in five groups from the Far North (Kaitaia), North Shore City, Manukau City, Hamilton and Lower Hutt. The companion satisfaction and trust drivers are dealt with together here in light of the over-lap between the two. Both drivers are covered in detail in Chapters 5.4 and 6.4.

Of the different interpretations of 'fair treatment', the ones general public groups focussed on were fair treatment relative to other people, the quality of the service received and fairness in terms of a just outcome.

Although the spontaneous response for some was that fair treatment meant equal treatment or the same treatment for all, respondents recognised that not everyone's circumstances were the same, so fair treatment necessitated treating people according to their needs or providing flexibility in certain circumstances.

Even so, there were some respondents who said people had to be treated the same.

My personal view is they should treat everybody the same and whether the rules that they have are fair are a whole different issues. And if you go down the track of dealing with everybody in their circumstance then that can be a very slippery slope where you have rules for some and rules for others. (Hamilton, general public, male)

Poor quality service or inconsistent service quality were other examples of unfair treatment. A respondent gave an example of a year-long delay in receiving the correct medical treatment for his daughter. An example to illustrate inconsistent service quality was the disparity of resources available for autistic children below the age of five and once they had entered the primary school system.

I work in early childhood and if we see a child who is within the autistic spectrum we try and get as much help pumped into them while they are in early childhood because it is so much easier to access. Once they hit school it disappears and you are fighting tooth and nail to get help for that child whose needs haven't changed, probably increased but that help that is available is just not there. (Manukau, general public, female)

Fair treatment also related to just processes. One respondent spoke of how she had been treated fairly by a process which saw a Court order award her a payment. Other respondents described the importance of fairness in terms of being listened to and receiving an explanation even though the result was not what they wanted.

Where unfair treatment occurs, some respondents will make allowances for individual public servants and blame the 'system' which they may mean rules and regulations or lack of resources to do the job properly. There is considerable overlap between the companion satisfaction and trust drivers.

There is a presumption that people are treated fairly most of the time.

To be honest I don't really think about it, when you are dealing with WINZ or IRD or getting a passport or something like that I mean you hope they apply the rules the same to everybody. (Hamilton, general public, male)

7.7 Staff kept their promises – that is, they did what they said they would do/the Public Service keeps its promises - that is, it does what it says it will do

These drivers were discussed in three groups from North Shore City, Dunedin and Waitaki (Oamaru). The companion satisfaction and trust drivers are dealt with together here in light of the over-lap between the two which are covered in Chapters 5.5 and 6.5.

When asked what 'keeping a promise meant', most respondents explained it in terms of doing what one said one would do.

A 'promise' also conveyed integrity which distinguished it from merely an intention to do something. As a result though, broken promises easily destroy trust. Indeed, as noted earlier in this report, failure to deliver on this driver is one of the strongest destroyers of trust.

A promise to me is somebody saying they are going to do something with a degree of integrity and professionalism otherwise it is simply a platitude to put off for today something they might get around to doing tomorrow. (Oamaru, general public, male)

This meant that the service expectations of follow through and accountability have special significance in terms of delivering on this driver. And if promises are broken there is an expectation of an apology and an explanation.

There was a significant over-lap in understanding of these companion satisfaction and trust drivers. Respondents did not articulate a difference between the two. In discussion of the satisfaction driver, some respondents gave examples of personal experiences.

[Any particular example that comes to mind?] *Just home renovations when I was trying to get building permits and things like that they promise to ring you back and you are going to have it by such and such, promise you will have it by that date, I will ring you back and let you know what is happening, yeah sure.* (Dunedin, general public, female)

However, when asked whether the Public Service keeps its promises (the trust driver) respondents clearly had the perception that it did not, but this was not based on any personal experience of their own.

[Do you think the public service keeps its promises?] *No, but I don't have any concrete examples. It's just a feeling that you get.* (Auckland, North Shore, general public, female)

I don't have a specific example, it's more just a perception. (Auckland, North Shore, general public, male)

The least trustworthy channel is the phone. Written communications are regarded as the most reliable channel because public servants can be held directly to account for any documented promises. Face-to-face contact is trusted more than the phone which is the least trusted channel.

7.8 It's an example of good value for tax dollars spent

This driver was discussed in five groups from North Shore City, Hamilton, Dunedin, Clutha (Balclutha) and Waitaki (Oamaru).

Respondents predominantly cite core public services – education, health, Police and emergency services – as examples of good value for tax dollars spent. This is largely because they are seen as “free”, essential and available to everyone to access. These services are also regarded as under-funded and under-resourced and involve staff in tough jobs, thus reinforcing the sense of value they provide.

Respondents also identify as examples of good value for tax dollars spent instances where they have personally experienced their service expectations being met, often comprehensively met.

ACC are good value for money [Why is that?] They offer a prompt and efficient service...They put a name to a person, you get a case manager, they have good systems, they have good phone systems and you can contact the person, that is your only contact. (Balclutha, general public, male)

Most respondents assume that private equivalent services will provide better service which generally leads them to infer that it will be better value, though a few question that inference. The presumption is that if people are prepared to pay there must be better value or why else would they do so. Indeed, while it was conceded that medical treatment might be the same in public and private hospitals, respondents placed a huge value on the ability to avoid waiting for treatment. Thus, the value of time in accessing treatment was valued far more highly than other aspects of service.

There was also a tendency to expect more value from public services when a fee was paid than when no fee applied such as when the service was provided out of general taxation.

Respondents found it difficult to assess the value of advisors and administrators and placed more value on front-line staff largely because the latter's work was visible or tangible and to some degree assessable and because the former were seen to be relatively over-paid.

A common suggestion for demonstrating value for tax dollars spent was to provide financial data so people could evaluate the value of spending or by improving service experiences some doubt was cast over whether people would bother to read the data. The use of television programmes about public service agencies had been a useful way of enabling people to understand the extent of what they did and the value of the services they provided. Others simply interpreted good value for tax dollars spent as receiving the quality of service that met their expectations.

If you go somewhere and you get the service that you want, the results that you want in a quick then aren't you getting good value for your tax dollar. (Hamilton, general public, female)

7.9 You have confidence that public servants do a good job

This driver was discussed in two groups from North Shore City, and in one group from Manukau City, Clutha (Balclutha) and Waitaki (Oamaru).

There was a strong linkage between this trust driver and the satisfaction driver *Staff Were Competent* because competent staff met service expectations and meeting expectations related directly to having trust in whether public servants do a good job. Consequently, many of the attributes associated with staff competency also emerged in discussion of this driver. Thus, public servants engendered confidence most importantly when they were able to listen, understand and be knowledgeable as well as committed to follow through to meet people's needs.

These attributes were further reinforced when respondents were asked to do a projective exercise where they wrote down what the ideal public servant would be saying, thinking and doing if they were doing a good job. There was a high degree of consistency across groups with many respondents describing the public servant as thinking how they can help, doing their best to help and deriving a feeling of self-satisfaction from helping to their best.

I'm thinking "let's work together, I want to get a good result". That would be like my ideal public servant really, somebody who's in that mind frame, "hey I'm actually here to help, I really am interested in this person on the outside and I want to get a good result. (North Shore, general public, male)

Confidence was established when other expectations such as promptness, empathy, politeness and the ability to explain processes and requirements to people were in evidence.

7.10 The Public Service provides services that meet your needs

This driver was discussed in one group from Manukau City and Hamilton and in two groups in Lower Hutt and Waitaki (Oamaru).

The Public Service lacked credibility with some respondents when measured against this driver. Some wanted to heavily qualify this statement and said it applied to some departments, but not others.

I would say 'sometimes' meets your needs and add 'at a cost' at the end. (Lower Hutt, general public, male)

Needs were classified by respondents as either universal ones that society as a whole needed or individual needs. In the case of universal needs, the most important needs were identified as emergency services as well as core services such as education, health and security and essential infrastructure.

Individual needs drew suggestions that identified many basic service expectations, such as: to be listened to, to have things explained, to be treated fairly, to have approachable, knowledgeable and competent staff and to be able to obtain a satisfactory outcome.

In general, respondents said they thought of 'your needs' in the driver as more than their own personal needs.

7.11 The Public Service admits responsibility when it makes mistakes

This driver was discussed in three groups from Manukau City, Hamilton and Lower Hutt.

Respondents understand this driver to mean that public servants should pro-actively admit to a mistake, apologise for it and explain what has been done to prevent a recurrence. Thus, the expectation of accountability was particularly high.

I had being accountable and I guess that includes making an apology where it's needed and fixing the problem. (Hamilton, general public, male)

Respondents were somewhat divided in how they related to the driver. Some identified it with high profile mistakes that had attracted media attention. These were seen to have been made public due to the media and there was concern that the time lapse between actual events occurring and coming to public attention was indicative of public servants covering up.

Others related it to their own experiences where an apology and an explanation had helped to address their concerns.

I had the same thing with [name deleted] same kind of thing and they admitted they were wrong and I actually felt better. (Manukau, general public, female)

There was a general perception that public servants did not admit to their mistakes readily.

7.12 General trust

This was discussed in four groups from Manukau City, Lower Hutt, Dunedin, and Waitaki (Oamaru).

The main meanings respondents ascribed to 'trust' were integrity and reliability and underlying both was an association with ethical behaviour. For a few respondents trust also means 'confidentiality'. Reliability and dependability were somewhat interchangeable and referred to keeping one's word by doing what one said one was going to do.

Trust is not something that is easily acquired.

It's something that builds, it takes time. It is almost a life time thing especially with public service. (Dunedin, general public, male)

Those public services that are trusted most are emergency services, police and hospitals because of their commitment to help regardless of the circumstances. Most respondents think that in order to increase trust in other public services they will need to be more open, transparent and accountable. This is consistent with support in the groups for the public to be aware of the standards of integrity and conduct for public servants and for there to be a means to hold public servants accountable for implementing. At present, respondents suspect the standards are little more than words on paper.

High profile media stories of breaches of conduct do tend to lead respondents to believe that they are not isolated cases. Some respondents stated that if managers were acting inappropriately it made them think there was more out of place at levels below management. Even so, this did not mean that respondents had a high degree of distrust of public services. Indeed, there was a reasonable level of trust for rank and file public servants.

I trust the workers not the people at the top. (Lower Hutt, general public, female)

8. Māori

8.1 Focus group locations

Nine focus groups were with Māori drawn from the following locations:

- 3 x Far North (2 x Kaitaia and 1 x Kaikohe)
- 2 x Manukau City
- 2 x Hamilton
- 1 x Lower Hutt
- 1 x Dunedin.

The trust driver *The Public Service Provides You With All the Information You Need* was discussed only in the Māori focus groups and is covered in detail in this chapter. This is because it was not a driver for other population groups. For all other drivers (see below) only points unique or important to Māori are covered.

The drivers tested among Māori were the following satisfaction drivers:

- *Staff Were Competent.*
- *Your Individual Circumstances Were Taken Into Account.*
- *You Were Treated Fairly.*
- *Staff Kept Their Promises – That is, They Did What They Said They Would Do.*
- *It's An Example of Good Value for Tax Dollars Spent.*

and the following trust drivers:

- *The Public Service Provides Services That Meet Your Needs.*
- *Public Servants Treat People Fairly.*
- *The Public Service Provides You With All the Information You Need.*
- *You Have Confidence Public Servants Do a Good Job.*
- *General Trust* (not a driver, but discussed).

8.2 Key points

8.2.1 Unique themes

The Māori groups shared many of the same perceptions of drivers as other groups. The key differences with the general public groups are highlighted in this section. Expectations that were either unique or more strongly articulated in the Māori groups than the general public groups were:

- Past injustices committed since the signing of The Treaty of Waitangi have an influence on Māori perceptions of being treated fairly. The degree to which the Crown through the government and public services have made right these wrongs influences perceptions of fair treatment.
- There are perceptions, though not widespread, of discrimination on the basis of race and income.
- The concept of *whakama* emerged whereby some Māori may be too ashamed to access services they need or to admit they do not understand all the information when engaging with a public service.
- Māori groups appeared to place a stronger emphasis on honour and integrity when using the word 'promise' suggesting it should not be used unless it is a pledge that will be kept.
- Māori groups also seemed to place more emphasis on competent staff being those who took individual circumstances into account.
- In terms of having information needs met, a driver specific to Māori, the main focus points were:
 - Māori do not feel they are provided with all the information they need
 - Some feel information about entitlements is deliberately withheld
 - While there is a need to pro-actively ensure Māori have all the information they need, care needs to be taken not to overload people with information
 - A multi-channel approach to information provision is needed

8.3 The Public Service provides information that meets your needs

This trust driver is specific to Māori and is covered in full in this section. Focus groups were held in the Far North (Kaitaia), Manukau, Hamilton and Dunedin.

■ Overview

Poor experiences of information not being provided, particularly with respect to entitlements, had a strong influence on perceptions.

There is a desire for public service organisations to be more pro-active with the provision of information which importantly includes information about how processes work. There may also be a need to pro-actively find out the kind of information that people feel they need than to assume what their information needs are. Public servants need to be aware that some Māori may not admit that they do not understand all the information they have been provided. There is therefore an onus on public servants to provide simple and easily understood communications.

Trust is likely to be improved with knowledgeable and understanding front-line staff who are effective communicators and are prepared to proactively ensure people understand the information they need. Special assistance is required for those who have reading problems.

■ Key themes

➤ Counter to actual experience

There was initial cynicism expressed when this driver was presented to respondents as it did not match their actual experiences.

My first thought is disbelief because I don't believe that dealing with public servants they always have to check with somebody, there should be just someone who you can go to and ask and they should be able to tell you. [So you are saying disbelief?] That if you go to one person they are going to be able to supply you with the information you need. There is no way they are not going to pass the buck to somebody else. (Manukau, Māori, female)

I can't have the sense that they are providing the information that we need. (Hamilton, Māori, male)

An important point was made by one respondent that the problematic areas appeared to be confined to a small number of departments.

It's probably though we're focusing a bit in each one of those organisations we are adversely speaking about. It's not all of them and when you look at that list up there we're probably only talking about three there and you tend to focus on the things that aren't working rather than the things that are. There's lots of them there that are or there's the only very few that – [There's lots of those public services that should be fine. (Interjection.)] (Dunedin, Māori, female)

➤ Information deliberately withheld

The experience of one department had a strong influence on opinions and the impressions given here were similar to ones expressed in many other groups, namely, that there was a policy of not informing people of their full entitlements.

They don't tell you [I totally agree they should and it should be easily available but it's not. (Interjection.)] Be lovely if you were given all the information you needed. (Dunedin, Māori, male)

The rationale for why the Public Service would withhold information was seen largely as an expenditure-saving strategy.

➤ Barriers to access

Cost can be a barrier to access information where fees apply. This made some respondents qualify the word 'provides' in the driver.

They could provide you with that information but they might charge you for that information. (Manukau, Māori, female)

The apparent complexity of processes can also act as a barrier.

To try and get info off the [Department] website if you don't know where you are going and it is like all these millions of forms and downloading this and that. (Manukau, Māori, female)

➤ **Pro-activity**

Respondents interpreted the driver as implying an onus on the Public Service to anticipate what information the public might need.

They provide information whether you need it or not, it comes in a particular form but I am unaware of whatever process they might have to determine exactly what your need for information is. (Hamilton, Māori, male)

One respondent emphasised that information was often required to provide solutions for people.

Information to me means answers. That is what information means to me. (Manukau, Māori, female)

➤ **Information provided**

Information that was wanted included full information on entitlements as well as the rationale for decisions including fees that people are required to pay. As was the case in some of the Asian groups, there was also a desire for public servants to provide information on the range of options available to people and to understand what is available.

So therefore in saying that if they had given you all the information she would have been able to make different choices because then the information is there. (Kaitaia, Māori, female)

➤ **Simple, effective communications**

Some respondents complained that at times too much information was provided and if that occurred people needed to be told which parts were relevant to them and their circumstances.

If you are just after one thing and you have got a pile like sometimes they give you they should be able to say this is where it is and this is how to find it. (Manukau, Māori, female)

It was felt that sometimes the language used was too complex.

Having it in plain English. Not legal talk with clause this and clause that. (Manukau, Māori, male)

Computer-based information also needs to be simple and easy to access and not all people are computer literate.

All this information you have gone around a number of websites ... and it is easy to get very lost in it. It is not the most user-friendly and then you have got people who haven't got access to that sort of information mainly because they don't know where to find it. (Hamilton, Māori, male)

I am too old for the Internet. (Manukau, Māori, male)

Information also needs to be tailored for those who have difficulty reading.

People get confused and when they go into the agencies they are already confused before they begin. So how is a normal person meant to go and know all the knowledge. I am dyslexic the problem is it was designed for a certain type of creed and that was how it was made so a lot of people miss out. (Manukau, Māori, male)

➤ **Knowledge of the system**

For some, knowledge of how the 'system' worked was often the key to being able to access information. This suggested a need to provide information on how processes work.

There is also a group of people ... like myself at the moment who are trying to move from Point A to Point B and still trying to find out how it works. And they are not actually providing that information to get us to understand how it works and how we can actually progress smoothly. [So understanding how it works is part of that?] To an extent yes. (Hamilton, Māori, male)

➤ **Whakama**

In the Kaitaia group, the concept of *whakama*, which had been raised in other groups, emerged in the context of providing information. This is understood as the concept of being ashamed. In this context, some Māori were too embarrassed to admit to not understanding the information they had been provided.

The older Māori people. They will walk away if they can't understand people. They will just walk out the door without saying. (Kaitaia, Māori, female)

In the Manukau group, the lack of confidence to obtain the right information showed a parallel to the Kaitaia group.

