

**Gloucester City Homes  
Residents Survey  
Income Management**

**Report**

**March 2009**

**Prepared For: Gloucester City Homes**

Prepared By: **mruk** research  
13 Queen Square  
Bristol  
BS1 4NT  
Tel: 0117 987 2844  
Fax: 0117 987 3385  
email: [info@mruk.co.uk](mailto:info@mruk.co.uk)

---

## Contents

<b>1. Background and Objectives</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Research Methodology</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3. Research Findings</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3.1 Payment Methods</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3.2 Ease of Understanding</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3.3 Rent Arrears and Debt Advice</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3.4 Contact and Communication</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3.5 Overall Satisfaction</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>4. Summary</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Appendix A – Respondent Demographics</b>	<b>15</b>

---

## 1. Background and Objectives

Gloucester City Homes Limited is an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO), responsible for managing and improving Gloucester City Council's 4,700 Council homes and 221 Leasehold properties.

Gloucester City Homes aim to meet tenant needs and aspirations by delivering excellent services for its residents, and the stock it manages.

The objectives of the survey are to:

- Provide management information and survey results on the quality of its services
- Provide management information and survey results on the quality of services provided by its partners
- Provide trend analysis on service quality and performance over time to inform the design of future service delivery
- Provide information in a clear format which can be understood by a variety of key stakeholders, including the Gloucester City Council client team who will monitor the ALMO

---

## 2. Research Methodology

The research consisted of 125 telephone interviews, lasting a duration of approximately 10 minutes. The interviews were conducted using questionnaires designed by **mruk** research in conjunction with Gloucester City Homes.

The interviews were conducted by **mruk**'s in-house Computer Aided Telephone Interviews (CATI) team during March 2009. The findings from this research have been compared with the data previously collected by **mruk** research in October 2007.

The sample was taken from a database of names of tenants provided by Gloucester City Homes.

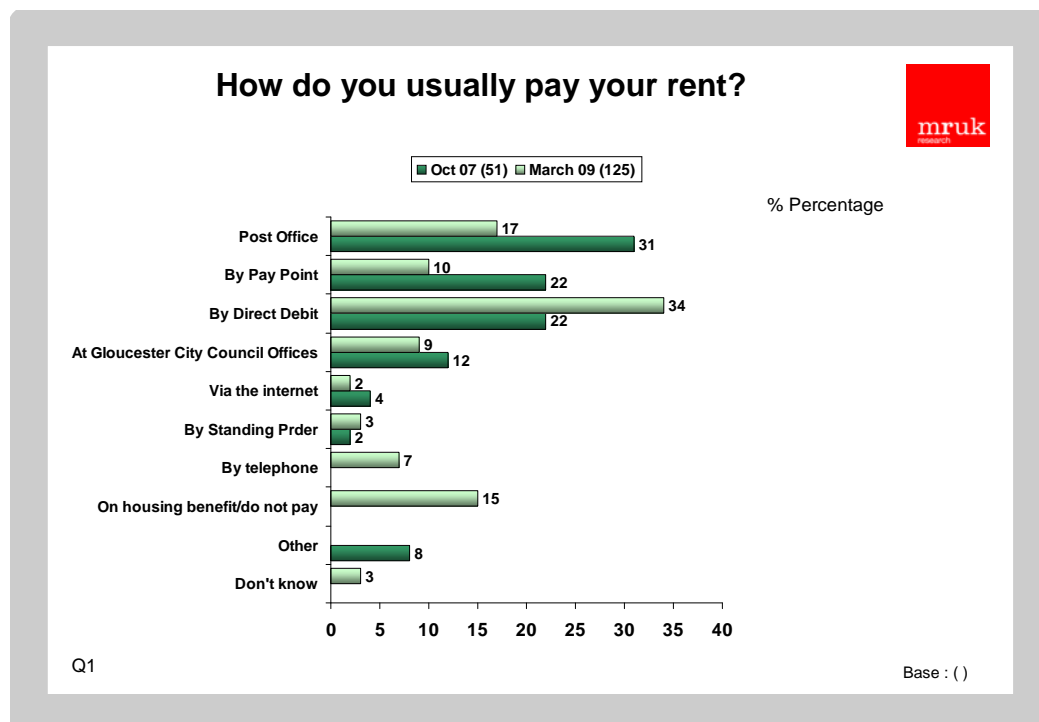
A breakdown of demographics of the respondent population can be found in Appendix 1.

### 3. Research Findings

#### 3.1 Payment Methods

The respondents used a variety of methods to pay rent. In 2009 the most frequently cited method was Direct Debit. However, in 2007 the Post Office was most frequently cited followed by Direct Debit.

Figure 1



Respondents also had a high level of awareness for the variety of methods available for paying rent. However, the level of awareness of each payment method decreased between 2007 and 2009. The majority of respondents reported being very or fairly satisfied with the payment options available in both 2007 and 2009 (see figure 3).

