

**MORAY CITIZENS' PANEL  
TRADING STANDARDS "WELFARE MAP" TESTING**

**REPORT**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This report sets out key findings from the recent Moray Citizens' Panel exercise to gather feedback on The Moray Council's "Welfare MAP" website.<sup>1</sup> The Welfare MAP was launched early in 2015 as part of a wider campaign to help Moray residents cope with ongoing changes to the welfare system. The site provides information on welfare benefits and on other services or agencies that can help individuals. This includes how to claim benefits, budgeting, housing, getting online and employability.
- 1.2. To gauge experience of and views on the Welfare MAP, a web-testing exercise was completed with members of the Moray Citizens' Panel. The exercise involved Panel members completing a number of tasks designed to encourage participants to use different parts of the Welfare MAP, before a pre-arranged telephone interview with a member of Craigforth's team. Interviews were used to gather feedback on all aspects of the Welfare MAP site including ease of navigation, appearance and design, and the range and quality of information provided.
- 1.3. Engagement with Panel members sought to gather feedback from a cross-section of members including those most likely to find the Welfare MAP useful (e.g. those in receipt of benefits, those seeking employment, those in rented accommodation). Against a target of 50 participants, the exercise secured **interviews with a total of 61 Panel members** over a 4 week period during August and September. This is a very positive level of engagement, particularly for an approach that required more significant time investment from members (and which had not previously been used with the Panel).
- 1.4. As Figure 1 below indicates, interviewees were varied in terms of socio-demographic profile. This included good representation of the often "hard to reach" groups most likely to find the site useful, such as those in receipt of benefits, those in rented accommodation, those seeking employment. The fieldwork also included a number of Panel members who indicated a lack of confidence or experience in using the internet – again this was identified as a potentially significant factor for the approach to gather feedback from those who may be less comfortable using the internet.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://welfaremap.moray.gov.uk/>

**Figure 1: Profile of Survey Respondents (base: 61)**

<b>Gender</b>	
Female	32
Male	27
Transgender	1
No response	1
<b>Age</b>	
Under 35	7
35-54	12
55-64	30
65+	11
No response	1
<b>Disability</b>	
Yes	15
No	44
No response	2
<b>Employment status</b>	
In employment	28
Retired	20
Unemployed	9
Not working (ill health, home/family)	3
No response	1
<b>In receipt of benefits</b>	
Yes	25
No	28
No response	8
<b>Housing tenure</b>	
Owner occupied	34
Social rented	21
Private rented/other	5
No response	1

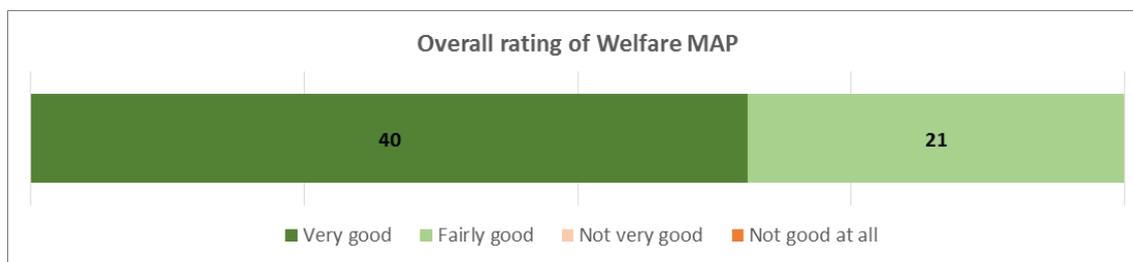
## 2. FEEDBACK ON THE WELFARE MAP WEBSITE