Yes my sister would just smile and say thank you and come home and go oh my God they didn't do this and I am like well why didn't you tell them and she is like oh no I didn't want to do that. ... I say to her let's go down and she is like nah I have already talked to them. (Manukau, Māori, female)

➤ **Improving information provision**

Respondents identified several ways to improve information provision from having knowledgeable, understanding, empathetic, culturally sensitive front-line staff and the provision of advocates for those who have difficulty understanding.

Advocates to work on behalf of people who are unable or unwilling to do that for themselves. Perhaps people who have had English as a second language or are illiterate or just don't feel confident about approaching an organisation. There are advocates around and advocacy organisations but only a certain number of people access those. (Dunedin, Māori, female)

There was also interest in better information exchange across government departments to improve the quality and efficiency of the information provided.

Improvements could also be made by monitoring the types of inquiries people make or by pro-actively finding out what information needs people have. Such information could be provided to front-line staff tailored through the most appropriate communication channels to ensure information needs are met.

8.4 Staff were competent

Discussions about this driver revealed no significant differences between Māori and general public groups. However, the Māori groups tended to emphasise more that competent staff could be relied upon and trusted to do a job and fully explain their entitlements to them.

8.5 Your individual circumstances were taken into account

What most distinguished Māori groups from the general public was the need to take into account Māori culture.

Your individual situation your background, culture. [What was important about culture?] Different cultures have different needs. Different levels of understanding, language. (Hamilton, Māori, male)

Within the cultural context the concept of *whakama* emerged. From the group discussions this was understood as a sense of shame which prevented some Māori from seeking or accepting help. This obviously has implications for ensuring those in need of public services receive what they are entitled to.

8.6 You were treated fairly

As noted in Chapter 5.4, fair treatment was open to different interpretations. Māori shared many of those interpretations, but what was unique for the Māori groups was the link between this driver and injustices under the Treaty of Waitangi.

You are talking about Māori people being treated fairly and since the Treaty we have felt victimised so that is just a joke really. (Kaitaia, Māori, female)

I think a lot of it is because Māori or the ones I know say that they have got a right to be here whereas they are a minority. But they are the original inhabitants that have a certain status. (Kaikohe, Māori, male)

This was particularly significant in the context of public services treating people fairly.

There was also perceived unfairness due to discrimination on the basis of race which was shared with the Asian group in discussions on this driver.

Differences in income and ethnicity can also help to reinforce feelings of being discriminated against. Something as simple as someone's name can lead to different expectations and behaviour towards someone.

It is just past experiences that people have had and how they judge people. You even get judged on your name. My daughter's name is [a Maori name], so they are expecting this real staunch as Māori girl to come bolting in and then there is this little petite thing that comes bolting in and they go no we called out [this name] and she is going yeah that is me. And she says mum it makes me feel my name is Māori and I am proud of my name but it makes me feel like I don't deserve it. (Lower Hutt, Māori, female)

Stereotypical impressions can also lead to judgments being made that are unwarranted.

8.7 Staff kept their promises – that is, they did what they said they would do

Although it was not universal among Māori respondents, the impression was given that 'a promise' was regarded as something stronger than a verbal commitment which was the tenor of views in the general public groups. There was a sense that an individual's personal integrity was at stake in keeping promises with words like 'honour' being used and with individual's saying that they use 'promise' quite selectively and carefully.

So when you promise somebody something there is no room for manoeuvre, there is your promise. If I was to promise somebody something then I would have to do it. (Lower Hutt, Māori, male)

8.8 It's an example of good value for tax dollars spent

There were strong similarities with the general public groups that core services were examples of good value for tax dollars spent. Those from the Manukau group found most difficulty in providing examples and other respondents more readily gave examples they had seen in the media of poor value for tax dollars spent.

8.9 The Public Service provides services that meet your needs

Again there were many similarities with the general public groups as core services featured among the most important needs. There did appear to be more emphasis placed on meeting the needs of those on low incomes among Māori respondents.

Māori community needs also emerged in one group when a respondent spoke about the need for grants to be available to upgrade marae facilities.

There was also more emphasis placed on providing information, particularly about entitlements, as one of the services that was needed.

There are a lot of benefits that people don't know about. (Kaikohe, Māori, female)

Another point of difference with the general public groups was that Māori almost unanimously interpreted 'your needs' as universal needs for everyone.

We all make up the public, individually we are not the public are we. It wouldn't be a public service for an individual we all have to participate. (Hamilton, Māori, male)

8.10 You have confidence public servants do a good job

There were little differences between Māori and general public groups' interpretations and experiences with respect to this driver. The most that could be said was that the Māori groups gave the impression of putting more emphasis on having staff take individual circumstances into account and on integrity.

In line with keeping promises they should be honest. (Hamilton, Māori, female)

8.11 General trust

General Trust was only discussed in the Dunedin Māori group. That group raised lack of consistent, reliable service which may be an indicator of distrust in public services for Māori.

You talk to one person one day and you get one answer and you ring back the next day and talk to someone else and you get exactly the opposite answer. (Dunedin, Māori, female)

The main ways the Māori group saw for improving trust were to provide more front-line staff and to provide people with the information they needed.

9. Asian

9.1 Focus group locations

Eight focus groups were undertaken with Asian participants drawn from the following locations:

- 3 x North Shore
- 2 x Manukau
- 1 x Hamilton
- 1 x Lower Hutt
- 1 x Dunedin.

These groups discussed the following satisfaction drivers:

- *The Service Experience Met Your Expectations.*
- *You Were Treated Fairly.*
- *Staff Were Competent.*
- *Staff Kept Their Promises – That Is, They Did What They Said They Would Do.*
- *It's an Example of Good Value for Tax Dollars Spent.*

and the following trust drivers:

- *You Have Confidence That Public Servants Do a Good Job.*
- *The Public Service Provides Services That Meet Your Needs.*
- *The Public Service Keeps Its Promises – That It Does What It Says It Will Do.*

9.2 Key points

9.2.1 Unique themes

The Asian groups shared many of the same perceptions of drivers as other groups. The key differences with the general public groups are highlighted in this section. It was clear that some Asian respondents, particularly some who had migrated to New Zealand, interpreted some drivers differently to other groups. Expectations that were more strongly articulated in the Asian than the general public groups were:

- Asian respondents tended to have a higher expectation of public services that are fast and efficient.
- Asian respondents interpreted staff competency differently to other groups, tending to view it as implying 'outstanding' as opposed to 'somewhat above average' service which was the interpretation given by other groups.

- Asian respondents are sensitive to being treated differently. There is a need for public servants to avoid appearing to be judgmental or discriminatory in their actions, particularly on the grounds of race.
- Satisfaction with public services is often based on international comparisons for those who have migrated. Often New Zealand public services compare favourably.
- There is a need to explain processes and be sensitive to those for whom English is a second language.
- Asian respondents rated the value of the New Zealand passport highly.

9.3 The service experience met your expectations

It appeared Asian respondents were more likely to expect and want public services to be fast and efficient. Actual experiences highlighted speed of service as a key issue in driving dissatisfaction among the Asian respondents.

You'll be more happy, faster rate, rather than waiting for a long time. (Manukau, Asian, male)

Asian respondents appeared to be more sensitive than other audiences to any perception that staff made pre-conceived judgements about them and in their case often due to their ethnic background. Some Asian respondents believed they received inconsistent service or service different from others because of their race.

Consistency. [Consistency?] This is my experience using the bus some bus drivers are nice, other bus drivers they say hi to everyone in front of you but I don't know if it is a racist thing. It could just be my experience but some of them are really rude. (Dunedin, Asian, male)

9.4 Staff were competent

There was some evidence that Asian respondents interpreted this driver differently to other groups. Competency was more likely to be viewed as outstanding which was quite different than across most audiences.

I think a competent person would be outstanding because not everyone can deliver any kind of service to the best of their ability because in New Zealand we have all kinds of cultures coming together and in order to get satisfaction from it you must be able to gain that kind of knowledge and the skill that comes with the job satisfaction. (Hamilton, Asian, female)

I think outstanding because everyone who does a job feels above average so to be competent obviously you have to be outstanding. (Hamilton, Asian, male)

Being culturally sensitive was an expectation raised by Asian respondents as a criteria for being viewed as competent.

Flexible what I mean by that is they have got access to any situation so they would understand about ethnicity, they would understand each and every ethnicity equal.
(Hamilton, Asian, male)

Asian respondents were also more sensitive to any sense that staff made pre-conceived judgements and treated customers differently as a result.

Again with the public services, again sometimes people prejudge you by your looks and whether to give you something that is written in law or to – they don't declare to you what your rights are. Don't pre-judge. (Manukau, Asian, male)

9.5 Your individual circumstances were taken into account

Discrimination also arose in discussion of this driver. Asian respondents felt they were treated poorly due to their ethnic background and some felt that public services needed to be conscious of a person's background and take this into account when dealing with them.

9.6 You were treated fairly

While discrimination was raised by most population groups in reference to being treated fairly, Asian respondents were more intensely vocal on the issue. Asian respondents were also more likely to provide examples where they felt they were treated differently or were discriminated against by the Public Service on the basis of their ethnicity.

Reinforcing this view, some New Zealand born Asian respondents felt that unfair treatment was evident when they fronted up in person, but they were treated fairly when accessing services over the phone, by mail or Internet where it was not obvious they were of Asian descent.

A few respondents felt that public services had improved on this basis with an increasingly diverse population living in New Zealand.

[In what way has it got better?] Well, with more migration of people here, they're more used to – more interaction with other cultures and then obviously a new generation gets into the workforce as well. (Manukau, Asian, male)

Some felt that being treated fairly meant that no assumptions would be made about a person which would impact on the level of service they received.

To treat people fairly, most Asian respondents felt that public services should be more aware of how to deal sensitively with those from different ethnic backgrounds. This might include speaking slower, showing more patience and taking care to explain things.

But where we all come from some of us have different accents, different knowledge and like I work with different girls at work, some are Chinese and Japanese and they have an accent and lots of Kiwi girls are impatient with the way they speak. And they say can you speak up I don't understand you and they do it very rudely. If they treated with that individuality or give them some consideration for their accent they have then eventually they will be treated fairly. (Hamilton, Asian, female)

However, a small number of respondents were sensitive to any perceived differences in treatment due to their ethnic background.

9.7 Staff kept their promises – that is, they did what they said they would do/the Public Service keeps its promises – that is, it does what it says it will do

There was little difference between the Asian groups and the general public groups in discussion of these drivers with a strong over-lap between them. Asian respondents carried a strong expectation of fulfilment.

When you go to the Post Office you expect them to help you with everything and the staff do that, so the Public Service and the staff, they're both keeping their promises. In case I go there for my car registration and they say "no we can't do it", that would be where they break a promise because I expect the Post Office to do it. It's listed in their responsibilities and since they do it, they're keeping their promise. (Manukau, Asian, female)

9.8 It's an example of good value for tax dollars spent

Asian respondents were sometimes more likely to see services as good value when comparing the same service in their country of origin.

Overall, compared to other places and other countries, I think health is better value for money here. (Manukau, Asian, female)

A number of Asian respondents felt that New Zealand passports were good value as they were accepted worldwide and were of high quality. The passport was rated more highly by the Asian groups than the general public and Māori groups, but about as highly as the Pacific People groups.

Passports, yes good value for money. We have world class passports. [They can take you anywhere in the world. (Interjection.)] They will take you anywhere in the world and they've got some security measures. It's one of the hardest to forge, the New Zealand passport. (Manukau, Asian, male)

9.9 You have confidence public servants do a good job

Experiences of discrimination resulted in Asian respondents believing public servants did a poor job. Similarly, evidence of a lack of cultural sensitivity such as when dealing with those with poor English language skills was seen to reflect negatively on public servants.

Just that they must give you the correct information and manners. And they must talk a bit slower because I speak only English, but sometimes when you can't understand them because they speak so fast Kiwis. (Hamilton, Asian, female)

Most Asian respondents felt it would make little difference what a public servant was thinking or feeling so long as their behaviour was polite and they did their best to meet the customer's needs. This was quite unlike the general public groups where consistency between thinking, saying and feeling the same thing was expected.

And so long as they speak nicely to you, even if they are thinking something else. (Hamilton, Asian, female)

What they think and what they say to us it doesn't matter because we don't know what they are thinking about but we can only hear what they are saying. If they say something offensive we wouldn't be happy most definitely, even if they are doing a good job but it doesn't matter what they are thinking because we don't know what it is. So we want them to be courteous to us when we are in front of them. (Hamilton, Asian, male)

9.10 The Public Service provides services that meet your needs

As found with several other drivers, Asian respondents were more likely to raise 'fast and efficient' service as a way for the Public Service to meet their needs.

My needs are very simple, speed. Speed of what things get processed, my mother will not go to public services because of the speed. (Dunedin, Asian, male)

9.11 Trust

Almost unanimously, Asian respondents felt that the New Zealand public services could be trusted more than the Public Service in their country of origin.

Honestly speaking there is no comparison. New Zealand is 200% better. [Than South Africa?] Yes. [In terms of trustworthiness you mean?] Yes. (North Shore, Asian, female)

From where I came to compare it New Zealand is better than my country. Less corruption, there is a lot of corruption. [But you don't think there is much corruption in New Zealand?] Services when you pay your taxes you see your roads no potholes, every month they check the roads. Philippines when you pay your taxes you don't get your roads done there. So basically from that it is good. (North Shore, Asian, male)

10. Pacific People

10.1 Focus group locations

Five focus groups were with Pacific People drawn from the following locations:

- 1 x Far North (Kaikohe)
- 2 x Manukau City
- 2 x Lower Hutt

The satisfaction drivers *They [public servants] admitted responsibility when they made mistakes* and *You were aware of what you needed to do every step of the process* were discussed only in the Pacific focus groups and are covered in detail in this chapter. This is because these drivers were unique for Pacific People. For all other satisfaction drivers (see below) only points unique or important to Pacific People are covered.

- *Staff Were Competent.*
- *Staff Kept Their Promises – That Is, They Did What They Said They Would Do.*
- *It's an Example of Good Value for Tax Dollars Spent.*

10.2 Key points

10.2.1 Unique themes

The Pacific People groups shared many of the same perceptions of drivers as other groups. The key differences with the general public groups are highlighted in this section. Expectations and perceptions that were unique or strongly illustrated by Pacific People as opposed to the general public groups were:

- A greater lack of confidence and understanding of how to deal with public services among recent migrants and first generation New Zealanders for whom English is a second language.
- Treating Pacific People with respect and being sensitive to their cultural needs will encourage engagement and trust.
- Proactively admitting to mistakes, apologising and taking appropriate remedial action will make Pacific People feel that they are being treated as equals; something that tends not to be felt when dealing with public services. This too will build trust.
- Pacific People are not inclined to admit they do not understand public service processes and requirements and will seek intermediaries from within their own family and community to assist them.

- Those who lack confidence or for whom English is a second language are more likely to prefer written or face-to-face communications than over the phone. Written communications enable people to read and understand things in their own time or to seek an intermediary to assist them.
- Respondents identify Pacific community channels as important ways for public services to build trust and understanding between themselves and Pacific People. Such channels could include:
 - Pacific Churches
 - Pacific community leaders
 - Communicating with Pacific People at their key community sports and cultural events
 - Using Pacific People's radio stations.
- Those who have migrated make favourable comparisons with New Zealand's public services.

10.3 [Public Servants] admitted responsibility when they made mistakes

This driver is unique to Pacific People and is covered in full in this section. Focus groups were conducted in the Far North (Kaikohe), Manukau City and Lower Hutt.

■ Overview

Few Pacific People said they had experienced public servants admitting responsibility to mistakes. Some, particularly those for whom English is a second language and who are unfamiliar with processes lack the confidence to raise concerns if they feel a mistake has been made. Such respondents tend to rely heavily on family and friends to help them deal with public services.

Pacific People place a lot of importance on public servants admitting responsibility to mistakes. Such admissions when accompanied by an apology are seen as a mark of respect as well as a sign that there will not be a recurrence.

■ Key themes

➤ *Admitting responsibility an exception*

Respondents said they had had very few experiences of public servants admitting responsibility for a mistake.

*I've never come across a person that will say he's admitted he's made a mistake.
[Not in any public service] No. (Manukau, Pacific People, male)*

➤ **Importance of admitting responsibility**

Respondents were able to provide several examples where mistakes had been made and no admission had been forthcoming. However, there was no doubt that admitting responsibility was important. It was a sign that things would be put right.

[Why do you think that's important to us that they admit they're wrong?] So they recognise what they've done wrong and they know they're going to correct it. (Lower Hutt, Pacific people, female)

It was also important because Pacific People viewed the admission of a mistake as an act of respect, a sign that the public servant was treating the Pacific person with respect as an 'equal'.

I think it's important for them to admit it because Pacific Islanders, I reckon, their opinions aren't as valued as they should. People have that stereotype of Pacific Islanders as if we don't know as much as they do, so when they admit, especially public services, when they admit – they're pretty much representing government, if they admit that they're in the wrong then it's like we are quite equal to everyone else. (Lower Hutt, Pacific People, female)

Because our knowledge is not as great, not being racist, but as with Pakehas they seem to be at another level when it comes to thinking and getting them to apologise to us kind of puts us a bit even with everyone else. (Kaikohe, Pacific people, male)

➤ **Reluctance to challenge mistakes**

While being treated as an equal should be the norm, it is clear Pacific People do not feel this is the case when dealing with public servants. Respondents said Pacific People regard themselves as less inclined to complain about mistakes or to challenge public servants if they think a mistake has been made.