Figure 2

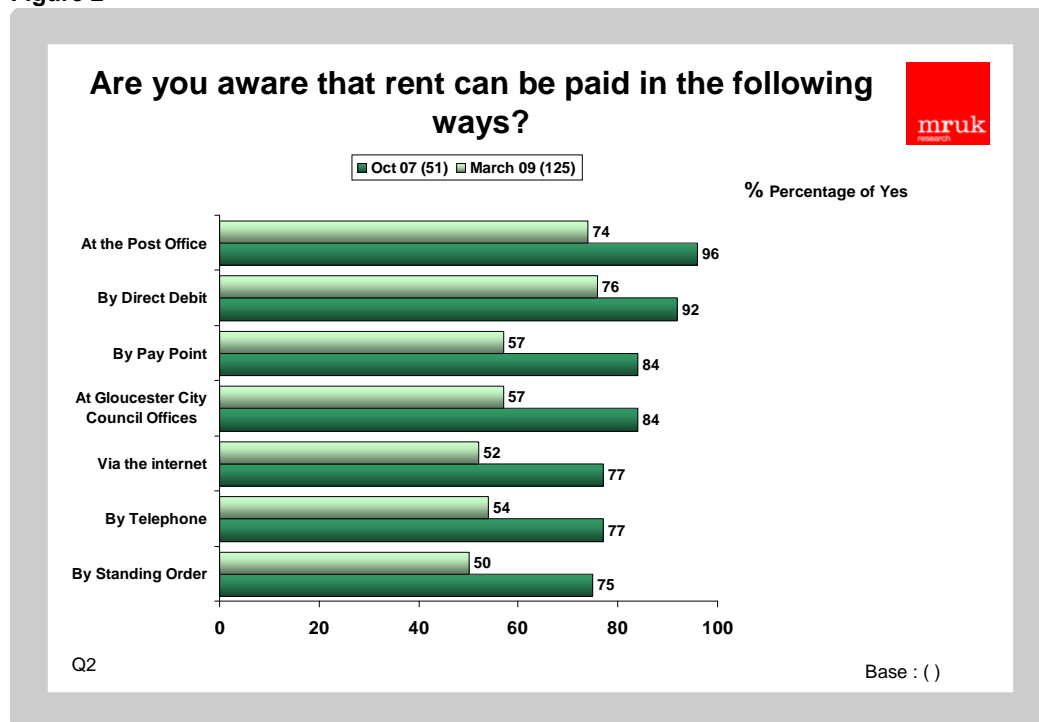
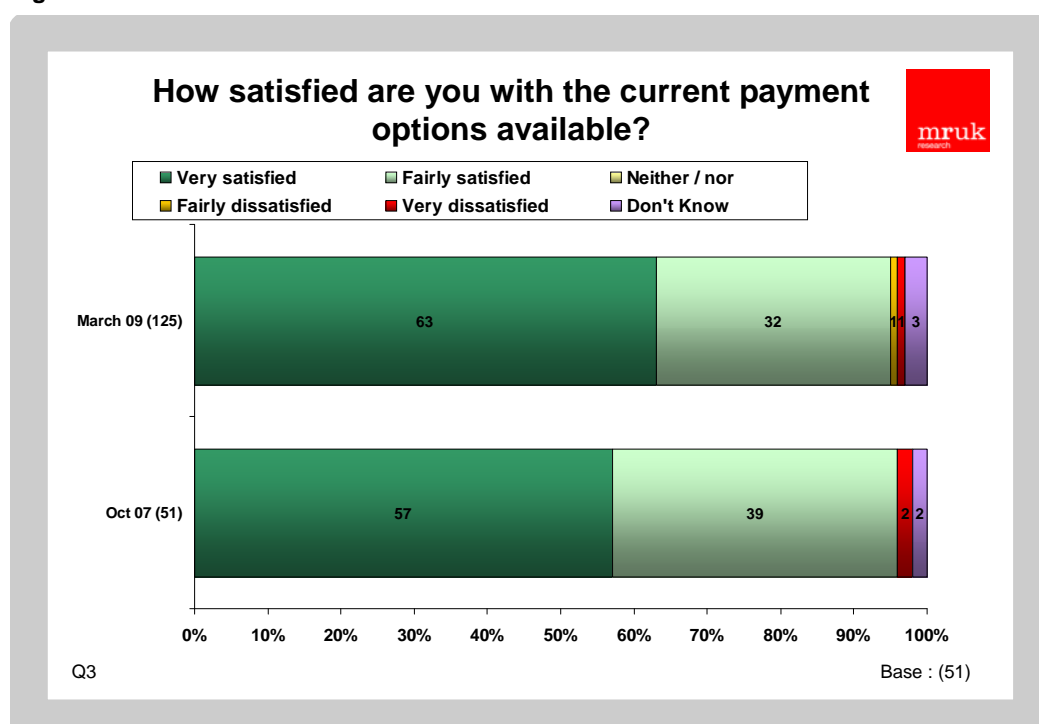


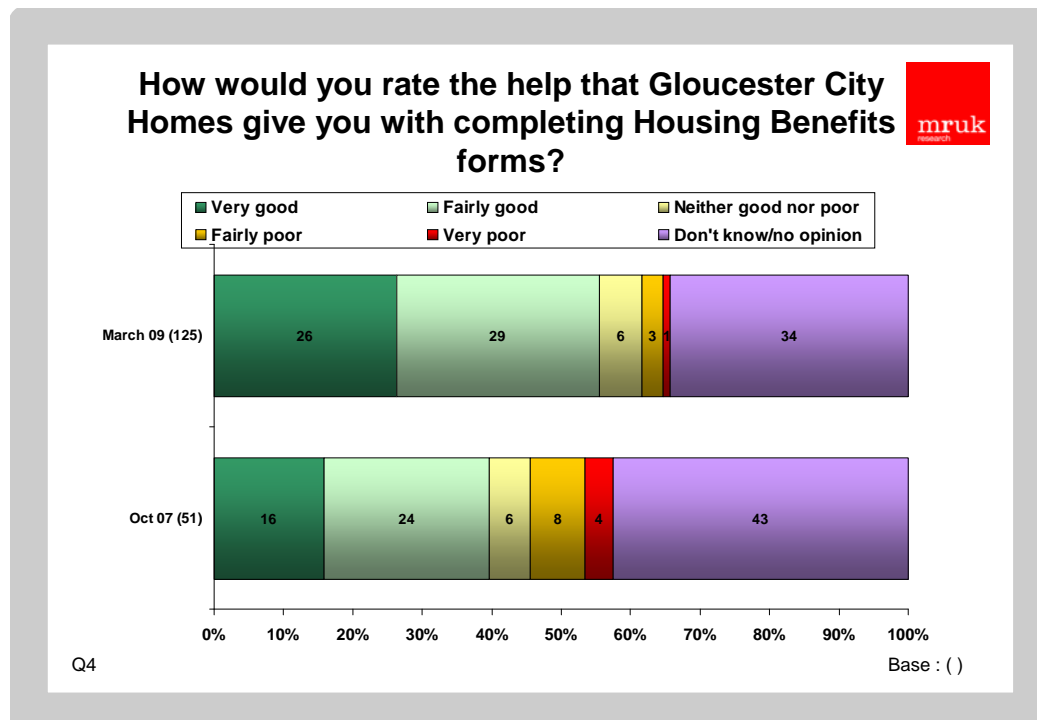
Figure 3



### 3.2 Ease of Understanding

When asked to rate how helpful Gloucester City Homes had been when completing housing benefit forms, a high proportion of respondents in both surveys responded 'don't know / no opinion (43%)'. However, in 2009, 57% of respondents rated it as 'very good' or 'fairly good' compared to 40% in 2007.