- 2.1. Over the following pages we set out the key points emerging through participants' feedback on the Welfare MAP website.
- 2.2. As noted in the previous section, the study required Panel members to complete a number of tasks through the Welfare MAP, before a telephone interview to gather their feedback on the website. Each participant was asked to complete a total of three tasks. Tasks were tailored to participants' circumstances, for example in relation to whether they were in receipt of benefits, their employment status, housing tenure, and confidence using the internet. The tasks undertaken by participants are listed below:
1. "I have debts that I can't manage, and would like to speak to someone face to face." Find the agencies that can provide face to face assistance to help clients resolve their debts.
  2. "I'm not sure whether I am getting all of the benefits I'm entitled to." Find an online benefits checker.
  3. "My benefits have stopped and I need help with money urgently." Find agencies that can provide crisis loans and food parcels.
  4. "I have been in the same job for 20 years and am being made redundant." Find agencies that can help with benefit advice, and agencies that can help with employability.
  5. "I've fallen behind with my payments and have rent arrears. What can I do?" Find agencies that can give advice on rent arrears.
  6. "I need to make an online application but I'm not good with computers." Find agencies that offer internet access and help with IT skills.
- 2.3. These tasks were used to ensure participants were able to provide informed feedback on the Welfare MAP. This was particularly important given that few interviewees had heard of the Welfare MAP website prior to being invited to take part in the study. Only 6 of the 61 participants had heard of the site, although only 1 of these indicated that they had used the site previously. The study was not intended to provide a representative sample of the wider Moray population, but this may indicate limited awareness of the Welfare MAP. Those who had heard of the site were varied in terms of their socio-demographic profile, but it is notable that 3 of the 6 who had heard of the site were in receipt of benefits.

**Overall rating**

- 2.4. Overall views on the Welfare MAP were universally positive; **all 61 participants rated the site as very or fairly good** (See Figure 2 below).
- 2.5. This is consistent with their experience of completing the tasks outlined on the previous page. Of the 183 tasks completed by participants more than 90% were completed without any difficulty whatsoever, and only 6 tasks were not successfully completed. We highlight participants’ experiences in relation to specific aspects of the Welfare MAP over the following pages, but it is clear that the ease with which the great majority of tasks were completed has informed the overall rating of the site.

**Figure 2: Participants’ overall rating of the Welfare MAP (base: 61)**



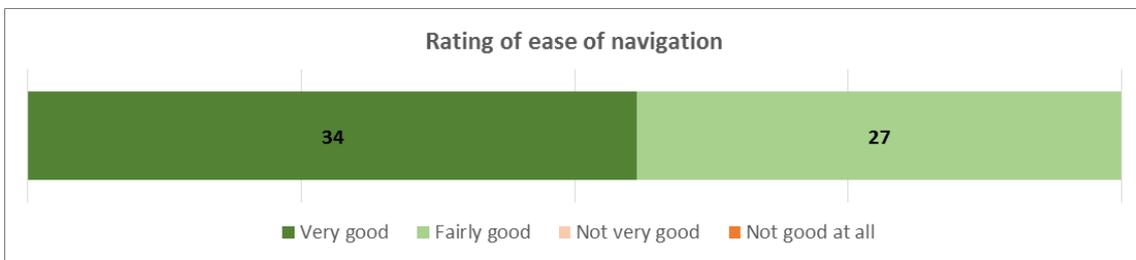
- 2.6. Around two thirds of participants (40 of 61) described the Welfare MAP site as “very good”. This strongly positive view was evident across all socio-demographic groups. However it is notable that those who described themselves as “very confident” using the internet were most positive, and those who were less confident using the internet were more likely to express reservations about the experience of the Welfare MAP.
- 2.7. The remaining 21 participants rated the site as “fairly good”. This included a small number of interviewees raising concerns about the Welfare MAP. These concerns were around the extent to which individuals may prefer to speak to someone directly, including reference to a view that in-person or telephone communication is better suited to discuss their specific circumstances. As such, reservations did not appear to reflect concerns about the site’s design or content.
- 2.8. Consistent with this positive overall rating of the site, **the majority of participants felt that they may find the Welfare Map useful in the future** (44 of 61 indicated this). Most of these participants referred to potentially finding the site useful if their circumstances changed. However a number of interviewees felt that they would find the site useful at present, primarily those in receipt of benefits. Indeed, nearly all of those in receipt of benefits indicated that they would find the site useful.
- 2.9. It is notable that, for the 16 participants who did not think that they would find the Welfare MAP useful in the future, this was primarily based on a view that they would be unlikely to be eligible for welfare support. Very few interviewees suggested that they would not want to use the website, if their circumstances changed such that information on welfare would be useful.