I think PIs are more tolerant. People snap faster if they're palangi instead of like the PIs. (Manukau, Pacific People, female)

➤ **Lack of confidence**

Respondents said there was a reluctance among some Pacific People, particularly those with limited understanding of rules, regulations and processes or the English language, to challenge authority if they felt a mistake may have been made. This was because they lacked the confidence to do so.

I think on the whole PIs are not direct enough. [Why do you think that is?] I don't know, maybe embarrassment, maybe thinking they might be wrong, not having enough faith in themselves. (Manukau, Pacific People, female)

Sometimes you do come across PIs that are quite like "oh no, shouldn't tell a palangi that they're wrong." (Lower Hutt, Pacific People, female)

➤ **Intermediaries**

Younger Pacific People were the ones most likely to act on behalf of older relatives to sort things out if mistakes had been made. Thus, they act as intermediaries able to challenge when mistakes have been made.

That's when your parents make you talk for them. "You can talk to the palangi man." I'm more than happy to help them out. Mum and Dad don't speak English. I'm not going to try and belittle them or anything, but when it gets to the point where Mum and Dad are trying to make a point or something, especially Dad, that's when I talk to the public servant. (Lower Hutt, Pacific People, female)

■ **Linkages across drivers**

➤ **Staff kept their promises – that is, they did what they said they would do**

There was some linkage to this satisfaction driver in so far as an admission to a mistake was a reflection that staff were not doing what they were supposed to do.

[Why do you think it's important that we want someone to admit responsibility when things like that happen?] Because we're the public and the service is there for us so we should be able to rely on them when we need them, and if they're not pulling through, then they're not doing what they're supposed to be doing. (Manukau, Pacific people, female)

And in the case of both drivers there was an expectation that the admission of a mistake would be accompanied by an apology and an explanation as to how things would be put right.

Just an apology or a letter why what happened, why did it happen and how they will rectify it perhaps. That personal touch, apology, will suffice I suppose depending on what's happened, depending on the level of what's actually happened. (Manukau, Pacific People, female)

➤ **The Public Service admits responsibility when it makes mistakes**

There was a strong linkage to this trust driver. Pacific People stated that public servants were not generally pro-active about admitting to mistakes. However, admitting to mistakes can help build trust because it demonstrates that the public servant is a good person who can be trusted upon to do the right thing in future.

I guess it contributes to their reputation. If they're willing to take responsibility for it, then I'd take them to be a good person. (Lower Hutt, Pacific people, female)

You can trust that they're going to do the right thing the next time around. That's fair enough. (Lower Hutt, Pacific People, female)

■ Areas to focus on to improve satisfaction levels

➤ *Onus on apology*

Public servants should be trained to ensure that if they have made a mistake that an apology is made and steps are taken to ensure that it does not recur. This should help engender respect and trust between themselves and the public.

10.4 You were aware of what you needed to do every step of the way

This driver is unique to Pacific People and is covered in full in this section. Focus groups were conducted in the Far North (Kaikohe), Manukau City and Lower Hutt.

■ Overview

While Pacific People expect public servants to ensure they are aware of what they need to do, some are less likely to admit to not knowing what to do out of a sense of pride. This can present a challenge which can be addressed to some extent by being more culturally aware and having information available that can be easily understood including in the appropriate Pacific language. The ability to ensure people are aware of what they need to do is seen as a sign of competence.

■ Key themes

➤ *Less likely to admit lack of knowledge*

Pacific People are less likely to admit that they do not understand the Public Service 'system' of rules, regulations, processes and similar requirements. This can be due to what respondents described as pride and shyness. This can result in situations when Pacific People say that they do understand when in fact they do not in order to avoid any perceived 'shame' in admitting ignorance.

They say all this information to you and then you go – especially our people, we're too proud sometimes, because you stand there and go "yes, yes, yes, okay, thank you" and walk out the door and have no idea what they were just told. (Manukau, Pacific People, male)

Therefore staff should ensure people understand what to do every step of the way.

A good public services makes sure that the client has gone away understanding what to do, and the process to make. (Manukau, Pacific People, male)

Pacific People staffing front-line positions who can assist with language issues or even other staff demonstrating sensitivity to Pacific cultures can encourage engagement, trust and understanding.

I think if you get within your own culture you're a little bit more relaxed as well. (Lower Hutt, Pacific People, male)

I think that helps like having somebody from your own culture who can explain to you in your own native tongue to make you feel comfortable because a lot of people have language barriers. (Lower Hutt, Pacific People, female)

In particular, respondents spoke of the usefulness of being able to draw on the assistance of a Pacific staff member, who might be able to interpret, and increasing the number of Pacific People at the front-line of public services, particularly in areas where proportionately more Pacific People access services.

Language barriers and concerns about one's immigration status can inhibit engagement and understanding. And as noted in discussion about the driver in 10.3, those for whom English is a second language rely on close friends and family members to act as intermediaries.

➤ **Special efforts needed**

Particular care needs to be taken to try to enable Pacific People to understand what they need to do when interacting with public servants. Where it is apparent a Pacific person may have some difficulty in understanding or interacting, public servants should show respect and politeness in order to make themselves more approachable.

I think all people who are just culturally aware of the do's and the don'ts. Like you can phrase it, like whatever it is, to help somebody but not in your face like "this is how you have to do it", just "oh you know", like in a polite, respectful way, not making you feel like you're dumb or making you feel – like making you feel comfortable I think. It's more about being comfortable and of course maybe we find it hard to even ask for help anyway so somebody who makes you feel comfortable that it is okay. I think it's just cultural awareness. (Lower Hutt, Pacific People, female)

There is also the need to speak more slowly if there are language issues in play. Providing clearly written information, preferably in the Pacific person's language, is also a means of ensuring better understanding. The phone tended to be the least preferred channel for those for whom English is a second language.

Just break it down so we understand and just get to the point rather than all the fancy words ... Why don't you just put basically put it on the paper. I'd rather just read that. (Lower Hutt, Pacific People, female)

A letter. [What is better about a letter?] Easier to read and understand. Not the big words we don't understand and makes us go to that dumb world and not too sure what they are on about...When they say something real big like a word I don't understand I just say yeah. And the paper I do understand, it is more easy. (Kaikohe, Pacific People, male)

Pacific People also suggested working through community organisations and channels to inform people about what to do. These included churches, having a presence at Pacific sports and cultural festivals and working through Pacific radio stations to keep people informed.

■ Linkages across drivers

➤ *Staff were competent*

The strongest linkage was with the competency driver. Being culturally aware of the limitations some people may have due to their background was seen as important in order to ensure that Pacific People understood what to do.

I think everyone would have to have some kind of knowledge of at least cultural awareness and values and beliefs and maybe courses or seminars on how to deal with those kinds of clients. [I think that would go under competent as well, the whole fact of being aware. (Interjection.)] (Lower Hutt, Pacific People, female)

■ Areas to focus on to improve satisfaction levels

➤ *Cultural awareness*

Being culturally aware and sensitive to the needs of those unfamiliar with public service processes and requirements will go a long way toward ensuring people do understand what to do. This can include:

- treating people with respect, so they feel more comfortable engaging
- speaking simply and slowly to those for whom English is a second language, particularly over the phone
- identifying intermediary family members who may be able to help someone to understand, and
- providing written material in an appropriate Pacific language.

Public service organisations should also work through the Pacific People's community Channels to provide generic information so individuals are more aware of what they should do. Respondents suggested:

- working through Pacific churches
- providing information at major Pacific festivals and sports events
- providing information to Pacific radio stations
- having information available to parents at gyms and school groups

Respondents also suggested increasing the number of Pacific People at the front-line of public services, particularly in areas where proportionately more Pacific People access services.

10.5 Staff were competent

The key distinction between Pacific People and the general public groups with respect to this driver was that satisfaction with public servants' competency was also linked to staff's cultural sensitivity and ability to ensure Pacific People understood what they need to when dealing with public services.

Know a bit about cultural things, Pacific Island cultures. [Is that important?] I think so.

Those public servants who are considered competent are trusted.

Straight upfront, you will understand who you can trust because one is either being restricted with knowledge and the other one is providing the full knowledge or full products of what they provide, so that's how I'll weigh up the trust factor with public services. (Auckland, Pacific People, female)

Pacific People say they are likely to avoid accessing those services that are not helpful, understanding and approachable; traits that build trust in public services for them.

10.6 It's an example of good value for tax dollars spent

Pacific People struggled to provide examples of good value for tax dollars spent, though those that could gave examples of core services. Pacific People who have migrated to New Zealand tend to rate New Zealand's public services better relatively to the services they were used to in the islands.

11. Young People

11.1 Focus group locations

Five focus groups were undertaken with Young People (aged 15-30 years). As life experiences and life stages vary considerably across this age span, five different types of groups were recruited.

- School students (15-17 years), Lower Hutt
- Young working (18-23 years), North Shore City
- Older working (24-30 years), Hamilton
- Young family (18-30 years), Balclutha
- Tertiary students, Dunedin.

The discussion guide was adjusted significantly for the school students. This was because there was concern that they might not be able to engage with the subject matter due to their limited experience with public services and the drivers being tested. Thus, for example, they were asked to assess their expectations of the school they attended as a lead into discussion about their expectations of public services in general. The discussion guide for young people and for the school students group are appended to show the changes that were made.

Earlier quantitative research had identified five drivers of satisfaction that most influenced young people's satisfaction with public services. These were

- *The Service Experience Met Your Expectations.*
- *Staff Were Competent.*
- *You Were Treated Fairly.*
- *Staff Kept Their Promises – That Is, They Did What They Said They Would Do.*
- *It's an Example of Good Value for Tax Dollars Spent.*

11.2 Key points

The key differences between the young people and general public groups are highlighted in this section. Expectations and perceptions that were unique or strongly illustrated by Young People as opposed to the general public groups were:

- Speed of service appeared to be more important to Young People than for the general public, particularly school and tertiary students.
- Respondents with young families tended to have more complex interactions with public services, and this placed a high expectation on accountability for service delivery.
- Young People appear to have greater comfort with using the Internet to interact with public services and see it as a quicker option.

- Young families on low to moderate incomes place high value on financial benefits, such as those arising from Working for Families tax credits.
- The older working group (24-30 years) and those with young families tended to report more negative experiences of public services.
- Being treated with respect and in a consistent manner are particularly important aspects of fair treatment for school students. School students are particularly sensitive to feeling discriminated against or not treated with respect due to their age. This can lead to strong perceptions that they are being treated unfairly.
- As school students, tertiary and younger working respondent's expectations of public services are somewhat unformed, simply doing a job properly can lead to expectations being exceeded.

11.3 The service experience met your expectations

Speed and timeliness of service delivery appeared to be more important to Young People, particularly those in the school student (15-17 years) and tertiary groups, than the general public groups. Public transport was one of the main public services these groups used.

As school students, tertiary and younger working respondent's expectations of public services are somewhat unformed, particularly the more limited their experience with them, simply doing a job properly can lead to expectations being exceeded.

Respondents with young families tended to have more complex interactions with public services and this placed a high expectation on accountability for service delivery.

Young People appear to have greater comfort with using the Internet to interact with public services. It was also expected to be a quick deliverer of services.

The Internet I expect to be much easier to do. It should be really straightforward and really easy to use. (North Shore, young people, younger working, female)

11.4 Staff were competent

There was only one significant difference between the Young People and the general public groups in discussion of this driver. The youngest of the groups placed more emphasis than other groups on the need for competent staff to treat them with respect. This emerged among this age group in discussions of other drivers too.

Show respectfulness. [What does respectfulness mean to you?] Just like treating you in a nice way. (Lower Hutt, 16-18 years, male)

11.5 You were treated fairly

The school students stressed the need to be treated with respect was a sign of fairness. There was a presumption across all groups that people were generally treated fairly most of the time.

There was an example of perceived unfairness that came up in the tertiary student group that was somewhat unique among all groups. This was an example of the introduction of a new service – the National Certificate of Education - for a specific age cohort. These respondents had been in Year 11 when it was introduced and felt they had been treated as guinea-pigs to the detriment of their education which they perceived as unfair.

11.6 It's an example of good value for tax dollars spent

As in the general public groups core services that were available to everyone were consistently identified as good value for tax dollars spent. However, the Balclutha group with young families - more than the general public groups - identified examples that brought financial benefit to their household income and of government programmes and services that were especially important and valuable to their children.

*Childcare subsidy for working people. [Tell us how come that is a good example?]
Because I am a solo dad with two kids and one is at school, the other one is in day care all day so I wouldn't worry about going to work if it didn't get subsidised.
(Balclutha, young family, male)*

*The family tax credit that is just brilliant. [Just talk me through the reasons why?]
It just helps you that little bit more helps you get along like my partner gets paid fortnightly so I know I get paid weekly so that is fine but if any bill pops up I know that money is coming in there that I can pay it and so I don't get a collection fee or something ridiculous like that. (Balclutha, young family, female)*

12. General impressions of the Public Services

As a warm up for the focus group discussion, respondents were asked to give their impressions of 'the Public Service'. The initial wave of groups did not provide sufficient depth or insight about impressions, so two projective exercises were introduced to gain a better understanding. One exercise involved respondents identifying from a long list of descriptors the three words that most applied to the Public Service and the three words that applied the least to it. The second exercise invited respondents individually to think of an animal that best summed up their impression of the Public Service. In both exercises respondents were asked to give reasons for their choices. Only one projective exercise was carried out in any group.

12.1 Overview

Perceptions of the Public Service can be categorised in four broad ways covering:

- the type of relationship the public have with it
- its dominant traits
- the quality of service it provides and,
- the role it plays in society.

The extent to which individuals perceive the Public Service in each of these categories can have a direct bearing on their expectations of public services and the way they interact with them.

Those respondents who characterise the Public Service in terms of their relationship with it see the relationship as asymmetric. They perceive the Public Service as powerful relative to themselves and some feel threatened by this.

Respondents perceived the Public Service as complex, closed, difficult to deal with, and rule-bound. On the positive side it was also seen as helpful, culturally sensitive and accessible.

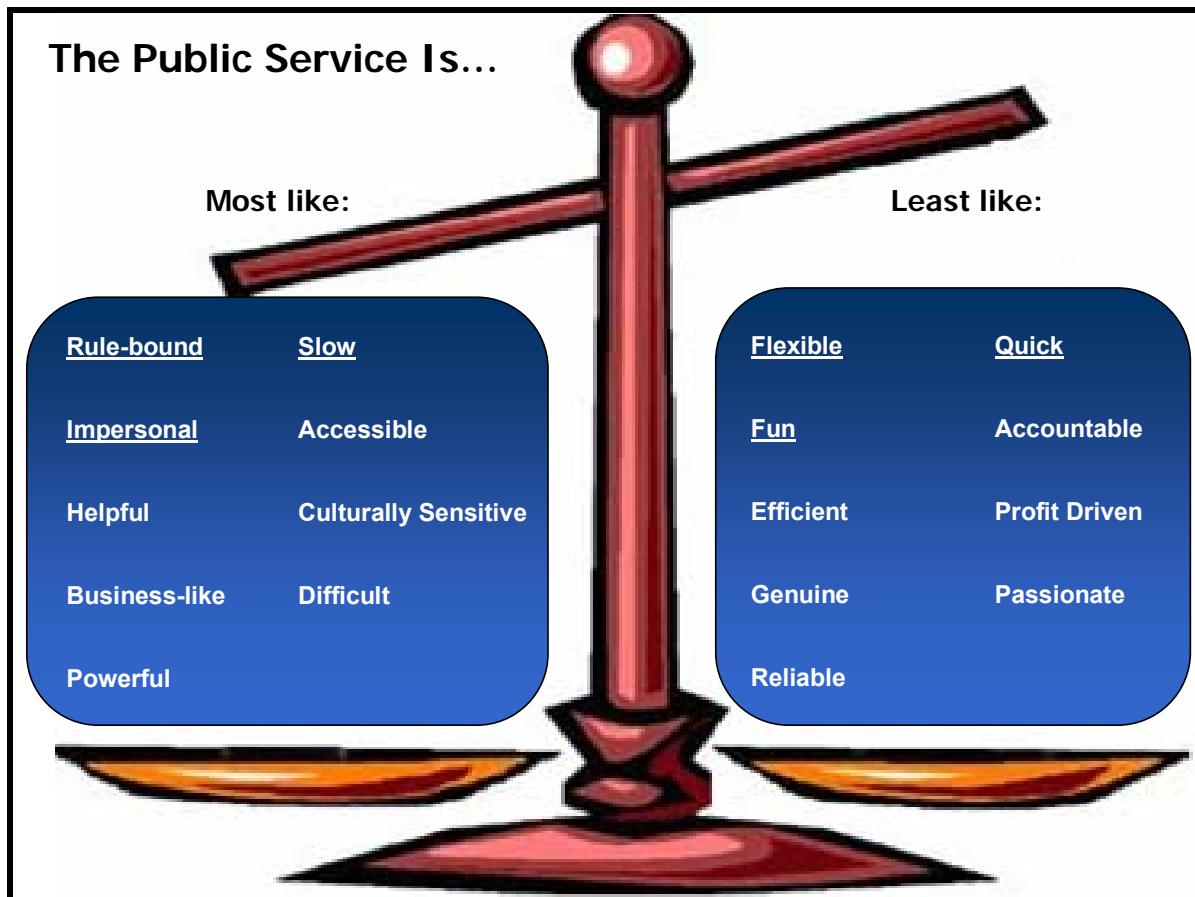
The Public Service is generally perceived to provide poorer quality services than the private sector. Respondents reported that the Public Service lacked a strong customer focus and did not appear to be accountable to the public it serves. As the sole provider of many services to the public respondents felt they had little ability to influence service improvements. These perceptions appeared to reinforce feelings of disempowerment.