Figure 4



Respondents were asked a set of questions regarding their understanding of information supplied by Gloucester City Homes. Figure 5 shows that the majority of respondents found 'Rent Increase notices' very or fairly easy to understand (81% in 2009 and 79% in 2007). Furthermore, figure 6 shows that the majority of respondents also felt this information was presented well (80% in 2009 and 71% in 2007).

Figure 5

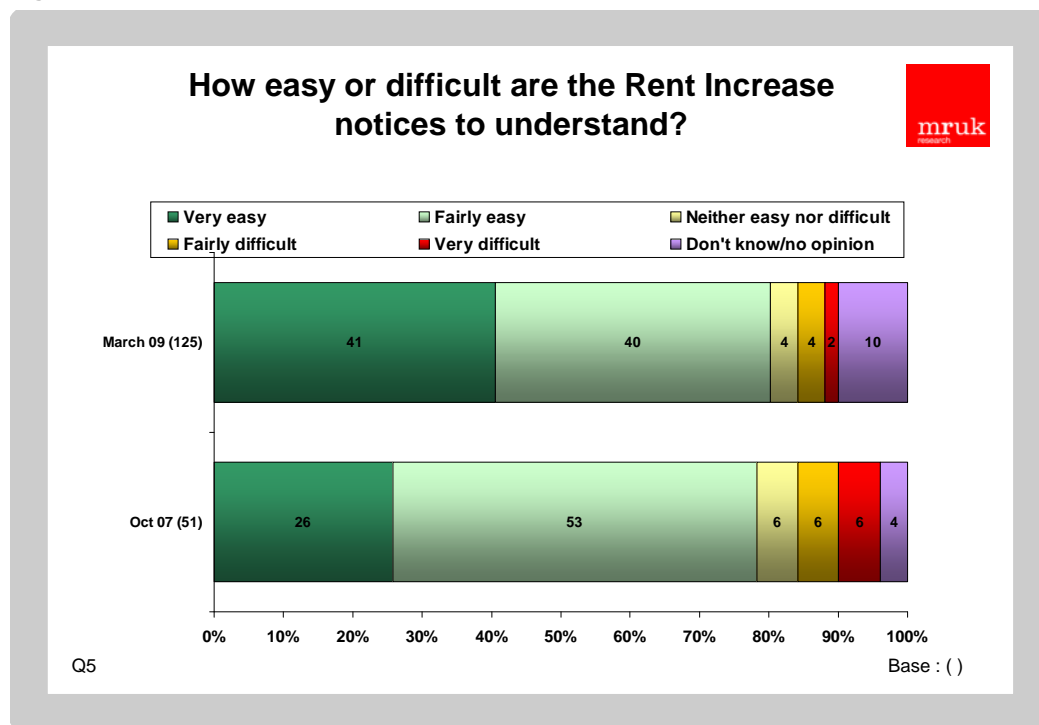
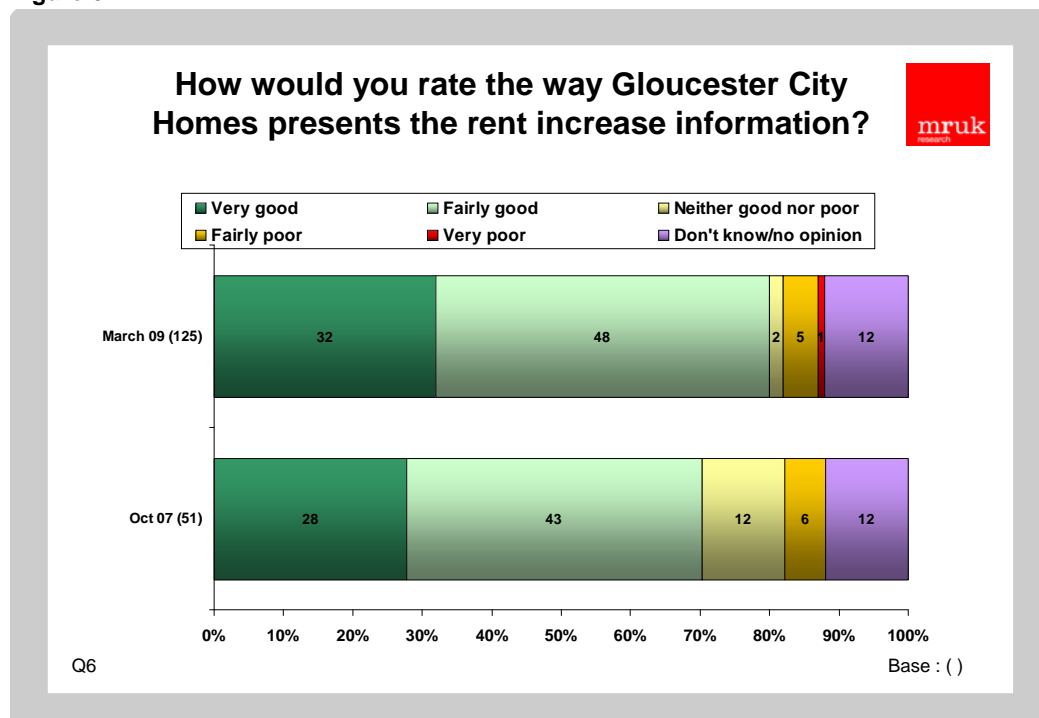
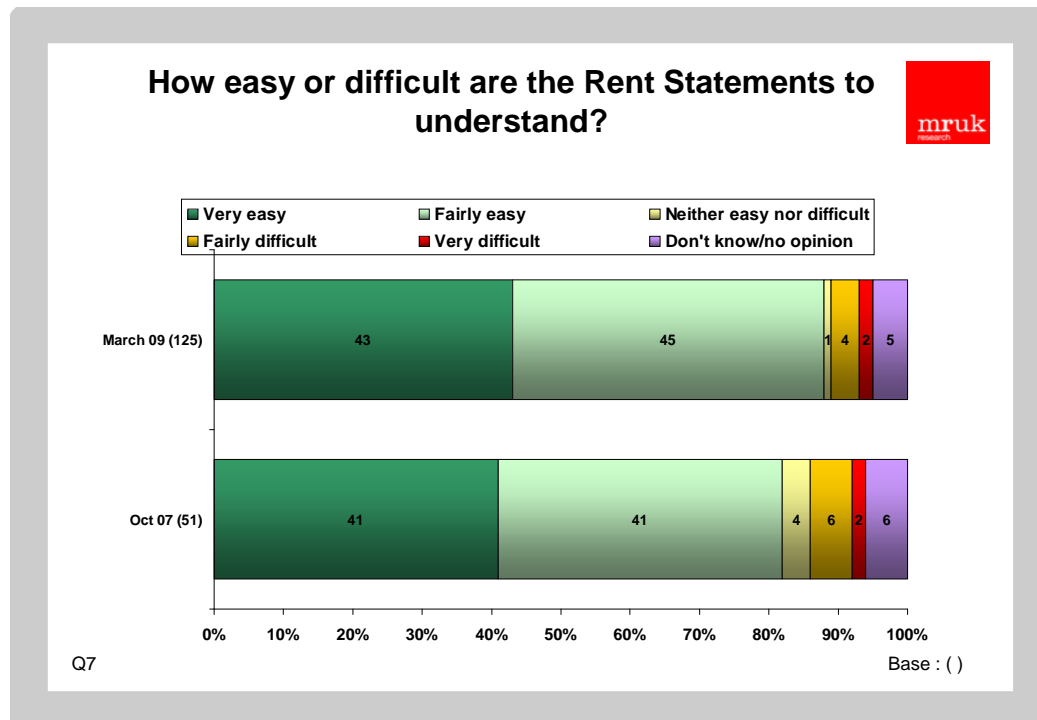