- 2.10. In addition to the overall site rating discussed above, participants were asked for their views on specific aspects of the Welfare MAP, based on their experience of completing the specified tasks. Views typically focused on the ease with which participants were able to navigate around the website, the site’s appearance and design, and the information provided through the site (in terms of both range and quality of information). We consider views on these points in turn below.

**Site navigation**

- 2.11. **Views were highly positive on the ease of navigating the Welfare MAP site.** All 61 participants rated this as very or fairly good, including 34 who gave the top “very good” rating (a little more than half of all participants).

**Figure 3: Participants’ rating of ease of site navigation (base: 61)**



- 2.12. This positive view reflects participants’ experience in completing tasks as part of the study. The great majority indicated that they were able to complete all tasks without difficulty, and this was primarily related to the ease with which they were able to navigate to the relevant parts of the Welfare MAP site. This included multiple participants who indicated that they were not at all confident using the internet, but who were able to complete all three specified tasks without difficulty.

**Experience example: Miss A**

A home owner, aged 70+ and with mobility difficulties.

Despite having never seen the Welfare MAP, and describing herself as not at all confident using the internet, was able to complete the specified tasks without any problem. Miss A felt that “if I can use it then anyone can”, and indicated she would “quite possibly” use the Welfare MAP in the future.

- 2.13. While the majority of participants gave a very positive rating, **a small number of interviewees expressed reservations about site navigation.** These were primarily linked to problems experienced when completing the specified tasks, and as such appear to reflect quite specific use examples or improvement suggestions, rather than more significant concerns about the ease with which users are able to navigate the site generally. Indeed it is notable that even those raising concerns about site navigation still rated this aspect of the Welfare MAP as “fairly good”.

## 2.14. The key concerns or difficulties raised in relation to site navigation were:

- The most common concern related to difficulties completing Task 1 (“find an online benefits checker”). Nearly all interviewees were able to find information on agencies who could help them to find out about and/or apply for welfare benefits. However, several felt that they would not know how to choose the right agency from the information provided, and there appeared to be some expectation that the Welfare MAP would incorporate a benefits calculator. For some participants this this concern seemed to be based on their failing to find the link to the UK Government benefits checker, but others specifically suggested inclusion of a benefits checker/calculator within the Welfare MAP.
- Most participants felt that they were able to find the relevant section of the site relatively easily, but some referred to the “number of clicks” required to reach the required information. Several interviewees referred to being presented with “long lists” of options within each section of the site, which required them to follow a series of links to reach the information they were looking for. In this regard, these concerns about ease of navigating the site appeared to be connected to the range and depth of information provided, and the work required to navigate through this. Participants made specific reference to information on agencies providing face-to-face debt advice, and agencies providing crisis loans or food parcels.
- A small number of participants had difficulty finding the right section to complete their tasks. This included finding agencies that give benefits advice, agencies helping with employability, and agencies providing internet access/IT skills. Several of those encountering problems indicated that they were “not at all confident” using the internet, but difficulties experienced also appeared to relate to the nature of the task that participants were being asked to complete (in addition to individuals’ abilities). In particular, several participants felt that the Welfare MAP could do more to make it easier for those looking for benefits/employability advice, and those seeking help with IT or internet access.