A small number of respondents had a more benign impression of the Public Service reflecting their view of its role as a provider of services including essential services that everyone needs.

Improvements to the perception of the public services may result from attention to a strong, publicly accountable and customer/solutions focused culture. It may lead people to feel less disempowered.

12.2 Descriptors

The top descriptors of what the service is most and least like are listed in the diagram below. This shows that perceptions are not all negative. The three descriptors that respondents most identified with the Public Service, and what it was least like, are underlined.



When asked for the reasons why they chose these descriptors, respondents mostly related to personal experiences though some respondents' views were perceptions not based on personal experience.

Rule-bound was the descriptor that was chosen most often and highlighted the lack of flexibility respondents felt when dealing with the Public Service.

Rule bound they stick to the rules ... just what the book says because the book says. (North Shore, Asian, male)

The two other most commonly selected descriptors were slow and impersonal. Those who chose slow and impersonal often expressed frustration with delays in contacting public servants on the phone or dealing with different people each time they phoned up. This was because they were never actually able to establish a personal relationship.

Slow to get a result and impersonal with the telephone calls you have got to hang on for ages and ages and then you get cut off and you have to go through it all again (Lower Hutt, general public, female)

Some were dissatisfied with the slowness of processes and paperwork.

They say quick and it is usually quite a drawn out process in some of the stuff they want you to go through or it is quite a stack of paper work. (Kaitaia, Māori, female)

One respondent described the slowness of services as due to the fact that there was no ability to deal with joined-up departments.

Because if you want to do certain things you have to go to this department and this department and this department. It is not inter-linked, the departments are not inter linked so it is a slow process when you have to go to each department individually. (North Shore, Asian, female)

12.3 Animal projective

➤ **Stubborn and inflexible**

The choice of animals were consistent with the descriptor exercise. Animals like donkeys, mules, oxen and pigs were chosen for their stubbornness, inflexibility and undeviating approach to matters.



A mule. Stubborn and hard to shift from fixed opinions. No flexibility or very little. (Kaikohe, Māori, male)



All I could come to was an ox, moving through mud, slowly, steadily but pretty much a straight line from one point to another and whoever is in control chooses the direction so it is pretty much someone decides which way it's going and that is it. (Kaikohe, Māori, male)

➤ **Slow**

Slow services were also highlighted.



I think of a turtle, quite slow but at some stage it may happen. (Balclutha, general public, female)

➤ **Large and powerful**

However, the most common animals chosen were large and powerful, for example, the lion and the elephant. The lion represented the image of the all-powerful public service.



Well a lion is the king of the jungle and really our councils and the government are the kings of the land, they can dictate to us and tell us what we can and what we can't do. That is how I feel about them. (Hamilton, Asian, female)

I had lion too. Strong, I give them respect so I am probably scared of them a little. They are the big thing. (Lower Hutt, general public, male)

The elephant, though representing power and size, was also chosen because it created an image of slowness and somewhat undeviating qualities. In addition, the elephant had a threatening dimension to it.



It's big, lumbering, it has got an endless appetite and when it's on a rampage you can't stop it and it is not really in touch with humanity. (Balclutha, young family, female)

➤ **Grey and boring**

To young respondents, the elephant also appeared somewhat grey and boring.

I chose an elephant because compared to other animals it is quite big and public services seem like massive. Elephant is kind of a plain grey colour and public transport can be pretty boring looking. It should be a rainbow. It would be nicer to go into a pretty kind of environment rather than something dirty. (Lower Hutt, 16-18 years, female)

➤ **Lack customer focus**

The hyena was chosen for its lack of customer focus.



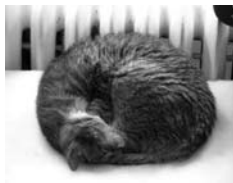
We can ask for the simplest thing and it could be reasonable but it takes forever to get the answer. And the other reason hyena is because of the constant processes that you have to go through sometimes you wonder if they are sitting back at morning tea time laughing. And how many people we have actually had to talk to to get what we wanted. (Oamaru, general public, female)

➤ **Taker versus provider**

There were a few that saw the Public Service as a taker, rather than a provider of service.



Well a tick. Getting fat off the little man. (Balclutha, general public, male)



Well some are like a cat, happy to consume as much as you give them and then lie around sleeping for the day. A lot of public services don't have a lot of incentives to excel and just cruise along every day. And some outfits are like a ferret, they are out for themselves and sneaky, sly and British. (Oamaru, general public, male)

Some respondents chose to focus on their more benign impressions of the Public Service. The cow was seen as a useful provider, but even this generally positive image had some shortcomings to it. For instance, cows could be stubborn and on occasion potentially dangerous too.



I thought of a cow. They are generally benign and pretty useful at times for a lot of stuff, but you wouldn't want one to stand on your toe particularly. There is something about cows they are stubborn and you can't really get them to do what you want them to do. (Dunedin, general public, male)

➤ **Harm**

Some feared the potential harm the Public Service could inflict.



I think like a big Alsatian or Rottweiler ... as in they can be nice but they've got the sharp teeth as well. You've got to be wary. (Dunedin, Māori, female).

➤ **Hidden and complex**

Some respondents' perceptions were of a public service that was complex, closed and difficult to deal with. The hermit crab and the mole represented the hidden complexity of the Public Service and the difficulty encountered in trying to contact the right person.



Hermit crab. My issue was to do with when I was applying for permanent residency and three times frustrations not getting in touch with the case manager my case officer getting fobbed off sometimes. (Kaikohe, Pacific People, female)



I have got a mole. I pictured network tunnels, tracks, busy and not a lot of communication. (Lower Hutt, general public, female)

The octopus was a favourite for those who wanted to capture what seemed to be the complexity of the Public Service with its tentacles spread over many areas.



I have put an octopus because it's something with a little brain but lots of legs in different departments. (Oamaru, general public, female)

➤ **Inconsistent service**

Some wanted to express views about poor service experiences. Occasionally, monkeys were referred to as well as rabbits for the erratic and inconsistent service experienced.



Rabbit because it is quite erratic at times ... (Balclutha, general public, female)

➤ **Friendly and helpful**

Horses and dogs represented a friendly and helpful side to the Public Service.



Horse because I think they all carry the load for us. So they are the ones that support. (Kaitaia, Māori, female)



I have got a dog I work with dogs all day and they are very willing to work for me and that is how I have found the Public Service. All the public services that I can think of. (Oamaru, general public, male)

13. Appendix 1: Discussion guide - General Public

Standard introduction

- Why focus groups?
- No right/wrong answers
- Confidentiality
- Right to pass on any questions
- Advise recording
- Logistics – duration, mobile calls, rest room, health and safety issues, emergency exits etc
- Take any questions

Warm up - respondents introduce themselves:

- Occupation (or otherwise), household circumstances

General topic introduction

Over the next two hours we'll be talking about the different kinds of public services that the government provides. I'll be asking you to think about your actual experiences with these public services, and anything else that you may have heard about public services from your friends, family or from the media.

Let's start by putting up on the whiteboard what it is you think about when you hear this term 'public services.' If it helps, think of some of the Public Services you have used in say the last few weeks?

[Facilitators ensure you have the list of public services captured in this first exercise handy to refer to during the rest of the group discussions. Below is a list of public services to prompt on if they do not emerge and where possible we want respondents to focus on the everyday transactions:

- Immigration about a visa or permit to work in New Zealand
- Inland Revenue about tax, Working for Families, or any other type of financial payments
- Work and Income about benefits, or getting a job
- Customs about importing goods into New Zealand, entering New Zealand, or customs duties
- ACC about compensation or injuries
- The Courts regarding court records or legal procedures
- The Police or Fire Service for help
- Land Transport New Zealand about a driver's licence, registering a vehicle, or changing ownership of a vehicle
- The department of Conservation about conservation activities, walking tramping or camping in national parks

- About a New Zealand passport or New Zealand citizenship
- About State housing, or renting rights and duties of landlords and tenants
- Stayed in a public hospital or received public hospital services as an outpatient
- Visited a public library
- Dealt with your local council]

Archetype – The Public Service

We are going to do a little exercise now where you can use your imagination. I want you to take a little time to think about the ‘public service’ and what that means to you. Now, imagine what sort of animal the ‘public service’ might be. Write down your animal and we’ll go round and discuss why you chose the animal you did. **[discuss]**

OR

Here’s a list of words **[distribute prompt]** that can be used to describe an organisation. What I’d like you to do is to think about the ‘public service’ and tick the three words or phrases on this list that you would say apply most to the Public Service. When you’ve done that can you now put a cross next to the three words or phrases that least apply to the Public Service. **[discuss choices]**

Service Experience Meeting Expectations (Satisfaction)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out what people mean when they say a service experience met their expectations. Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

OK. We’ve stopped talking about the Public Service in general for now.

This next part of the discussion is going to look at public services. So, we’re really looking at your actual experiences of using public services. If it helps, think of the times you have had experience with public services like on this list here **[refer to list on whiteboard]**. And we’re interested in anything you have to say.

One thing people say about public services that increases their satisfaction is that the service experience met their expectations. First of all - what sorts of things do you think count as the ‘service experience’? **[establish scope of service experience after suggestions are offered – write this on whiteboard for all to see and modify if they wish]** Are you describing all contact of any type you have with public services or is it narrower than that? If it’s narrower than that, then what’s in and what’s out?

What we really want to know is what it means to you when you say the service that you experienced met your expectations. To do that, can you first of all look at the services you have mentioned and write down what you think the service should be like – what sort of things need to happen?

Now, using a scale of 0-10, where 0 means ‘very low’ and 10 means ‘very high’ how would you rate what you actually expect public services to be like? **[ask for ratings]** What’s your reasoning behind your rating? Would you apply the same rating for all public services? If not, what is different about the services you rate higher or lower than others?

Now, working in pairs, looking at those ratings you've given, what needs to be done to improve that rating? What are the sorts of things that need to happen so that your expectations have been met? And rate those things from the most important to the least important. **[report back and discuss]** Why is it that some of these expectations are more important than others? What sort of things could occur that meant your expectations were not met?

Does it make any difference to your expectations if you are paying for the service? If so, what sort of difference?

Do you think your expectations can be met if the things that you say should happen don't happen? If so, how could that come about?

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important to say about a service meeting your expectations?

You Have Confidence that Public Servants Do a Good Job (Trust)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out what gives people confidence that public servants do a good job Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

We want to look now at how good a job you think public servants do. First of all, we want to understand what you think 'doing a good job' means to you. Here's a stick character **[distribute stick cartoon of Public Servant]** and what we'd like you to do is to imagine this is a public servant that you are dealing with. If they are doing a 'good job' in your view, can you fill in what you think they might be saying, then what they are thinking and then what they are feeling. **[report back and discuss]**

Does it matter that they may be saying one thing and thinking or feeling another? Why? Why not? What's really important about doing a good job?

Now, in pairs, develop a list of things you would expect a public servant to do if they were doing a good job. Which of these are more important than others? Why is that?

Thinking of public servants in general – do you have confidence that they do a good job? **explore reasons]**

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about having confidence that public servants do a good job?

Staff Were Competent (Satisfaction)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out what staff need to do for people to feel that they are competent Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

[Write down 'Competent' on Board] If I was to describe someone as 'competent' in their job, what would that mean to you? **[capture on board]**

If someone was described as ‘competent’, would you think highly of them or would it be more that they do an OK job, but nothing outstanding or would it mean something different again? What is it that someone does or say that makes them competent in your eyes? **[elicit]**

Looking at those things you have mentioned can you please rate them on a 0-10 scale where 0 means not that important and 10 means very important – just jot some numbers down on a piece of paper. **[Go round and write numbers beside each factor, then discuss reasons for relative importance of each]** How satisfied would you be if public service staff had those competence attributes?

Would it make any difference whether you were paying for a service? What if it was something you were required to do by law, for example, you have to register your car?

How would your views about staff and their competency differ in the following situations? What needs to happen for you to feel that you have been dealt with by competent staff in each of these situations:

- Over the phone contact
- Over the counter contact
- Over the Internet contact
- Contact by mail

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about staff being competent?

Public Service Provides Services that Meet Your Needs (Trust)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out how we can increase trust in the Public Service by identifying what people mean when they say the Public Service meets their needs Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

Everyone has different needs and all of us have contact with the Public Service for different reasons and at different times of our lives for a wide range of services. In this discussion, we want you to think about the services the Public Service provides.

Spend a couple of minutes thinking about the kinds of services the Public Service provides and then we’ll write them on the whiteboard – you can do this in pairs talking among yourselves. **[whiteboard writing services in the left hand column titled ‘services’ and discuss]** What is the need or needs you identify for each of these services? **[identify for each service, the need(s) it fulfils and write in the right-hand column. NB do not apply any filters to what respondents say – treat what may seem like a ‘want’ as a need if they identify it as so]**

Given that it may not be possible for the Public Service to meet all your needs, what are the main things they have to do to ensure that they meet at least your most important needs?

How important are these needs to you? In what ways are they important/unimportant or irrelevant? If the Public Service did not provide these needs, what would happen? Do you have any misgivings that they may not meet your needs? How might that come about do you think?

When you talk about ‘your’ needs – what does that mean to you? Does it include meeting the needs of others in any way? **[If so, explore extent of this]**

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about the Public Service providing services that meet your needs?

Staff Kept Their Promises - That Is, They Did What They Said They Would Do/The Public Service Keeps Its Promises (Satisfaction and Trust)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out the things that people mean when they say staff kept their promises. Place the satisfaction driver on the board for all respondents to see]

Staff

What is a 'promise'?

What does it mean to 'keep a promise'? Can you give me examples? **[only if respondents mention politicians be sure to distinguish public servants and public service from the 'promises' politicians may make]**

What about when you're dealing with staff from public services and again we can think of the different types of situations like:

- Over the phone contact
- Over the counter contact
- Over the Internet contact
- Contact by mail

What would it mean for staff to keep their promises when you dealt with them? **[elicit examples]** What would it mean to break a promise? If a promise were broken – how could they make up for that?

Can you think of examples where you have felt they have not kept their promises? And where they have kept their promises?

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about staff keeping their promises?

Public Service

[Note to facilitators – We now want to find out what 'the Public Service keeps its promises' means. Place the trust driver on the board for all respondents to see]

Let's forget about individual staff contacts and think of the Public Service in general. Do you think of the Public Service as something that keeps promises? **[explore why/why not?]**

Well, let's assume the Public Service said it keeps its promises? What would that mean to you? What sorts of things would you expect it to keep its promises about. Again can you think of examples of the Public Service keeping its promises? Why are these promises you expect the Public Service to keep?

What if it didn't keep its promises – what sort of things would be happening?

Is there a difference between having promises kept and public servants keeping promises **[discuss]**

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about the Public Service keeping its promises?

You Were Treated Fairly/Public Servants Treat People Fairly (Satisfaction and Trust)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find what it means when people say they were treated fairly Place the driver ‘You Were Treated Fairly’ on the board for all respondents to see]

What does being treated ‘fairly’ mean to you?

I want you to think of your own individual experiences with public servants. Thinking about those experiences, did you feel you were treated fairly? Could you write down any experiences with public servants that you remember where you felt you were treated fairly and any where you were treated unfairly **[report back individually]** What was it about those experiences that made you feel you were treated fairly/unfairly? Or was there nothing special about the experience? If so, did you assume you had been treated fairly? If so, what reasons would there be for assuming that?

[Note to facilitators. We now want to identify what people mean when they say public servants treat people fairly. Place the driver ‘Public Servants Treat People Fairly’ on the board for all respondents to see]

Now, let’s look at what it means when people say public servants treat people fairly. Split into two or three groups and discuss among yourselves to provide examples of the sorts of things that happen that make you think they are fair or unfair. **[report back and discuss]**. Why do these examples suggest they treat people fairly/unfairly? Are these typical of what goes on? Are there any areas of the Public Service where you think they may be more or less fair than other areas? If so, which areas and why do you think these differences exist?

Is there a difference between you being treated fairly and public servants treating people fairly? **[discuss]**

Why do you think it’s important to treat people fairly? When you think about ‘treating people fairly’ do you think of that as treating everyone the same or do you think of it as treating each person fairly in terms of their individual circumstances?

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about the public servants treating people fairly?

It’s an Example of Good Value for Tax Dollars Spent (Satisfaction)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out what people mean when they say it’s an example of good value for tax payers’ dollars spent Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

Looking at the first list we put up on the board [**refer list on whiteboard from first exercise**] what examples can you think of that show good value for tax dollars spent? Why are they examples of good value for tax dollars spent?

Here's a list of services that many people get or are aware of. Can you rate on a 0-10 scale where 0 means "very poor" and 10 means "very good" how you would rate the value for money each service provides. [**discuss reasons for ratings**] What is it about each of these that suggests to you whether or not it is giving good value? [**list value for money criteria on whiteboard**]

Is there a difference in the way you rate value for money depending on whether you're looking at the private sector or the Public Service. Why do you have these different expectations?

Does it make any difference if what you are paying for is something you have to do as opposed to something you have a choice over doing? If so, in what ways do you look at them differently. Why do you have these different expectations?

Earlier, I asked what you understood by the Public Service and you named [**reiterate list**] Are there any other things you've thought of that you'd like to add to that list? Do you think differently about how value for money is given depending on whether it's a Ministry giving advice, an organisation administering rules or people doing things like teaching or nursing or rubbish collecting, or getting a driver's licence or a passport? If so, in what ways does it differ? [**discuss and capture criteria for value for money**]

Even though you may think differently about parts of the Public Service and the range of things that could cover, can you spend a few minutes writing down the sorts of things that would be examples of good value for tax dollars spent in the Public Service? You may have mentioned some already, but I want to see that we're not missing any. [**discuss examples and reasons**]

Would it make any difference whether you were paying for a service? What if it was something you were required to do by law, for example, you have to register your car?