Figure 6



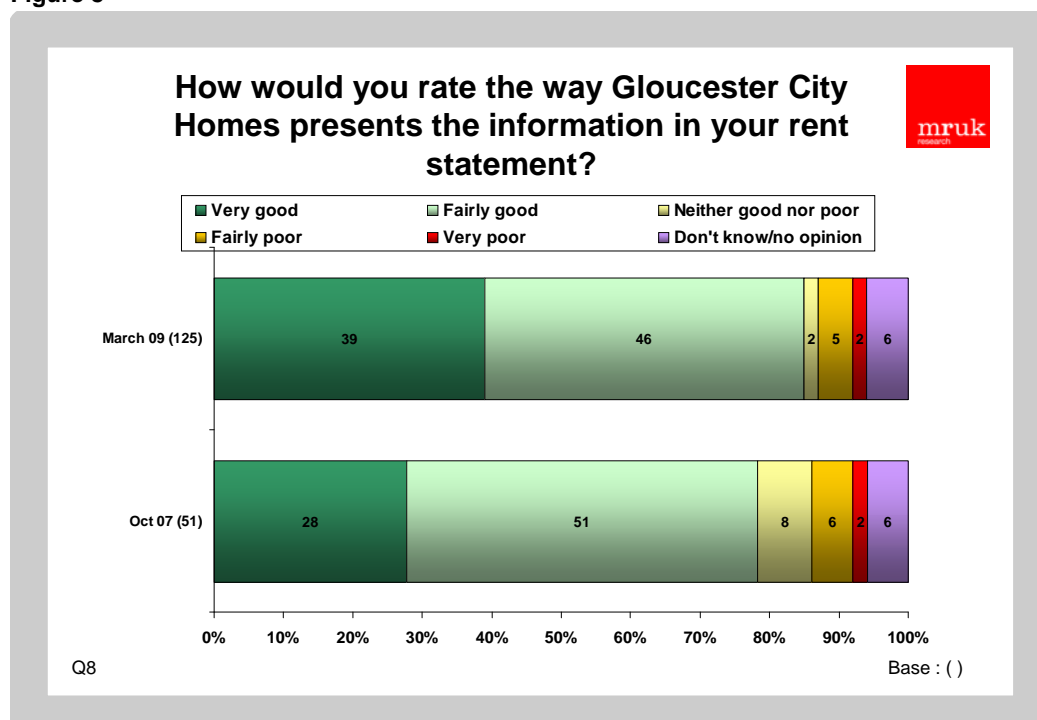
Similar findings were found when respondents were asked how easy 'Rent Statements' were to understand. The majority reported the statements as very or fairly easy to understand in both survey periods (see figure 7).

Figure 7



The majority of respondents felt the information presented in their 'Rent Statements' was either very good or fairly good (90% in 2009 and 79% in 2007, see figure 8).