#### Experience example: Miss B

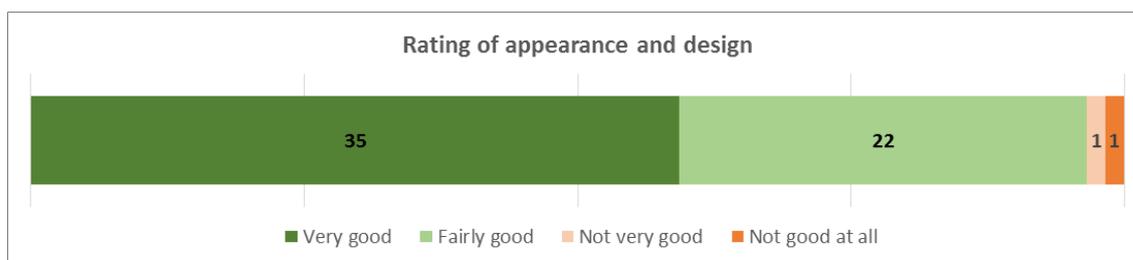
A private renter, aged under 35, with some limiting illness/disability and currently in receipt of benefits.

Miss B described herself as “fairly confident” using the internet, and accessed the Welfare MAP site for the study using a smartphone. Miss B encountered difficulties navigating through to relevant information on agencies providing face to face debt advice and those that can provide crisis loans and food parcels: *“it was fairly easy to find the original heading on the main page but you have to go through a list of pages to get to who you actually have to contact.”*

**Appearance and design**

2.15. **Nearly all participants gave a positive rating of the Welfare MAP’s appearance and design**; 58 of the 60 participants giving an opinion on the site appearance and design felt that this was very or fairly good. The remaining two participants felt that the appearance and design of the Welfare MAP site was poor.

**Figure 4: Participants’ rating of site appearance and design (base: 60)<sup>2</sup>**



2.16. The large majority of participants giving a positive rating of the site design included 35 who described the appearance and design as “very good” (a little more than half of all participants).

2.17. A number of these participants commented on specific aspects of the appearance and design. These comments suggest that participants appreciated the extent to which the site design supported the function of the site, and particularly ease of navigation (e.g. rather than a purely aesthetic judgement of the site). In particular, participants praised:

- The “simple, clear” layout of the Welfare MAP site;
- Good use of design to emphasise section headings, which were identified as important for participants’ navigation of the site; and
- Good use of colour throughout to demarcate different sections of the site, and to ensure content is easy to read (including for those with visual impairment).

**Experience example: Miss C**

A homeowner, aged under 35, with limiting illness/disability and currently in receipt of benefits.

Miss C expressed some reservations about the aesthetic design of the Welfare MAP, but generally felt that the appearance of the site helped users to navigate the available information (and was able to complete all tasks without difficulty). *“Colouring on the pages was very user friendly, not too sharp and not too white. Breaks the page up and makes it easier to look at for a longer period of time as I am epileptic so staring at a screen for a long period of time is not always good.”*

<sup>2</sup> Note that 1 participants was unable to offer a view on the site appearance and design.

2.18. ***A small number of participants expressed concerns about the appearance and design of the Welfare Map site.*** This included the two participants who rated the site design as poor, but also some of those who rated this as “fairly good”. These comments were primarily focused on areas where individuals felt that the appearance and design was a barrier to the functionality of the site. However, one participant also commented more generally on the appearance of the site:

- Two participants (one with impaired vision) reported problems using the site as a result of difficulties reading site content. This included reference to site text being too small, and the site layout meaning use of relatively dense text in some places.
- A small number of participants had difficulty finding the relevant sections of the Welfare MAP for some tasks, and suggested that site design could do more to highlight the main sub-sections of the site.
- One participant referred to the “frequently asked questions” included on the homepage as being a useful way of navigating the Welfare MAP, and suggested that site design could be used to make these more prominent.
- One participant suggested that the site branding could be stronger and more relevant. This included reference to the site header on the home page as “*random...looks out of place*”.

#### **Experience example: Mr A**

A homeowner, aged 65+, with visual impairment.