If these sorts of things were happening – it may not always be known to the wider public. Do you think it's important for the Public Service to show it is providing value for money? If so, - why is that and how should they best go about showing value for money?

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about an example of good value for tax payers' dollars spent?

Trust General

[**NB facilitators, if it appears that actions of politicians are influencing views tease out the extent to which they think of trust in relation to what politicians do as opposed to what public servants do**]

[**Write TRUST up on the Board**] Can you tell me what that word means to you – trust? If it helps to gather your thoughts write something down. It might be an experience you've had or that you have heard about that led to you feel trust or distrust. [**capture key components of trust.**]

Is *trust* something you would apply to the Public Service? In what ways would you? What do you trust the Public Service to do or to be? Think of personal examples that illustrate what you mean as far as possible.

Can you work in pairs now and think of ways that would work for you that would build more trust in the Public Service than you already have [**capture and discuss**]

Are you aware that there is a set of standards that public servants are required to follow? [**explore awareness**]. [**Distribute Prompt 'Standards of Integrity & Conduct'**] Do you think that if everyone knew about that set of standards that this would increase their trust in the Public Service? If so, why? And what would be a good way of increasing the public's awareness of the code? If not, why not?

Do you think your image of the Public Service reflects these standards? [**explore**]

When you hear of breaches of standards of conduct and integrity – what do you think? Do you think it means the system is working well or not? [**elicit unprompted views first**] And how do these breaches influence your trust in the Public Service.

[**If nothing comes through from the previous question, then probe**] - One way of looking at reports of breaches is that there is a good system in place to catch the occasional breaches and that the system is working well. The other way of looking at things is to say that having caught a few breaches it may mean that there are a lot more breaches occurring that do not get caught. Which of those two is closest to your view? [**explore reasons**]

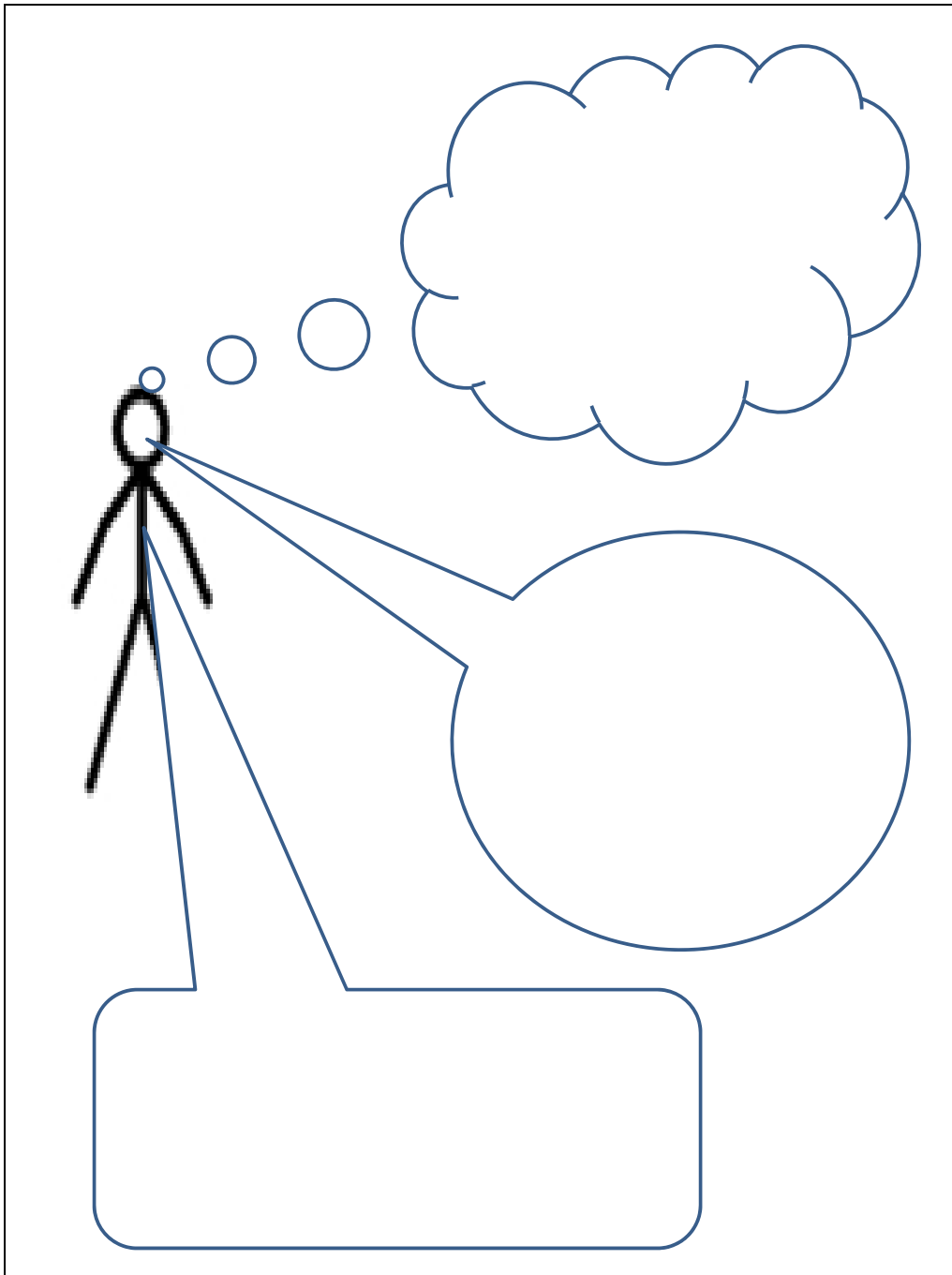
- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Genuine | <input type="checkbox"/> Passionate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quick | <input type="checkbox"/> Competent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Successful | <input type="checkbox"/> Hard working |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding | <input type="checkbox"/> Innovative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accountable | <input type="checkbox"/> Approachable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trustworthy | <input type="checkbox"/> Decisive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Leading edge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Well managed | <input type="checkbox"/> Slow |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Keeps its promises | <input type="checkbox"/> Practical |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rule-bound | <input type="checkbox"/> Smart |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traditional | <input type="checkbox"/> Reliable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Helpful | <input type="checkbox"/> Impersonal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caring | <input type="checkbox"/> Dynamic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Efficient | <input type="checkbox"/> Modern |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pro-active | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unfriendly | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good communicator | <input type="checkbox"/> Good Employer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In touch | <input type="checkbox"/> Respected |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flexible | <input type="checkbox"/> Responsible |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expert | <input type="checkbox"/> Hi-tech |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local | <input type="checkbox"/> Culturally sensitive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stylish | <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledgeable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sensible | <input type="checkbox"/> Remote |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dependable | <input type="checkbox"/> Business-like |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor communicator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Powerful | <input type="checkbox"/> Outgoing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corrupt | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unhelpful | <input type="checkbox"/> Stable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Progressive | <input type="checkbox"/> Empathy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Convenient | <input type="checkbox"/> Solid |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Profit driven | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficult |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fun | <input type="checkbox"/> Energetic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dependable | <input type="checkbox"/> Honest |

VALUE FOR MONEY

On a 0-10 scale where 0 means “very poor” and 10 means “very good” how would you rate the value for money each provides. Please tick the top 2 for the value for money they provide.

Service	0-10 rating	Tick Top 2
Power Companies		
The Warehouse		
Police		
A Passport		
Hospitals		
Car registration		
Banks		
Citizens Advice Bureau		
Council Services		
Schools		
Public Libraries		

PUBLIC SERVANT



14. Appendix 2: Discussion guide - Māori

Standard introduction:

- Why focus groups?
- No right/wrong answers
- Confidentiality
- Right to pass on any questions
- Advise recording
- Logistics – duration, mobile calls, rest room, health and safety issues, emergency exits etc
- Take any questions

Warm up - respondents introduce themselves:

- Occupation (or otherwise), household circumstances

General topic introduction

Over the next two hours we'll be talking about the different kinds of public services that the government provides. I'll be asking you to think about your actual experiences with these public services, and anything else that you may have heard about public services from your friends, family or from the media.

Let's start by putting up on the whiteboard what it is you think about when you hear this term 'public services.' If it helps, think of some of the Public Services you have used in say the last few weeks?

[Facilitators ensure you have the list of public services captured in this first exercise handy to refer to during the rest of the group discussions. Below is a list of public services to prompt on if they do not emerge and where possible we want respondents to focus on the everyday transactions:

- Immigration about a visa or permit to work in New Zealand
- Inland Revenue about tax, Working for Families, or any other type of financial payments
- Work and Income about benefits, or getting a job
- Customs about importing goods into New Zealand, entering New Zealand, or customs duties
- ACC about compensation or injuries
- The Courts regarding court records or legal procedures
- The Police of Fire Service for help
- Land Transport New Zealand about a driver's licence, registering a vehicle, or changing ownership of a vehicle
- The department of Conservation about conservation activities, walking tramping or camping in national parks
- About a New Zealand passport or New Zealand citizenship

- About State housing, or renting rights and duties of landlords and tenants
- Stayed in a public hospital or received public hospital services as an outpatient
- Visited a public library
- Dealt with your local council]

Archetype – The Public Service

We are going to do a little exercise now where you can use your imagination. I want you to take a little time to think about the ‘public service’ and what that means to you. Now, imagine what sort of animal the ‘public service’ might be. Write down your animal and we’ll go round and discuss why you chose the animal you did. **[discuss]**

OR

Here’s a list of words that can be used to describe an organisation. What I’d like you to do is to think about the ‘public service’ and tick the three words or phrases on this list that you would say apply most to the Public Service. When you’ve done that can you now put a cross next to the three words or phrases that least apply to the Public Service. **[discuss choices]**

You Have Confidence that Public Servants Do a Good Job (Trust)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out what gives people confidence that public servants do a good job. Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

We want to look now at how good a job you think public servants do. First of all, we want to understand what you think ‘doing a good job’ means to you. Here’s a stick character **[distribute stick cartoon of Public Servant]** and what we’d like you to do is to imagine this is a public servant that you are dealing with. If they are doing a ‘good job’ in your view, can you fill in what you think they might be saying, then what they are thinking and then what they are feeling. **[report back and discuss]**

Does it matter that they may be saying one thing and thinking or feeling another? Why? Why not? What’s really important about doing a good job?

Now, in pairs, develop a list of things you would expect a public servant to do if they were doing a good job. Which of these are more important than others? Why is that?

Thinking of public servants in general – do you have confidence that they do a good job? **[explore reasons]**

Thinking of the different ways people interact with public services, does your confidence differ depending on whether you are dealing with them:

- Over the phone contact
- Over the counter contact
- Over the Internet contact
- Contact by mail

If so, in what ways?

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about having confidence that public servants do a good job?

Staff Were Competent (Satisfaction)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out what staff need to do for people to feel that they are competent. Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

[Write down ‘Competent’ on Board] If I was to describe someone as ‘competent’ in their job, what would that mean to you? **[capture on board]**

If someone was described as ‘competent’, would you think highly of them or would it be more that they do an OK job, but nothing outstanding or would it mean something different again? What is it that someone does or say that makes them competent in your eyes? **[elicit]**

Looking at those things you have mentioned can you please rate them on a 0-10 scale where 0 means not that important and 10 means very important – just jot some numbers down on a piece of paper. **[Go round and write numbers beside each factor, then discuss reasons for relative importance of each]** How satisfied would you be if public service staff had those competence attributes?

Would it make any difference whether you were paying for a service? What if it was something you were required to do by law, for example, you have to register your car?

How would your views about staff and their competency differ in the following situations? What needs to happen for you to feel that you have been dealt with by competent staff in each of these situations:

- Over the phone contact
- Over the counter contact
- Over the Internet contact
- Contact by mail

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about staff being competent?

Public Service Provides Services that Meet Your Needs (Trust)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out how we can increase trust in the Public Service by identifying what people mean when they say the Public Service meets their needs. Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

Everyone has different needs and all of us have contact with the Public Service for different reasons and at different times of our lives for a wide range of services. In this discussion, we want you to think about the services the Public Service provides.

Spend a couple of minutes thinking about the kinds of services the Public Service provides and then we'll write them on the whiteboard – you can do this in pairs talking among yourselves. **[whiteboard writing services in the left hand column titled 'services' and discuss]** What is the need or needs you identify for each of these services? **[identify for each service, the need(s) it fulfils and write in the right-hand column. NB do not apply any filters to what respondents say – treat what may seem like a 'want' as a need if they identify it as so]**

Given that it may not be possible for the Public Service to meet all your needs, what are the main things they have to do to ensure that they meet at least your most important needs?

How important are these needs to you? In what ways are they important/unimportant or irrelevant? If the Public Service did not provide these needs, what would happen? Do you have any misgivings that they may not meet your needs? How might that come about do you think?

When you talk about 'your' needs – what does that mean to you? Does it include meeting the needs of others in any way? **[If so, explore extent of this]**

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about the Public Service providing services that meet your needs?

Staff Kept Their Promises - That Is, They Did What They Said They Would Do (Satisfaction)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out the things that people mean when they say staff kept their promises, particularly with respect to what staff say and what they do Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

What is a 'promise'?

What does it mean to 'keep a promise'? Can you give me examples? **[be sure to distinguish public servants and public service from the 'promises' politicians may make]**

What would it mean for staff to keep their promises when you dealt with them? **[elicit examples]** What would it mean to break a promise? If a promise were broken – how could they make up for that?

Can you think of examples where you have felt they have not kept their promises? And where they have kept their promises?

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about staff keeping their promises?

You Were Treated Fairly/Public Servants Treat People Fairly (Satisfaction and Trust)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find what it means when people say they were treated fairly. Place the driver ‘You Were Treated Fairly’ on the board for all respondents to see]

What does being treated ‘fairly’ mean to you? A number of Māori people we have spoken to have said it is important to be treated fairly. What do you think of that – why do you think they say it is so important to them? Do you agree **[explore reasons]** Do you think treating people fairly is something that’s very important to Māori? If so, why do you think that is so?

I want you to think of your own individual experiences with public servants. Thinking about those experiences, can you think of examples when you felt you were treated fairly? How about examples of when you were treated unfairly? Write them down if it helps. **[report back individually]** What was it about those experiences that made you feel you were treated fairly/unfairly? Or was there nothing special about the experience? If so, did you assume you had been treated fairly? If so, what reasons would there be for assuming that?

[Note to facilitators. We now want to identify what people mean when they say public servants treat people fairly. Place the driver ‘Public Servants Treat People Fairly’ on the board for all respondents to see]

Now, let’s look at what it means when people say public servants treat people fairly. Split into two or three groups and discuss among yourselves the things public servants needs to do to treat people fairly. I’m also interested in those things that happen that make you distrust public servants to treat people fairly. **[report back and discuss]**. Why do these examples suggest they treat people fairly/unfairly? Are these typical of what goes on? Are there any areas of the Public Service where you think they may be more or less fair than other areas? If so, which areas and why do you think these differences exist?

Is there a difference between you being treated fairly and public servants treating people fairly?

When you think about ‘treating people fairly’ do you think of that as treating everyone the same or do you think of it as treating each person fairly in terms of their individual circumstances?

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about you being treated fairly?

The Public Service Provides You With All the Information You Need (Trust)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to identify what things have to be done when providing information that will increase people’s trust in the Public Service. Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

Some people have told us that it is especially important to them that the Public Service provides them with all the information they need. What comes into your mind when you hear that? **[explore reasons]** Do you think it is important then?

The Public Service obviously has a lot of information about a lot of things. What we're interested in learning from you is what it means for the Public Service to provide you with all the information you need. **[reveal this phrase on whiteboard for group to review]**. What do you think of that? What does that mean to you? **[probe 'all', 'information' and 'need' to clarify understanding of each term]** What sort of things would that mean that the Public Service would have to do if it did that?

Have you ever experienced times when dealing with the Public Service that you needed some sort of information? It could be information about what to do, where to go, how to do something or any type of information you need. **[explore]**

Thinking about information you are provided, does getting what you need include how clearly the information is provided to you? How about how easy it is to understand? Does it include how the information is provided to you? What are the best ways to provide information to you? Do you think the Public Service does these things? Are there any areas where it does it better than others? Why might that be? How it could provide the information you need better, so you have more trust in the Public Service?

Are there any types of information that you feel you have needed where it was not provided? Do you think information that is needed is deliberately withheld? If so, why might that be? Or do you think information may not be provided because they are unaware of what information people need?

Have you ever been in a situation or known of someone who has been in a situation where they haven't had the confidence to ask for more information they felt they needed? In those circumstances, what do people need to help give them that confidence to ask?

Have you ever helped someone out who has not had the confidence to ask for the information they need? If so, what are the best things to do to help them?

Generally though, do you trust the Public Service that it provides the information people need? Any areas where you wouldn't trust it to provide all the information that is needed?

Is there anything else you would like to say that has not already been covered?

It's an Example of Good Value for Tax Dollars Spent (Satisfaction)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out what people mean when they say it's an example of good value for tax payers' dollars has been spent. Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

Looking at the first list we put up on the board **[refer list on whiteboard from first exercise]** what examples can you think of that show good value for tax dollars spent? Why are they examples of good value for tax dollars spent?