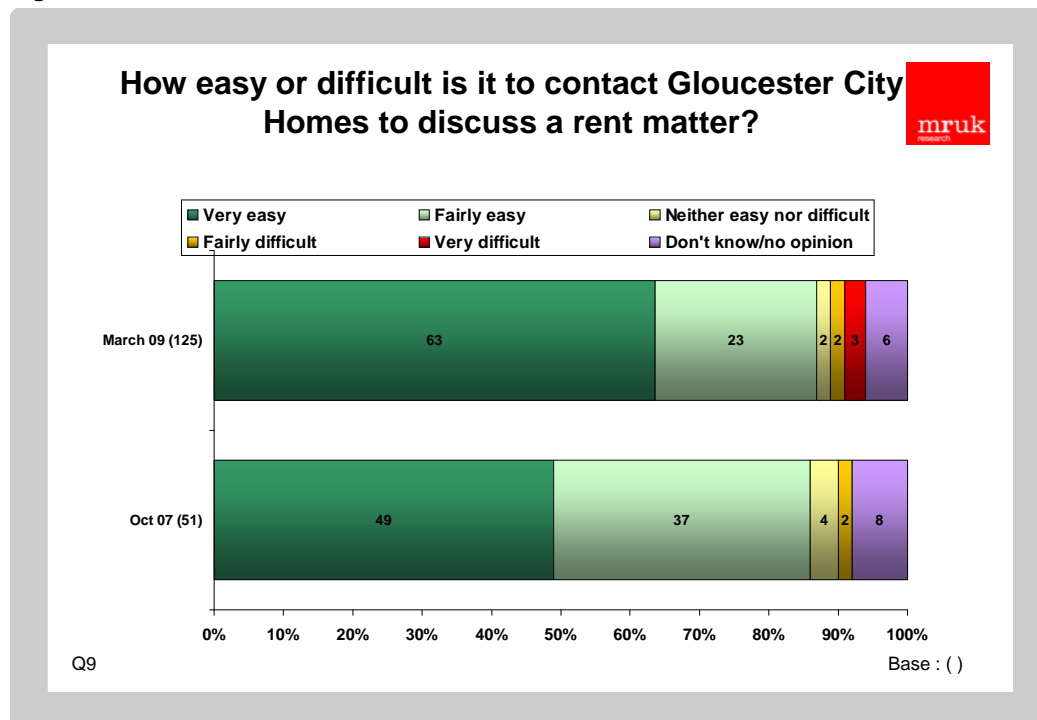
Figure 8



### 3.3 Rent Arrears and Debt Advice

Respondents were asked a set of questions regarding rent matters and rent arrears. When asked how easy it was to contact Gloucester City Homes to discuss rent matters, the majority of respondents found it very or fairly easy, (86% in both 2009 and 2007, see figure 9).

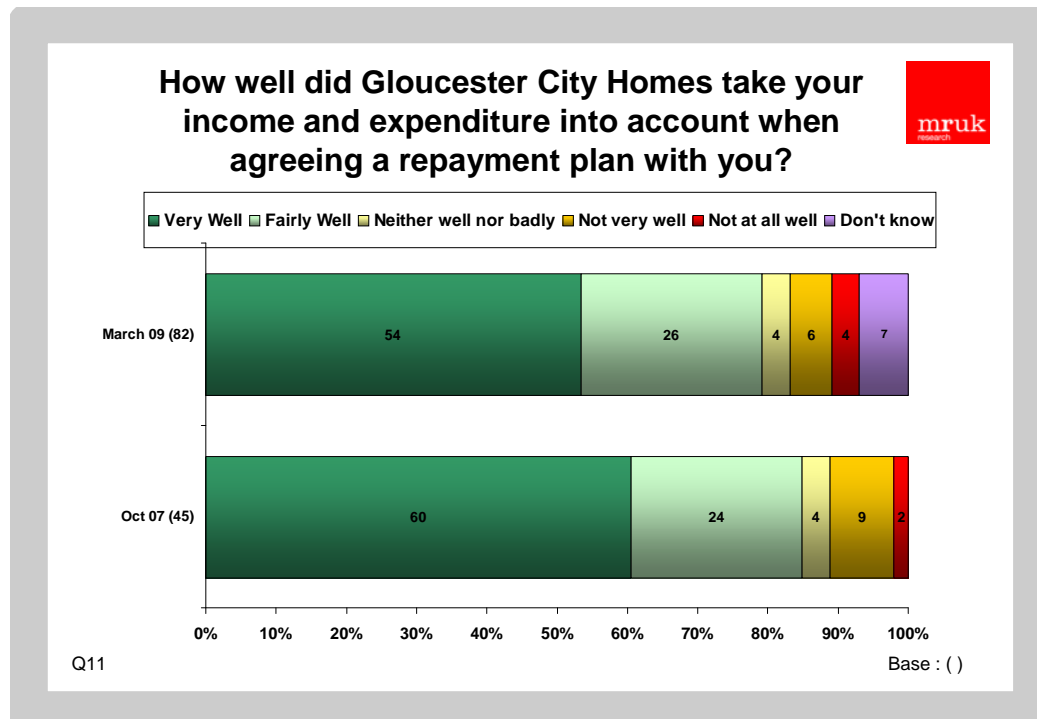
Figure 9



In 2009, 66% of respondents had been contacted by Gloucester City Homes because they had fallen into arrears with their rent. The comparative figure in 2007 was 88%.

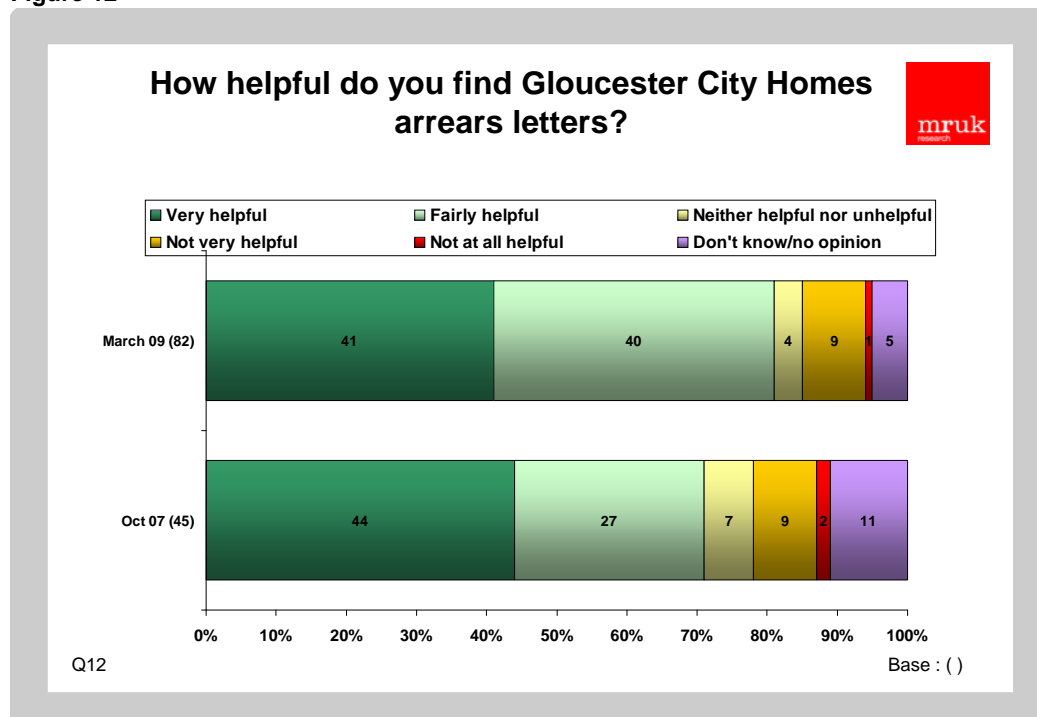
Eighty percent of those who had been contacted for this reason felt Gloucester City Homes had done very or fairly well when taking their income and expenditure into account when agreeing a repayment plan (compared to 84% in 2007) as illustrated in figure 10.

Figure 10



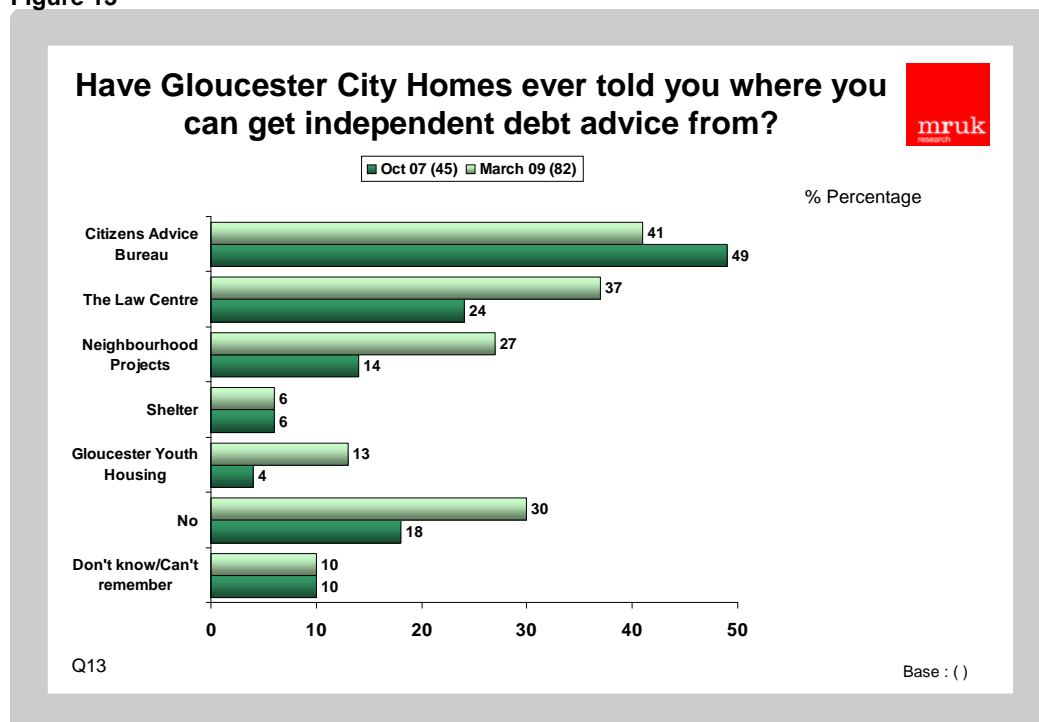
Of those contacted to discuss rent arrears, the majority found the rent arrears letter very helpful (41%) or fairly helpful (40%). Only 10% felt the letter was not helpful (see figure 12).

Figure 12



Respondents reported being given a number of options of organisations where they could get independent debt advice. Forty-one percent of respondents (49% in 2007) reported that Gloucester City Homes had informed them of services offered by the ‘Citizens advice Bureau’. Compared to 2007, the Law Centre and Neighbourhood Projects were more frequently cited as organisations that Gloucester City Homes had recommended. Furthermore, a higher proportion of respondents (30%) in 2009 indicated that they had not been told where to get such advice from compared to 2007 (18%).