Here's a list of services that many people get or are aware of. Can you rate on a 0-10 scale where 0 means "very poor" and 10 means "very good" how you would rate the value for money each service provides. **[discuss reasons for ratings]** What is it about each of these that suggests to you whether or not it is giving good value? **[list value for money criteria on whiteboard]**

Is there a difference in the way you rate value for money depending on whether you're looking at the private sector or the Public Service. Why do you have these different expectations?

Does it make any difference if what you are paying for is something you have to do as opposed to something you have a choice over doing? If so, in what ways do you look at them differently. Why do you have these different expectations?

Earlier, I asked what you understood by the Public Service and you named **[reiterate list]** Are there any other things you've thought of that you'd like to add to that list? Do you think differently about how value for money is given depending on whether it's a Ministry giving advice, an organisation administering rules or people doing things like teaching or nursing or rubbish collecting, or getting a driver's licence or a passport? If so, in what ways does it differ? **[discuss and capture criteria for value for money]**

Even though you may think differently about parts of the Public Service and the range of things that could cover, can you spend a few minutes writing down the sorts of things that would be examples of good value for tax dollars spent in the Public Service? You may have mentioned some already, but I want to see that we're not missing any. **[discuss examples and reasons]**

Would it make any difference whether you were paying for a service? What if it was something you were required to do by law, for example, you have to register your car?

If these sorts of things were happening – it may not always be known to the wider public. Do you think it's important for the Public Service to show it is providing value for money? If so, - why is that and how should they best go about showing value for money?

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about an example of good value for tax payers' dollars spent?

Trust General

[NB facilitators, if it appears that actions of politicians are influencing views tease out the extent to which they think of trust in relation to what politicians do as opposed to what public servants do]

[Write TRUST up on the Board] Can you tell me what that word means to you – trust? If it helps to gather your thoughts write something down. It might be an experience you've had or that you have heard about that led to you feel trust or distrust. **[capture key components of trust.]**

Is *trust* something you would apply to the Public Service? In what ways would you? What do you trust the Public Service to do or to be? Think of personal examples that illustrate what you mean as far as possible.

Can you work in pairs now and think of ways that would work for you that would build more trust in the Public Service than you already have **[capture and discuss]**

Are you aware that there is a set of standards that public servants are required to follow? [**explore awareness**]. [**Distribute Prompt 'Standards of Integrity & Conduct'**] Do you think that if everyone knew about that set of standards that this would increase their trust in the Public Service? If so, why? And what would be a good way of increasing the public's awareness of the code? If not, why not?

Do you think your image of the Public Service reflects these standards? [**explore**]

When you hear of breaches of standards of conduct and integrity – what do you think? Do you think it means the system is working well or not? [**elicit unprompted views first**] And how do these breaches influence your trust in the Public Service.

[**If nothing comes through from the previous question, then probe**] - One way of looking at reports of breaches is that there is a good system in place to catch the occasional breaches and that the system is working well. The other way of looking at things is to say that having caught a few breaches it may mean that there are a lot more breaches occurring that do not get caught. Which of those two is closest to your view? [**explore reasons**]

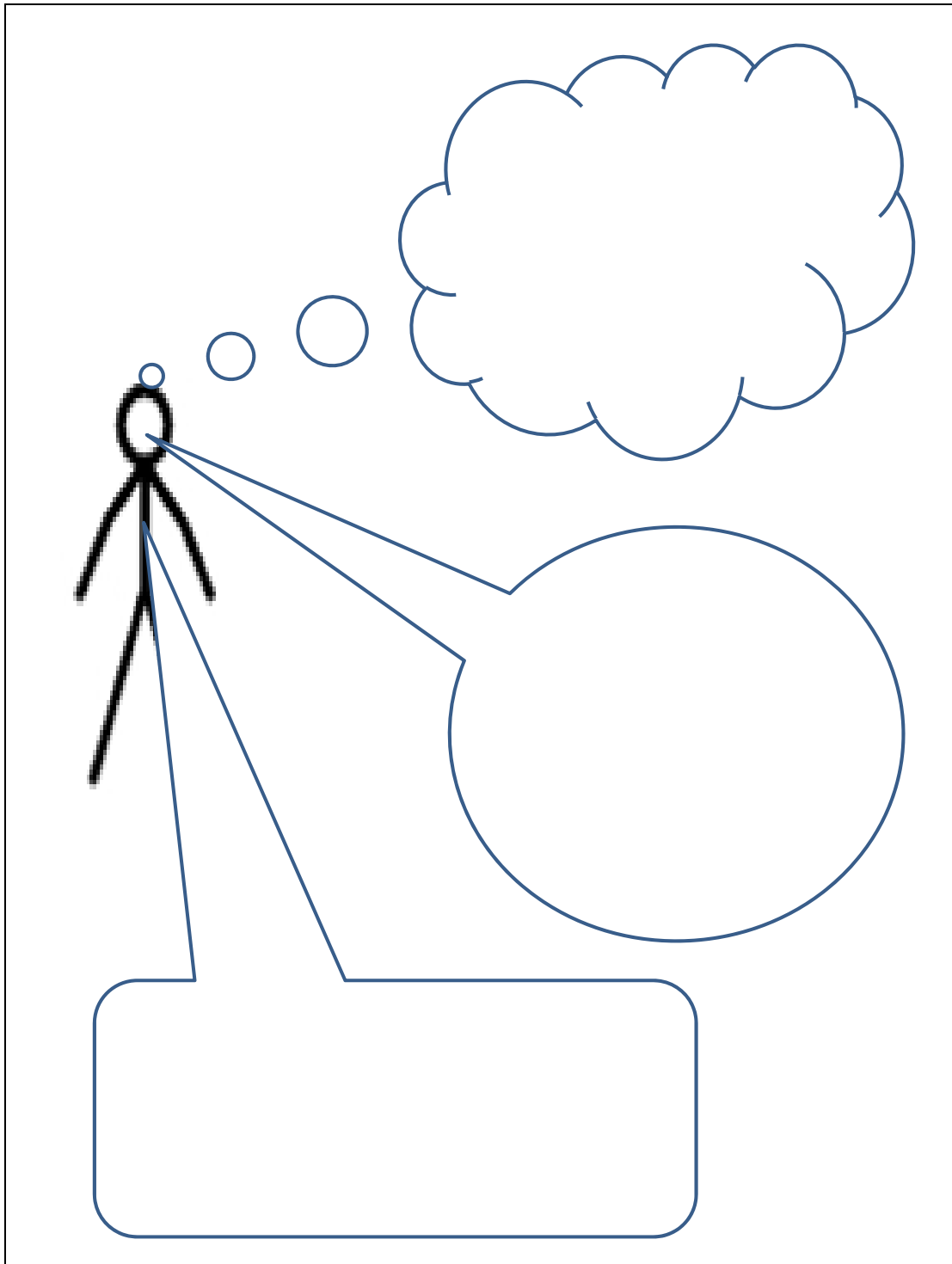
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Helpful | <input type="checkbox"/> Hard working |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Successful | <input type="checkbox"/> Innovative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding | <input type="checkbox"/> Approachable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accountable | <input type="checkbox"/> Decisive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trustworthy | <input type="checkbox"/> Leading edge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Slow |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Well managed | <input type="checkbox"/> Practical |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Keeps its promises | <input type="checkbox"/> Smart |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rule-bound | <input type="checkbox"/> Reliable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traditional | <input type="checkbox"/> Impersonal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Helpful | <input type="checkbox"/> Dynamic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caring | <input type="checkbox"/> Modern |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Efficient | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pro-active | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unfriendly | <input type="checkbox"/> Good Employer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good communicator | <input type="checkbox"/> Respected |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In touch | <input type="checkbox"/> Responsible |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flexible | <input type="checkbox"/> Hi-tech |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fair | <input type="checkbox"/> Culturally sensitive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expert | <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledgeable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local | <input type="checkbox"/> Remote |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stylish | <input type="checkbox"/> Business-like |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sensible | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor communicator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dependable | <input type="checkbox"/> Outgoing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Powerful | <input type="checkbox"/> Stable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corrupt | <input type="checkbox"/> Empathy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unhelpful | <input type="checkbox"/> Solid |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Progressive | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficult |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Convenient | <input type="checkbox"/> Energetic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Profit driven | <input type="checkbox"/> Honest |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fun | |

VALUE FOR MONEY

On a 0-10 scale where 0 means “very poor” and 10 means “very good” how would you rate the value for money each provides. Please tick the top 2 for the value for money they provide.

Service	0-10 rating	Tick Top 2
Power Companies		
The Warehouse		
Police		
A Passport		
Hospitals		
Car registration		
Banks		
Citizens Advice Bureau		
Council Services		
Schools		
Public Libraries		

PUBLIC SERVANT



15. Appendix 3: Discussion guide - Asian

Standard introduction

- Why focus groups?
- No right/wrong answers
- Confidentiality
- Right to pass on any questions
- Advise recording
- Logistics – duration, mobile calls, rest room, health and safety issues, emergency exits etc
- Take any questions

Warm up - respondents introduce themselves

- Occupation (or otherwise), household circumstances

General topic introduction

Over the next two hours we'll be talking about the different kinds of public services that the government provides. I'll be asking you to think about your actual experiences with these public services, and anything else that you may have heard about public services from your friends, family or from the media.

Let's start by putting up on the whiteboard what it is you think about when you hear this term 'public services.' If it helps, think of some of the Public Services you have used in say the last few weeks?

[Facilitators ensure you have the list of public services captured in this first exercise handy to refer to during the rest of the group discussions. Below is a list of public services to prompt on if they do not emerge and where possible we want respondents to focus on the everyday transactions:

- Immigration about a visa or permit to work in New Zealand
- Inland Revenue about tax, Working for Families, or any other type of financial payments
- Work and Income about benefits, or getting a job
- Customs about importing goods into New Zealand, entering New Zealand, or customs duties
- ACC about compensation or injuries
- The Courts regarding court records or legal procedures
- The Police of Fire Service for help
- Land Transport New Zealand about a driver's licence, registering a vehicle, or changing ownership of a vehicle
- The department of Conservation about conservation activities, walking tramping or camping in national parks
- About a New Zealand passport or New Zealand citizenship

- About State housing, or renting rights and duties of landlords and tenants
- Stayed in a public hospital or received public hospital services as an outpatient
- Visited a public library
- Dealt with your local council]

Archetype – The Public Service

We are going to do a little exercise now where you can use your imagination. I want you to take a little time to think about the ‘public service’ and what that means to you. Now, imagine what sort of animal the ‘public service’ might be. Write down your animal and we’ll go round and discuss why you chose the animal you did. **[discuss]**

OR

Here’s a list of words that can be used to describe an organisation. What I’d like you to do is to think about the ‘public service’ and tick the three words or phrases on this list that you would say apply most to the Public Service. When you’ve done that can you now put a cross next to the three words or phrases that least apply to the Public Service. **[discuss choices]**

Service Experience Meeting Expectations (Satisfaction)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out what people mean when they say a service experience met their expectations. Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

OK. We’ve stopped talking about the Public Service in general for now.

This next part of the discussion is going to look at public services. So, we’re really looking at your actual experiences of using public services. If it helps, think of the times you have had experience with public services like on this list here **[refer to list on whiteboard]**. And we’re interested in anything you have to say.

One thing people say about public services that increases their satisfaction is that the service experience met their expectations. First of all - what sorts of things do you think count as the ‘service experience’? **[establish scope of service experience after suggestions are offered – write this on whiteboard for all to see and modify if they wish]** Are you describing all contact of any type you have with public services or is it narrower than that? If it’s narrower than that, then what’s in and what’s out?

What we really want to know is what it means to you when you say the service that you experienced met your expectations. To do that, can you first of all look at the services you have mentioned and write down what you think the service should be like – what sort of things need to happen?

Now, using a scale of 0-10, where 0 means ‘very low’ and 10 means ‘very high’ how would you rate what you actually expect public services to be like? **[ask for ratings]** What’s your reasoning behind your rating? Would you apply the same rating for all public services? If not, what is different about the services you rate higher or lower than others?

Now, working in pairs, looking at those ratings you've given, what needs to be done to improve that rating? What are the sorts of things that need to happen so that your expectations have been met? And rate those things from the most important to the least important. **[report back and discuss]** Why is it that some of these expectations are more important than others? What sort of things could occur that meant your expectations were not met?

Does it make any difference to your expectations if you are paying for the service? If so, what sort of difference?

Do you think your expectations can be met if the things that you say should happen don't happen? If so, how could that come about?

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important to say about a service meeting your expectations?

You Have Confidence that Public Servants Do a Good Job (Trust)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out what gives people confidence that public servants do a good job Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

We want to look now at how good a job you think public servants do. First of all, we want to understand what you think 'doing a good job' means to you. Here's a stick character **[distribute stick cartoon of Public Servant]** and what we'd like you to do is to imagine this is a public servant that you are dealing with. If they are doing a 'good job' in your view, can you fill in what you think they might be saying, then what they are thinking and then what they are feeling. **[report back and discuss]**

Does it matter that they may be saying one thing and thinking or feeling another? Why? Why not? What's really important about doing a good job?

Now, in pairs, develop a list of things you would expect a public servant to do if they were doing a good job. Which of these are more important than others? Why is that?

Thinking of public servants in general – do you have confidence that they do a good job? **explore reasons]**

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about having confidence that public servants do a good job?

Staff Were Competent (Satisfaction)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out what staff need to do for people to feel that they are competent Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

[Write down 'Competent' on Board] If I was to describe someone as 'competent' in their job, what would that mean to you? **[capture on board]**

If someone was described as ‘competent’, would you think highly of them or would it be more that they do an OK job, but nothing outstanding or would it mean something different again? What is it that someone does or say that makes them competent in your eyes? **[elicit]**

Looking at those things you have mentioned can you please rate them on a 0-10 scale where 0 means not that important and 10 means very important – just jot some numbers down on a piece of paper. **[Go round and write numbers beside each factor, then discuss reasons for relative importance of each]** How satisfied would you be if public service staff had those competence attributes?

Would it make any difference whether you were paying for a service? What if it was something you were required to do by law, for example, you have to register your car?

How would your views about staff and their competency differ in the following situations? What needs to happen for you to feel that you have been dealt with by competent staff in each of these situations:

- Over the phone contact
- Over the counter contact
- Over the Internet contact
- Contact by mail

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about staff being competent?

Public Service Provides Services that Meet Your Needs (Trust)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out how we can increase trust in the Public Service by identifying what people mean when they say the Public Service meets their needs Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

Everyone has different needs and all of us have contact with the Public Service for different reasons and at different times of our lives for a wide range of services. In this discussion, we want you to think about the services the Public Service provides.

Spend a couple of minutes thinking about the kinds of services the Public Service provides and then we’ll write them on the whiteboard – you can do this in pairs talking among yourselves. **[whiteboard writing services in the left hand column titled ‘services’ and discuss]** What is the need or needs you identify for each of these services? **[identify for each service, the need(s) it fulfils and write in the right-hand column. NB do not apply any filters to what respondents say – treat what may seem like a ‘want’ as a need if they identify it as so]**

Given that it may not be possible for the Public Service to meet all your needs, what are the main things they have to do to ensure that they meet at least your most important needs?

How important are these needs to you? In what ways are they important/unimportant or irrelevant? If the Public Service did not provide these needs, what would happen? Do you have any misgivings that they may not meet your needs? How might that come about do you think?

When you talk about ‘your’ needs – what does that mean to you? Does it include meeting the needs of others in any way? **[If so, explore extent of this]**

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about the Public Service providing services that meet your needs?

Staff Kept Their Promises - That Is, They Did What They Said They Would Do/The Public Service Keeps Its Promises (Satisfaction and Trust)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out the things that people mean when they say staff kept their promises. Place the satisfaction driver on the board for all respondents to see]

Staff

What is a 'promise'?

What does it mean to 'keep a promise'? Can you give me examples? **[only if respondents mention politicians be sure to distinguish public servants and public service from the 'promises' politicians may make]**

What about when you're dealing with staff from public services and again we can think of the different types of situations like:

- Over the phone contact
- Over the counter contact
- Over the Internet contact
- Contact by mail

What would it mean for staff to keep their promises when you dealt with them? **[elicit examples]** What would it mean to break a promise? If a promise were broken – how could they make up for that?

Can you think of examples where you have felt they have not kept their promises? And where they have kept their promises?

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about staff keeping their promises?

Public Service

[Note to facilitators – We now want to find out what 'the Public Service keeps its promises' means. Place the trust driver on the board for all respondents to see]

Let's forget about individual staff contacts and think of the Public Service in general. Do you think of the Public Service as something that keeps promises? **[explore why/why not?]**

Well, let's assume the Public Service said it keeps its promises? What would that mean to you? What sorts of things would you expect it to keep its promises about. Again can you think of examples of the Public Service keeping its promises? Why are these promises you expect the Public Service to keep?

What if it didn't keep its promises – what sort of things would be happening?

Is there a difference between having promises kept and public servants keeping promises [**discuss**]

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about the Public Service keeping its promises?

You Were Treated Fairly (Satisfaction)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find what it means when people say they were treated fairly Place the driver ‘You Were Treated Fairly’ on the board for all respondents to see]

What does being treated ‘fairly’ mean to you?

I want you to think of your own individual experiences with public servants. Thinking about those experiences, did you feel you were treated fairly? Could you write down any experiences with public servants that you remember where you felt you were treated fairly and any where you were treated unfairly [**report back individually**] What was it about those experiences that made you feel you were treated fairly/unfairly? Or was there nothing special about the experience? If so, did you assume you had been treated fairly? If so, what reasons would there be for assuming that?

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about the Public Service keeping its promises?