Figure 13

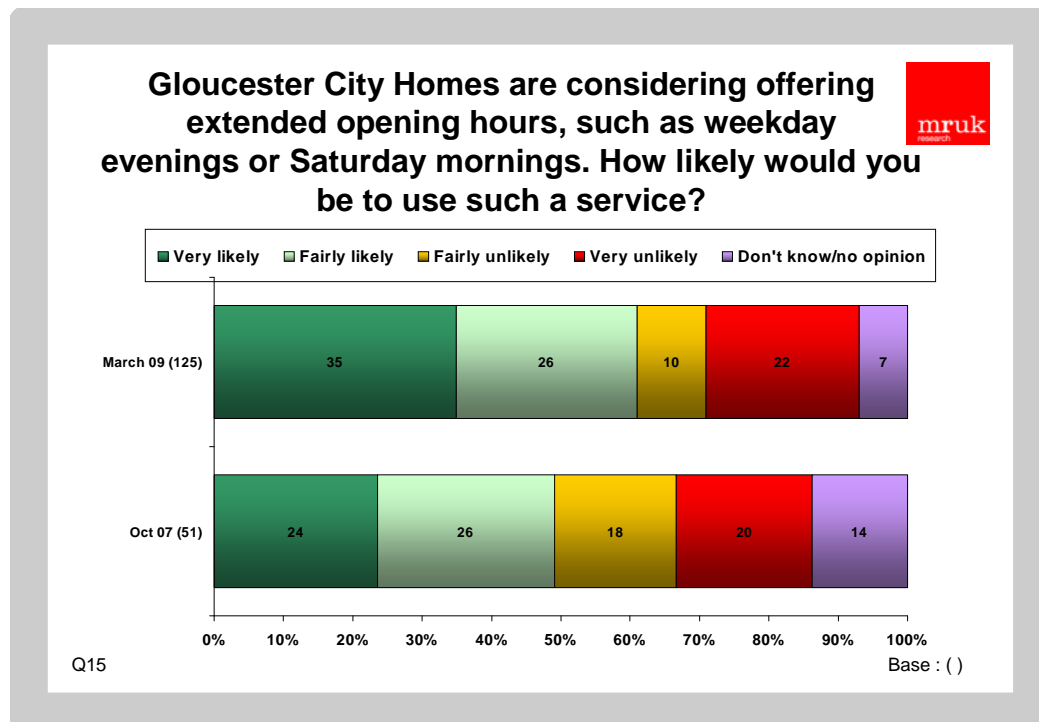


Although respondents reported being told of the different organisations which offered independent debt advice, only 24% reported being offered a referral to such an organisation by Gloucester City Homes staff. The comparative figure in 2007 was 29%.

### 3.4 Contact and Communication

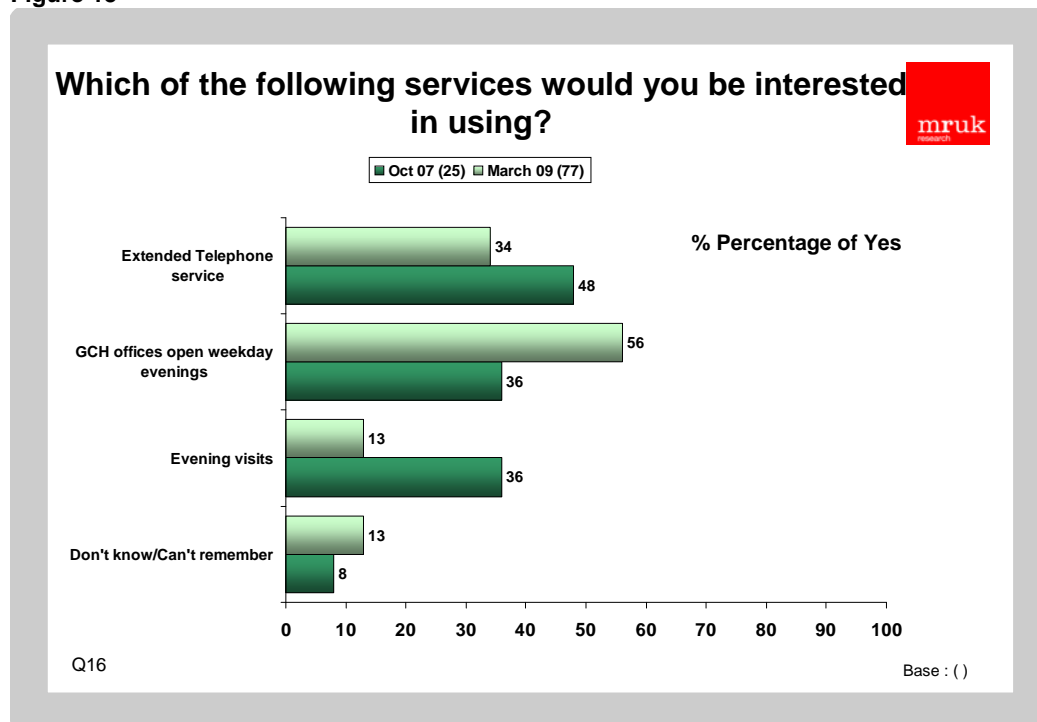
The respondents were asked their opinion on extending the opening hours of Gloucester City Homes. A mixed response was received when asked how likely respondents would be to use the extended hours. A higher proportion of respondents (62%) indicated that they would be very or fairly likely to use the service compared to 50% in 2007 (see figure 14).

Figure 14



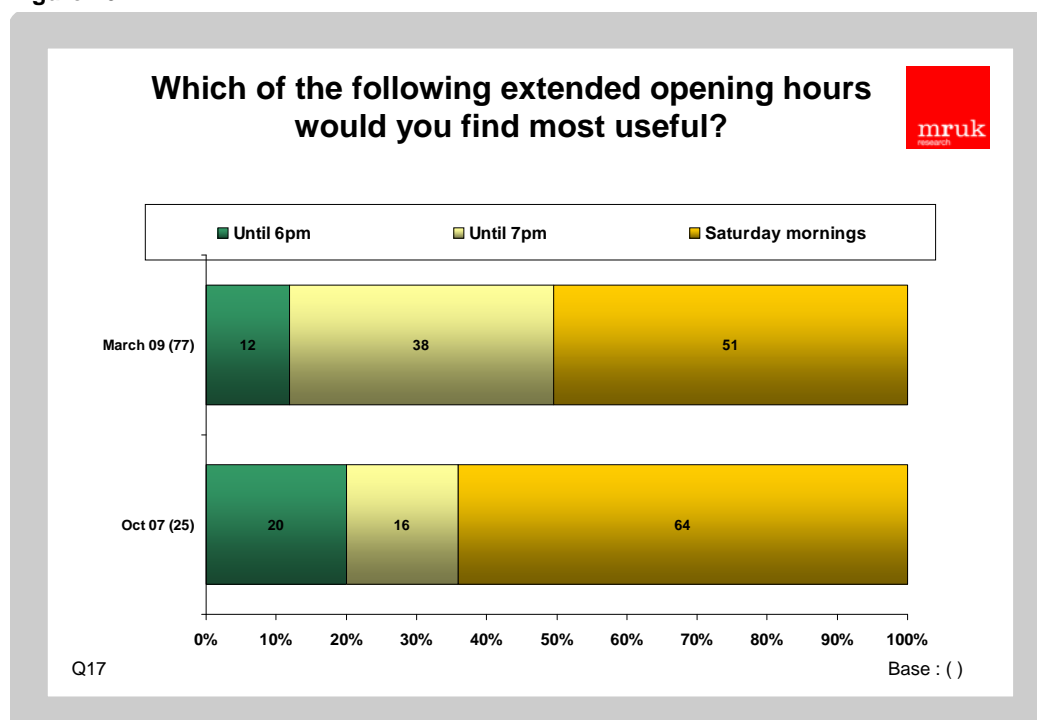
Of those who suggested they would use the service, 'GCH offices open weekday evenings' (56%) was the most popular choice compared to 2007 when an 'extended telephone service' was the most popular choice (48%).

Figure 15



Respondents also suggested that extending opening hours to include Saturday mornings would be most useful in both 2009 (51%) and 2007 (64%). A higher proportion indicated 'until 7pm' compared to the previous survey.

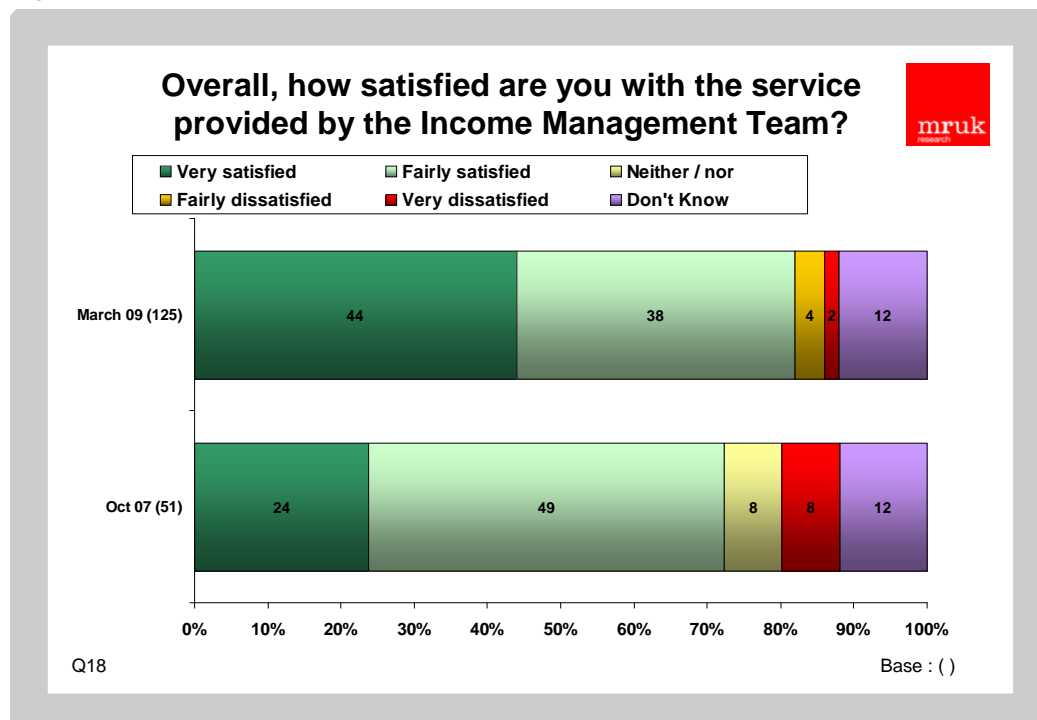
Figure 16



### 3.5 Overall Satisfaction

Finally, respondents were given the opportunity to report how satisfied they were with the overall service they had received from the Income Management Team. The majority of respondents (82%) were very or fairly satisfied with the service they had received. This compared to 73% in 2007, illustrating an increase in satisfaction between the two surveys.

Figure 17



## 4. Summary

Below is a summary of Wave 1 of this research:-

- The majority of respondents pay their rent by Direct Debit compared to 2007 when the Post Office was most frequently cited. The majority of respondents were aware of the payment options available to them. However, the level of awareness had declined since 2007.
- In both 2007 and 2009 there was high levels of satisfaction with the payment options available.
- Eighty-one percent (79% in 2007) of respondents felt the 'Rent Increase notices' were easy to understand (very or fairly) and 88% (82% in 2007) of respondents felt the 'Rent Statements' were easy to understand. The majority of respondents also felt the documents were very or fairly well presented.
- When discussing rent matters, respondents found Gloucester City Homes very or fairly easy to contact (86% in both years).
- Sixty-six percent (88% in 2007) of respondents had been contacted due to rent arrears. In both years, the majority of these respondents felt their income and expenditure had been taken into account well when agreeing a payment scheme. The majority also found the arrears letter helpful.
- The majority of respondents were aware of a variety of organisations where they could receive independent debt advice, but only 24% (29% in 2007) had been offered a referral to such an organisation by Gloucester City Homes' staff.
- Sixty-one percent of respondents (50% in 2007) felt they would use extended opening hours if they were offered. Of the options offered, respondents felt GCH offices being open on weekday evenings would be the most useful followed by an extended telephone service. The reverse was true in 2007. Furthermore, in 2007 a higher proportion of respondents (36%) indicated 'evening visits' compared to 13% in 2009.
- Finally, the majority of respondents were satisfied with the overall service they had received from the Income Management Team (82% in 2009; 73% in 2007).

## Appendix A – Respondent Demographics

### Age of respondents

Age Band	2009	2007
16-24 years	12	5
25-34 years	19	14
35-44 years	34	11
45-54 years	28	13
55-64 years	12	3
64-74 years	11	0
75+ years	5	3
Refused	4	2

### Working Status

Status	2009	2007
In full time employment (24+ hours per week)	43	16
In part time employment (Less than 24 hours per week)	16	11
Government Training	0	0
In full time education	2	0
Unemployed (registered)	24	8
Unemployed (unregistered)	4	0
Permanently sick/ disabled	7	4
Wholly retired from work	18	3
Looking after the home	5	5
Caring for an adult or child	0	4
Other	4	0
Refused	2	0

### Gender of Respondents

Gender	2009	2007
Male	61	18
Female	64	33

### Ethnicity of Respondents

Ethnicity	2009	2007
White – British	103	43
White – European	1	0
Any other mixed background	1	0
Indian	1	0
Black Caribbean	12	3
Black African	1	0
Any other Black background	3	4
Other	0	1
Refused	3	0