It’s an Example of Good Value for Tax Dollars Spent (Satisfaction)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out what people mean when they say it’s an example of good value for tax payers’ dollars spent Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

Looking at the first list we put up on the board [**refer list on whiteboard from first exercise**] what examples can you think of that show good value for tax dollars spent? Why are they examples of good value for tax dollars spent?

Here’s a list of services that many people get or are aware of. Can you rate on a 0-10 scale where 0 means “very poor” and 10 means “very good” how you would rate the value for money each service provides.**[discuss reasons for ratings]** What is it about each of these that suggests to you whether or not it is giving good value? [**list value for money criteria on whiteboard**]

Is there a difference in the way you rate value for money depending on whether you’re looking at the private sector or the Public Service. Why do you have these different expectations?

Does it make any difference if what you are paying for is something you have to do as opposed to something you have a choice over doing? If so, in what ways do you look at them differently. Why do you have these different expectations?

Earlier, I asked what you understood by the Public Service and you named **[reiterate list]** Are there any other things you've thought of that you'd like to add to that list? Do you think differently about how value for money is given depending on whether it's a Ministry giving advice, an organisation administering rules or people doing things like teaching or nursing or rubbish collecting, or getting a driver's licence or a passport? If so, in what ways does it differ? **[discuss and capture criteria for value for money]**

Even though you may think differently about parts of the Public Service and the range of things that could cover, can you spend a few minutes writing down the sorts of things that would be examples of good value for tax dollars spent in the Public Service? You may have mentioned some already, but I want to see that we're not missing any. **[discuss examples and reasons]**

Would it make any difference whether you were paying for a service? What if it was something you were required to do by law, for example, you have to register your car?

If these sorts of things were happening – it may not always be known to the wider public. Do you think it's important for the Public Service to show it is providing value for money? If so, - why is that and how should they best go about showing value for money?

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about an example of good value for tax payers' dollars spent?

Trust General

[NB facilitators, if it appears that actions of politicians are influencing views tease out the extent to which they think of trust in relation to what politicians do as opposed to what public servants do]

[Write TRUST up on the Board] Can you tell me what that word means to you – trust? If it helps to gather your thoughts write something down. It might be an experience you've had or that you have heard about that led to you feel trust or distrust. **[capture key components of trust.]**

Is *trust* something you would apply to the Public Service? In what ways would you? What do you trust the Public Service to do or to be? Think of personal examples that illustrate what you mean as far as possible.

Can you work in pairs now and think of ways that would work for you that would build more trust in the Public Service than you already have **[capture and discuss]**

Are you aware that there is a set of standards that public servants are required to follow? **[explore awareness]. [Distribute Prompt 'Standards of Integrity & Conduct']** Do you think that if everyone knew about that set of standards that this would increase their trust in the Public Service? If so, why? And what would be a good way of increasing the public's awareness of the code? If not, why not?

Do you think your image of the Public Service reflects these standards? **[explore]**

When you hear of breaches of standards of conduct and integrity – what do you think? Do you think it means the system is working well or not? **[elicit unprompted views first]** And how do these breaches influence your trust in the Public Service.

[If nothing comes through from the previous question, then probe] - One way of looking at reports of breaches is that there is a good system in place to catch the occasional breaches and that the system is working well. The other way of looking at things is to say that having caught a few breaches it may mean that there are a lot more breaches occurring that do not get caught. Which of those two is closest to your view? **[explore reasons]**

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Genuine | <input type="checkbox"/> Passionate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quick | <input type="checkbox"/> Competent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Helpful | <input type="checkbox"/> Hard working |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Successful | <input type="checkbox"/> Innovative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding | <input type="checkbox"/> Approachable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accountable | <input type="checkbox"/> Decisive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trustworthy | <input type="checkbox"/> Leading edge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Slow |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Well managed | <input type="checkbox"/> Practical |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Keeps its promises | <input type="checkbox"/> Smart |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rule-bound | <input type="checkbox"/> Reliable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traditional | <input type="checkbox"/> Impersonal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Helpful | <input type="checkbox"/> Dynamic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caring | <input type="checkbox"/> Modern |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Efficient | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pro-active | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unfriendly | <input type="checkbox"/> Good Employer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good communicator | <input type="checkbox"/> Respected |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In touch | <input type="checkbox"/> Responsible |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flexible | <input type="checkbox"/> Hi-tech |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fair | <input type="checkbox"/> Culturally sensitive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expert | <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledgeable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local | <input type="checkbox"/> Remote |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stylish | <input type="checkbox"/> Business-like |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sensible | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor communicator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dependable | <input type="checkbox"/> Outgoing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Unhelpful | <input type="checkbox"/> Solid |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Progressive | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficult |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Convenient | <input type="checkbox"/> Energetic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Profit driven | <input type="checkbox"/> Honest |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fun | |

VALUE FOR MONEY

On a 0-10 scale where 0 means “very poor” and 10 means “very good” how would you rate the value for money each provides. Please tick the top 2 for the value for money they provide.

Service	0-10 rating	Tick Top 2
Power Companies		
The Warehouse		
Police		
A Passport		
Hospitals		
Car registration		
Banks		
Citizens Advice Bureau		
Council Services		
Schools		
Public Libraries		

16. Appendix 4: Discussion guide - Pacific People

Standard introduction

- Why focus groups?
- No right/wrong answers
- Confidentiality
- Right to pass on any questions
- Advise recording
- Logistics – duration, mobile calls, rest room, health and safety issues, emergency exits etc
- Take any questions

Warm up - respondents introduce themselves

- Occupation (or otherwise), household circumstances

General topic introduction

Over the next two hours we'll be talking about the different kinds of public services that the government provides. I'll be asking you to think about your actual experiences with these public services, and anything else that you may have heard about public services from your friends, family or from the media.

Let's start by putting up on the whiteboard what it is you think about when you hear this term 'public services.' If it helps, think of some of the public services you have used in say the last few weeks?

[Facilitators ensure you have the list of public services captured in this first exercise handy to refer to during the rest of the group discussions. Below is a list of public services to prompt on if they do not emerge and where possible we want respondents to focus on the everyday transactions:

- Immigration about a visa or permit to work in New Zealand
- Inland Revenue about tax, Working for Families, or any other type of financial payments
- Work and Income about benefits, or getting a job
- Customs about importing goods into New Zealand, entering New Zealand, or customs duties
- ACC about compensation or injuries
- The Courts regarding court records or legal procedures
- The Police or Fire Service for help
- Land Transport New Zealand about a driver's licence, registering a vehicle, or changing ownership of a vehicle
- The department of Conservation about conservation activities, walking tramping or camping in national parks

- About a New Zealand passport or New Zealand citizenship
- About State housing, or renting rights and duties of landlords and tenants
- Stayed in a public hospital or received public hospital services as an outpatient
- Visited a public library
- Dealt with your local council]

Archetype – The Public Service

We are going to do a little exercise now where you can use your imagination. I want you to take a little time to think about the ‘public service’ and what that means to you. Now, imagine what sort of animal the ‘public service’ might be. Write down your animal and we’ll go round and discuss why you chose the animal you did. **[discuss]**

OR

Here’s a list of words that can be used to describe an organisation. What I’d like you to do is to think about the ‘public service’ and tick the three words or phrases on this list that you would say apply most to the Public Service. When you’ve done that can you now put a cross next to the three words or phrases that least apply to the Public Service. **[discuss choices]**

Staff were competent (Satisfaction)

For the rest of the evening we are going to look at public services. We’re going to be looking at two or three things that affect how satisfied people are with public services. If it helps, think of the times you have had experience with public services to help you identify what it was that made you satisfied with the service.

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out what staff need to do for people to feel that they are competent Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

[Write down ‘Competent’ on Board] If I was to describe someone as ‘competent’ in their job, what would that mean to you? **[capture on board]**

If someone was described as ‘competent’, would you think highly of them or would it be more that they do an OK job, but nothing outstanding or would it mean something different again? What is it that someone does or say that makes them competent in your eyes? **[elicit]**

Looking at those things you have mentioned can you please rate them on a 0-10 scale where 0 means not that important and 10 means very important – just jot some numbers down on a piece of paper. **[Go round and write numbers beside each factor, then discuss reasons for relative importance of each]** How satisfied would you be if public service staff had those competence attributes?

Would it make any difference whether you were paying for a service? What if it was something you were required to do by law, for example, you have to register your car?

How would your views about staff and their competency differ in the following situations? What needs to happen for you to feel that you have been dealt with by competent staff in each of these situations:

- Over the phone contact
- Over the counter contact
- Over the Internet contact
- Contact by mail

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about staff being competent?

Staff kept their promises - That is, they did what they said they would do (Satisfaction)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out the things that people mean when they say staff kept their promises, particularly with respect to what staff say and what they do Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

What is a 'promise'?

What does it mean to 'keep a promise'? Can you give me examples? **[be sure to distinguish public servants and public service from the 'promises' politicians may make]**

What would it mean for staff to keep their promises when you dealt with them? **[elicit examples]** What would it mean to break a promise? If a promise were broken – how could they make up for that?

Can you think of examples where you have felt they have not kept their promises? And where they have kept their promises?

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about staff keeping their promises?

They [Public Servants] admitted responsibility when they made mistakes (Satisfaction)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out what public servants need to do in order for Pacific People to feel that public servants do admit responsibility when they make mistakes. Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

Some people say it is especially important to them that public servants admit responsibility when they make mistakes. Why do you think that might be especially important to them? **[explore reasons and what needs to be done to ensure that happens]** What does it mean to you to admit responsibility for mistakes? Do you think admitting responsibility is something that's very important to Pacific People? If so, why do you think that is so?

I want each of you to imagine that you are dealing with a public servant about something that is important to you. It can be anything you like. You find out that the public servant makes a mistake that affects you or someone close to you. You may be affected in a big way or a small way – it doesn't matter.

Thinking about that situation what would you expect the public servant to do? **[establish nature of the mistake and tease out each step of the interaction, noting issues around denial/acceptance of responsibility, apology and putting right the damage done]**

Sometimes it's not always clear that a mistake has been made, but you may still think that one has been made. Do you think that if you thought a mistake had been made you would be confident enough to challenge the public servants concerned? What about other Pacific People you know – would they be confident? **[if not confident, explore reasons and identify how help could be provided and prompt on use of intermediaries]** What if the public servants concerned did not acknowledge a mistake had been made?

Sometimes a mistake can be made by a public servant and you don't know about it. Would you expect to be told about such a mistake if one occurred?

If a mistake has been made by a public servant – how should they go about putting things right? What's the range of things involved? Who has to apologise – the public servant themselves, their boss? What form should the apology take? Verbal? Written? Compensation? **[extract detail on how this should be done]**

Do you think that public servants generally do admit responsibility when they make mistakes? **[explore reasons]**. What more could be done to acknowledge responsibility in an appropriate way that would satisfy you?

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about public servants admitting responsibility when they make mistakes.

You were aware of what you needed to do every step of the process (Satisfaction)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out what 'being aware of what you needed to do every step of the process' means. Be aware that some people will avoid admitting they don't know what to do, so we need to dig to find out how to satisfy those who say they are aware and perhaps are unaware what to do Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

Most of you have had to deal with public services on a range of things. Can you pick one example each? Please talk us through what happened **[at the beginning of the story and as the story unfolds ask at appropriate intervals 'Were you aware what you needed to do? How did you know what to do? OR if you didn't know what to do – what happened? Did you have to get help from another person? [explore intermediary's role]**

Thinking back on that experience or other ones you have had with public services - how could things have been made better for you, so you knew what to do every step of the process what you needed to do? Have you or a close family member ever had to deal with more than one public service agency about a matter? Thinking of that experience, how was it dealing with several agencies? Is it more difficult or easier dealing with several agencies? What sort of things could be done to improve things so you were aware of what you needed to do? **[if respondents have difficulty give an example like dealing with Work and Income, Housing New Zealand and Inland revenue over Working for Families tax credits]**

Sometimes we find it hard to admit we don't understand something, especially to people we don't know. It may have happened to you or a close family member when you have dealt with public services. Thinking about those times, what tends to happen? What are the useful ways you find to deal with those situations? How could the public servants make it easier to understand what to do at those times?

Have there been times when you have decided not to deal with the Public Service about something because you felt you were not aware of what you needed to do? **[elicit examples and discuss what could have helped]**

Some people also say it is especially important to them that they are made aware of what they need to do every step of the process when dealing with public services. Why do you think they might say that? **[explore reasons and what needs to be done to ensure that happens]**

Do you know what to do when you deal with the Public Service in each of these situations:

- When you have to pay for a service like registering a car or transferring the ownership of a car over
- When you request something you may be entitled to like Working for Families tax credits or benefits
- When you need to seek assistance like when you need medical attention or Police help or to know what your rights are if you are renting property.

How could things be improved in each of these sorts of areas?

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about being aware of what you needed to do every step of the process?

It's an example of good value for tax dollars spent (Satisfaction)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out what people mean when they say it's an example of good value for tax payers' dollars has been spent. Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

Looking at the first list we put up on the board **[refer list on whiteboard from first exercise]** what examples can you think of that show good value for tax dollars spent? Why are they examples of good value for tax dollars spent?

Here's a list of services that many people get or are aware of. Can you rate on a 0-10 scale where 0 means "very poor" and 10 means "very good" how you would rate the value for money each service provides. **[discuss reasons for ratings]** What is it about each of these that suggests to you whether or not it is giving good value? **[list value for money criteria on whiteboard]**

Is there a difference in the way you rate value for money depending on whether you're looking at the private sector or the Public Service. Why do you have these different expectations?

Does it make any difference if what you are paying for is something you have to do as opposed to something you have a choice over doing? If so, in what ways do you look at them differently. Why do you have these different expectations?

Earlier, I asked what you understood by the Public Service and you named **[reiterate list]** Are there any other things you've thought of that you'd like to add to that list? Do you think differently about how value for money is given depending on whether it's a Ministry giving advice, an organisation administering rules or people doing things like teaching or nursing or rubbish collecting, or getting a driver's licence or a passport? What about if you are paying for the service out of your own pocket compared let's say with services that are provided direct from taxes? If so, in what ways does it differ? **[discuss and capture criteria for value for money]**

Even though you may think differently about parts of the Public Service and the range of things that could cover, can you spend a few minutes writing down the sorts of things that would be examples of good value for tax dollars spent in the Public Service? You may have mentioned some already, but I want to see that we're not missing any. **[discuss examples and reasons]**

Would it make any difference whether you were paying for a service? What if it was something you were required to do by law, for example, you have to register your car?

If these sorts of things were happening – it may not always be known to the wider public. Do you think it's important for the Public Service to show it is providing value for money? If so, - why is that and how should they best go about showing value for money?

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about an example of good value for tax payers' dollars spent?

Trust general

[NB facilitators, if it appears that actions of politicians are influencing views tease out the extent to which they think of trust in relation to what politicians do as opposed to what public servants do]

[Write TRUST up on the Board] Can you tell me what that word means to you – trust? If it helps to gather your thoughts write something down. It might be an experience you've had or that you have heard about that led to you feel trust or distrust. **[capture key components of trust.]**

Is *trust* something you would apply to the Public Service? In what ways would you? What do you trust the Public Service to do or to be? Think of personal examples that illustrate what you mean as far as possible.

Can you work in pairs now and think of ways that would work for you that would build more trust in the Public Service than you already have **[capture and discuss]**

Are you aware that there is a set of standards that public servants are required to follow? [**explore awareness**]. [**Distribute Prompt 'Standards of Integrity & Conduct'**] Do you think that if everyone knew about that set of standards that this would increase their trust in the Public Service? If so, why? And what would be a good way of increasing the public's awareness of the code? If not, why not?

Do you think your image of the Public Service reflects these standards? [**explore**]

When you hear of breaches of standards of conduct and integrity – what do you think? Do you think it means the system is working well or not? [**elicit unprompted views first**] And how do these breaches influence your trust in the Public Service.

[**If nothing comes through from the previous question, then probe**] - One way of looking at reports of breaches is that there is a good system in place to catch the occasional breaches and that the system is working well. The other way of looking at things is to say that having caught a few breaches it may mean that there are a lot more breaches occurring that do not get caught. Which of those two is closest to your view? [**explore reasons**]

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Genuine | <input type="checkbox"/> | Passionate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> | Friendly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Quick | <input type="checkbox"/> | Competent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Helpful | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hard working |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Successful | <input type="checkbox"/> | Innovative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Understanding | <input type="checkbox"/> | Approachable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Accountable | <input type="checkbox"/> | Decisive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Trustworthy | <input type="checkbox"/> | Leading edge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> | Slow |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Well managed | <input type="checkbox"/> | Practical |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Keeps its promises | <input type="checkbox"/> | Smart |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Rule-bound | <input type="checkbox"/> | Reliable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Traditional | <input type="checkbox"/> | Impersonal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Helpful | <input type="checkbox"/> | Dynamic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Caring | <input type="checkbox"/> | Modern |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Efficient | <input type="checkbox"/> | Conservative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Pro-active | <input type="checkbox"/> | Professional |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Unfriendly | <input type="checkbox"/> | Good Employer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Good communicator | <input type="checkbox"/> | Respected |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | In touch | <input type="checkbox"/> | Responsible |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Flexible | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hi-tech |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Fair | <input type="checkbox"/> | Culturally sensitive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Expert | <input type="checkbox"/> | Knowledgeable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Local | <input type="checkbox"/> | Remote |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Stylish | <input type="checkbox"/> | Business-like |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Sensible | <input type="checkbox"/> | Poor communicator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Dependable | <input type="checkbox"/> | Outgoing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Intelligent | <input type="checkbox"/> | Personal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Powerful | <input type="checkbox"/> | Stable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Corrupt | <input type="checkbox"/> | Empathy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Unhelpful | <input type="checkbox"/> | Solid |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Progressive | <input type="checkbox"/> | Difficult |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Convenient | <input type="checkbox"/> | Energetic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Profit driven | <input type="checkbox"/> | Honest |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Fun | | |

VALUE FOR MONEY

On a 0-10 scale where 0 means “very poor” and 10 means “very good” how would you rate the value for money each provides. Please tick the top 2 for the value for money they provide.

Service	0-10 rating	Tick Top 2
Power Companies		
The Warehouse		
Police		
A Passport		
Hospitals		
Car registration		
Banks		
Citizens Advice Bureau		
Council Services		
Schools		
Public Libraries		

17. Appendix 5: Discussion guide - Young People

Standard introduction

- Why focus groups?
- No right/wrong answers
- Confidentiality
- Right to pass on any questions
- Advise recording
- Logistics – duration, mobile calls, rest room, health and safety issues, emergency exits etc
- Take any questions

Warm up - respondents introduce themselves

- Occupation (or otherwise e.g. school), household circumstances

General topic introduction

Over the next two hours we'll be talking about the different kinds of public services that the government provides. I'll be asking you to think about your actual experiences with these public services, and anything else that you may have heard about public services from your friends, family or from the media.

Let's start by putting up on the whiteboard what it is you think about when you hear this term 'public services.' If it helps, think of some of the public services you have used in say the last few weeks?

[Facilitators ensure you have the list of public services captured in this first exercise handy to refer to during the rest of the group discussions. Below is a list of public services to prompt on if they do not emerge and where possible we want respondents to focus on the everyday transactions:

- Immigration about a visa or permit to work in New Zealand
- Inland Revenue about tax, Working for Families, or any other type of financial payments
- Work and Income about benefits, or getting a job
- Customs about importing goods into New Zealand, entering New Zealand, or customs duties
- ACC about compensation or injuries
- The Courts regarding court records or legal procedures
- The Police or Fire Service for help
- Land Transport New Zealand about a driver's licence, registering a vehicle, or changing ownership of a vehicle
- The department of Conservation about conservation activities, walking tramping or camping in national parks

- About a New Zealand passport or New Zealand citizenship
- About State housing, or renting rights and duties of landlords and tenants
- Stayed in a public hospital or received public hospital services as an outpatient
- Visited a public library
- Dealt with your local council]

Archetype – The Public Service

We are going to do a little exercise now where you can use your imagination. I want you to take a little time to think about the ‘public service’ and what that means to you. Now, imagine what sort of animal the ‘public service’ might be. Write down your animal and we’ll go round and discuss why you chose the animal you did. **[discuss]**

OR

Here’s a list of words that can be used to describe an organisation. What I’d like you to do is to think about the ‘public service’ and tick the three words or phrases on this list that you would say apply most to the Public Service. When you’ve done that can you now put a cross next to the three words or phrases that least apply to the Public Service. **[discuss choices]**

Service experience meeting expectations (Satisfaction)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out what people mean when they say a service experience met their expectations. Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

OK. We’ve stopped talking about the Public Service in general for now.

This next part of the discussion is going to look at public services. So, we’re really looking at your actual experiences of using public services. If it helps, think of the times you have had experience with public services like on this list here **[refer to list on whiteboard]**. And we’re interested in anything you have to say.

One thing people say about public services that increases their satisfaction is that the service experience met their expectations. First of all - what sorts of things do you think count as the ‘service experience’? **[establish scope of service experience after suggestions are offered – write this on whiteboard for all to see and modify if they wish]** Are you describing all contact of any type you have with public services or is it narrower than that? If it’s narrower than that, then what’s in and what’s out?

What we really want to know is what it means to you when you say the service that you experienced met your expectations. To do that, can you first of all look at the services you have mentioned and write down what you think the service should be like – what sort of things need to happen?

Now, using a scale of 0-10, where 0 means ‘very low’ and 10 means ‘very high’ how would you rate what you actually expect public services to be like? **[ask for ratings]** What’s your reasoning behind your rating? Would you apply the same rating for all public services? If not, what is different about the services you rate higher or lower than others?

Now, working in pairs, looking at those ratings you've given, what needs to be done to improve that rating? What are the sorts of things that need to happen so that your expectations have been met? And rate those things from the most important to the least important. **[report back and discuss]** Why is it that some of these expectations are more important than others? What sort of things could occur that meant your expectations were not met?

Does it make any difference to your expectations if you are paying for the service? If so, what sort of difference?

Are there any things that must happen to ensure your expectations have been met in each of the following situations?

- Over the phone contact service
- Over the counter contact service
- Over the Internet contact service
- Contact by mail service

Do you think your expectations can be met if the things that you say should happen don't happen? If so, how could that come about?

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important to say about a service meeting your expectations?

Staff were competent (Satisfaction)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out what staff need to do for people to feel that they are competent Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

[Write down 'Competent' on Board] If I was to describe someone as 'competent' in their job, what would that mean to you? **[capture on board]**

If someone was described as 'competent', would you think highly of them or would it be more that they do an OK job, but nothing outstanding or would it mean something different again? What is it that someone does or say that makes them competent in your eyes? **[elicit]**

Looking at those things you have mentioned can you please rate them on a 0-10 scale where 0 means not that important and 10 means very important – just jot some numbers down on a piece of paper. **[Go round and write numbers beside each factor, then discuss reasons for relative importance of each]** How satisfied would you be if public service staff had those competence attributes?

Would it make any difference whether you were paying for a service? What if it was something you were required to do by law, for example, you have to register your car?

How would your views about staff and their competency differ in the following situations? What needs to happen for you to feel that you have been dealt with by competent staff in each of these situations:

- Over the phone contact
- Over the counter contact
- Over the Internet contact
- Contact by mail

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about staff being competent?

Staff kept their promises - That is, they did what they said they would do (Satisfaction)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out the things that people mean when they say staff kept their promises, particularly with respect to what staff say and what they do Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

What is a 'promise'?

What does it mean to 'keep a promise'? Can you give me examples? **[be sure to distinguish public servants and public service from the 'promises' politicians may make]**

What would it mean for staff to keep their promises when you dealt with them? **[elicit examples]** What would it mean to break a promise? If a promise were broken – how could they make up for that?

Can you think of examples where you have felt they have not kept their promises? And where they have kept their promises?

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about staff keeping their promises?

You were treated fairly (Satisfaction)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find what it means when people say they were treated fairly Place the driver 'You Were Treated Fairly' on the board for all respondents to see]

What does being treated 'fairly' mean to you?

I want you to think of your own individual experiences with public servants. Thinking about those experiences, did you feel you were treated fairly? Could you write down any experiences with public servants that you remember where you felt you were treated fairly and any where you were treated unfairly **[report back individually]** What was it about those experiences that made you feel you were treated fairly/unfairly? Or was there nothing special about the experience? If so, did you assume you had been treated fairly? If so, what reasons would there be for assuming that?

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about being treated fairly?

It's an example of good value for tax dollars spent (**Satisfaction**)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out what people mean when they say it's an example of good value for tax payers' dollars has been spent. Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

Looking at the first list we put up on the board [**refer list on whiteboard from first exercise**] what examples can you think of that show good value for tax dollars spent? Why are they examples of good value for tax dollars spent?

Here's a list of services that many people get or are aware of. Can you rate on a 0-10 scale where 0 means "very poor" and 10 means "very good" how you would rate the value for money each service provides. [**discuss reasons for ratings**] What is it about each of these that suggests to you whether or not it is giving good value? [**list value for money criteria on whiteboard**]

Is there a difference in the way you rate value for money depending on whether you're looking at the private sector or the Public Service. Why do you have these different expectations?

Does it make any difference if what you are paying for is something you have to do as opposed to something you have a choice over doing? If so, in what ways do you look at them differently. Why do you have these different expectations?

Earlier, I asked what you understood by the Public Service and you named [**reiterate list**] Are there any other things you've thought of that you'd like to add to that list? Do you think differently about how value for money is given depending on whether it's a Ministry giving advice, an organisation administering rules or people doing things like teaching or nursing or rubbish collecting, or getting a driver's licence or a passport? What about if you are paying for the service out of your own pocket compared let's say with services that are provided direct from taxes? If so, in what ways does it differ? [**discuss and capture criteria for value for money**]

Even though you may think differently about parts of the Public Service and the range of things that could cover, can you spend a few minutes writing down the sorts of things that would be examples of good value for tax dollars spent in the Public Service? You may have mentioned some already, but I want to see that we're not missing any. [**discuss examples and reasons**]

Would it make any difference whether you were paying for a service? What if it was something you were required to do by law, for example, you have to register your car?

If these sorts of things were happening – it may not always be known to the wider public. Do you think it's important for the Public Service to show it is providing value for money? If so, - why is that and how should they best go about showing value for money?

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about an example of good value for tax payers' dollars spent?

Trust general

[NB facilitators, if it appears that actions of politicians are influencing views tease out the extent to which they think of trust in relation to what politicians do as opposed to what public servants do]

[Write TRUST up on the Board] Can you tell me what that word means to you – trust? If it helps to gather your thoughts write something down. It might be an experience you've had or that you have heard about that led to you feel trust or distrust. **[capture key components of trust.]**

Is *trust* something you would apply to the Public Service? In what ways would you? What do you trust the Public Service to do or to be? Think of personal examples that illustrate what you mean as far as possible.

Can you work in pairs now and think of ways that would work for you that would build more trust in the Public Service than you already have **[capture and discuss]**

Are you aware that there is a set of standards that public servants are required to follow? **[explore awareness]. [Distribute Prompt 'Standards of Integrity & Conduct']** Do you think that if everyone knew about that set of standards that this would increase their trust in the Public Service? If so, why? And what would be a good way of increasing the public's awareness of the code? If not, why not?

Do you think your image of the Public Service reflects these standards? **[explore]**

When you hear of breaches of standards of conduct and integrity – what do you think? Do you think it means the system is working well or not? **[elicit unprompted views first]** And how do these breaches influence your trust in the Public Service.

[If nothing comes through from the previous question, then probe] - One way of looking at reports of breaches is that there is a good system in place to catch the occasional breaches and that the system is working well. The other way of looking at things is to say that having caught a few breaches it may mean that there are a lot more breaches occurring that do not get caught. Which of those two is closest to your view? **[explore reasons]**

VALUE FOR MONEY

On a 0-10 scale where 0 means “very poor” and 10 means “very good” how would you rate the value for money each provides. Please tick the top 2 for the value for money they provide.

Service	0-10 rating	Tick Top 2
Power Companies		
The Warehouse		
A passport		
Hospitals		
Car registration		
Banks		
Citizens Advice Bureau		
Council Services		
Schools		
Public Libraries		

UNDERSTANDING THE DRIVERS DISCUSSION GUIDE – YOUNG PEOPLE AT SCHOOL

Standard introduction:

- Why focus groups?
- No right/wrong answers
- Confidentiality
- Right to pass on any questions
- Advise recording
- Logistics – duration, mobile calls, rest room, health and safety issues, emergency exits etc
- Take any questions

Warm up - respondents introduce themselves:

- School, Year at School, interests outside school and what you might do after you leave school

General topic introduction

Over the next hour and a half or so we'll be talking about the different kinds of public services that the government or your local council provides. I'll be asking you to think about your actual experiences with these public services, and anything else that you may have heard about public services from your friends, family or from the media.

Let's start by putting up on the whiteboard anything the government or the local council does that you've had contact with in the past 12 months.

[Facilitators ensure you have the list of public services captured in this first exercise handy to refer to during the rest of the group discussions. Below is a list of public services to prompt on if they do not emerge and where possible we want respondents to focus on the everyday transactions:

- Education/school
- Careers Service
- New Zealand Qualifications Authority - NCEA
- Council recreation centres, swimming pools, sports grounds
- Police
- ACC
- Fire Service
- Land Transport New Zealand about a driver's licence, registering a vehicle, or changing ownership of a vehicle, driver's test
- The Department of Conservation about conservation activities, walking tramping or camping in national parks

- Stayed in a public hospital or received public hospital services as an outpatient
- Visited a public library
- Dealt with your local council e.g. parking fine

Archetype – The Public Service

We are going to do a little exercise now where you can use your imagination. I want you to take a little time to think about the ‘public service’ and what that means to you. Now, imagine what sort of animal the ‘public service’ might be. Write down your animal and we’ll go round and discuss why you chose the animal you did. **[discuss]**

A lot of people in the Wellington area work for the government or local council. From your way of seeing things – what kind of people work in the Public Service? Are they interesting people? Do they do interesting jobs? **[explore perceptions and reasons]**

Service experience meeting expectations (Satisfaction)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out what people mean when they say a service experience met their expectations. Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

OK. We’ve stopped talking about the Public Service in general for now.

This next part of the discussion is going to look at public services. We’re really looking at your actual experiences of using public services. If it helps, look at the list you came up with at the beginning. **[refer to list on whiteboard]**. And we’re interested in anything you have to say.

What we really want to know is what it means to you when you say the service that you experienced met your expectations. To do that, can you first of all look at **teaching at schools** write down what you think teaching should be like to meet your expectation – what sort of things need to happen so you can say the teacher is meeting your expectations? **[elicit and discuss]** What are the key things good teachers do and key things poor teachers do? What are the main differences between them?

Now choose another public service and do the same for that so you can say that service meets your expectations. **[elicit and discuss]**

Now, using a scale of 0-10, where 0 means ‘very low’ and 10 means ‘very high’ how would you rate what you actually expect public services in general to be like? **[ask for ratings]** What’s your reasoning behind your rating? Would you apply the same rating for all public services? If not, what is different about the services you rate higher or lower than others?

Now, working in pairs, looking at those ratings you’ve given, what needs to be done to improve that rating? If you like, imagine you are the government in a few years time and you are deciding what services will be like for people. What are the sorts of things that need to happen so that your expectations have been met? And rate those things from the most important to the least important. **[report back and discuss]** Why is it that some of these expectations are more important than others? What sort of things could occur that meant your expectations were not met?

Are there any things that must happen to ensure your expectations have been met in each of the following situations?

- Over the phone contact service
- Over the counter contact service
- Over the Internet contact service
- Contact by mail service

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important to say about a service meeting your expectations?

Staff were competent (Satisfaction)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find out what staff need to do for people to feel that they are competent. Place the driver on the board for all respondents to see]

[Write down ‘Competent’ on Board] If I was to describe someone as ‘competent’ in their job, what would that mean to you? **[capture on board]**

If someone was described as ‘competent’, would you think highly of them or would it be more that they do an OK job, but nothing outstanding or would it mean something different again? What is it that someone does or says that makes them competent in your eyes? **[elicit on whiteboard]**

Looking at those things you have mentioned on the whiteboard can you please rate them on a 0-10 scale where 0 means not that important and 10 means very important – just jot some numbers down on a piece of paper. **[Go round and write numbers beside each factor, then discuss reasons for relative importance of each]** How satisfied would you be if public service staff had those competence attributes?

Would it make any difference whether you were paying for a service? What if it was something you were required to do by law, for example, you have to register your car?

How would your views about staff and their competency differ in the following situations? What needs to happen for you to feel that you have been dealt with by competent staff in each of these situations:

- Over the phone contact
- Over the counter contact
- Over the Internet contact
- Contact by mail

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about staff being competent?

You were treated fairly (**Satisfaction**)

[Note to facilitators – we are trying to find what it means when people say they were treated fairly Place the driver ‘You Were Treated Fairly’ on the board for all respondents to see]

What does being treated ‘fairly’ mean to you?

I want you to think of your own individual experiences with public servants and you can include teachers, but experiences out of school would be good to hear about to. Thinking about those experiences, did you feel you were treated fairly? Could you write down any experiences with public servants that you remember where you felt you were treated fairly and any where you were treated unfairly [**report back individually**]

What was it about those experiences that made you feel you were treated fairly/unfairly? Or was there nothing special about the experience? If so, did you assume you had been treated fairly? If so, what reasons would there be for assuming that?

Is there anything else you would like to say that you feel is important about being treated fairly?

DESCRIPTORS

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Genuine | <input type="checkbox"/> Passionate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quick | <input type="checkbox"/> Competent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Successful | <input type="checkbox"/> Innovative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding | <input type="checkbox"/> Approachable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accountable | <input type="checkbox"/> Decisive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trustworthy | <input type="checkbox"/> Leading edge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Slow |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Well managed | <input type="checkbox"/> Practical |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Keeps its promises | <input type="checkbox"/> Smart |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rule-bound | <input type="checkbox"/> Reliable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traditional | <input type="checkbox"/> Impersonal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Helpful | <input type="checkbox"/> Dynamic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caring | <input type="checkbox"/> Modern |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Efficient | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pro-active | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unfriendly | <input type="checkbox"/> Good Employer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good communicator | <input type="checkbox"/> Respected |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In touch | <input type="checkbox"/> Responsible |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flexible | <input type="checkbox"/> Hi-tech |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fair | <input type="checkbox"/> Culturally sensitive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expert | <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledgeable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local | <input type="checkbox"/> Remote |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stylish | <input type="checkbox"/> Business-like |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sensible | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor communicator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dependable | <input type="checkbox"/> Outgoing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Powerful | <input type="checkbox"/> Stable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corrupt | <input type="checkbox"/> Empathy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unhelpful | <input type="checkbox"/> Solid |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Progressive | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficult |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Convenient | <input type="checkbox"/> Energetic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Profit driven | <input type="checkbox"/> Honest |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fun | <input type="checkbox"/> Hard working |