Mr A described himself as “fairly confident” using the internet, but had problems with all three practical tasks due to difficulties reading the site content. Mr A had to ask for help from a family member to complete the tasks: “*we managed to find everything so setup is good but layout is bad. Tiny writing. Could have big bold headings and then smaller writing.*”

#### **Experience example: Miss D**

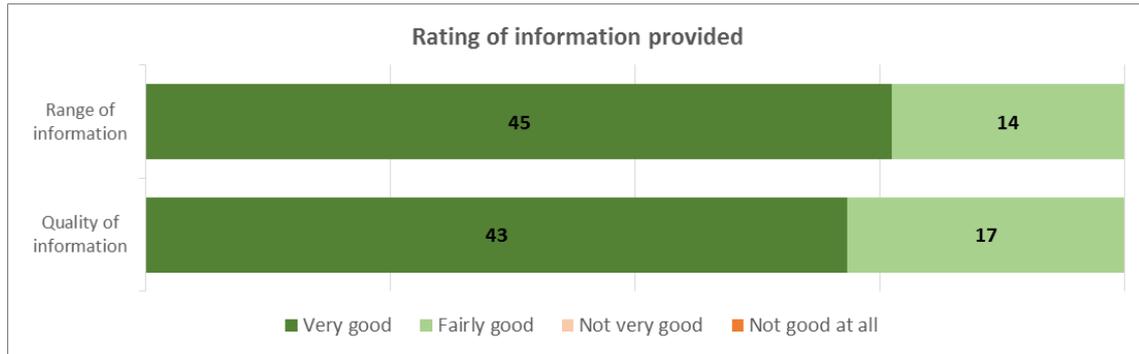
A homeowner, aged 35-44, with no disabilities and not in receipt of benefits.

Miss D described herself as “very confident” using the internet and was able to complete the three practical tasks, accessing the Welfare MAP via smartphone. However, she suggested that site layout could be improved to make it easier for users to find the information that is most relevant to them – particularly for those who may be feeling highly stressed. “*Appearance wise it is standard local authority. Frequently asked question would be easier to use, especially for the type of people who will access the site.*”

**Range and quality of information**

2.19. In addition to positive ratings of site navigation and design, **views were also overwhelmingly positive on the content provided by the Welfare MAP**. All interviewees gave a positive rating of both the range and the quality of information provided by the site. This included around three quarters of participants who described the information provided as “very good”; 45 of 61 in relation to the range of information, and 43 of 61 on the quality of information.

**Figure 4: Participants’ rating of range/quality of information provided (base: 61)**



2.20. The majority of participants describing the information provided by the Welfare MAP as “very good” typically had little to add to this description, other than that the information enabled them to complete the specified tasks without difficulty. However, a small number of these participants added further comment in support of their very positive description of the site content:

- Several participants (including some of those currently in receipt of benefits) indicated that the information provided could be useful for them, and in this sense was likely to be relevant to those seeking advice on welfare changes.
- More generally, participants described the site content as being “clear and concise”. This was also evident in the extent to which participants found the information easy to digest as part of the practical tasks.
- Participants also praised the breadth of information available through the site, and particularly the extent to which this is likely to be of value to a broad range of people. As noted below, a small number of participants had some difficulty navigating through the range of information available, but there was also recognition that this was important for a site which could be used by a diverse mix of residents – “[it is] hard to get it spot on as each person is different”.

2.21. ***A small number of interviewees expressed reservations about the Welfare MAP content***, both in terms of the range of information and the quality of the information. Comments here focused on:

- The broad range of information provided by the Welfare MAP was highlighted as a factor in the difficulties experienced by a small number of participants when completing the tasks. A small number of participants referred to the site presenting *“a lot of options...a lot of information”*, and for some this was a challenge when navigating. This was linked to suggestions that site design could be updated to make it easier for site users to negotiate the range of content available.
- A small number of participants suggested that the difficulties they encountered finding the right part of the site can impact on views on the information provided. While interviewees suggested that the information is *“very good once you can find it”*, a small number of participants expressed frustration with the time or work required to access this. Feedback suggests that there may be potential for this frustration to undermine users’ engagement with the information provided.
- The range of information provided by the site meant that some participants struggled to identify the specific option that is best suited to their circumstances. This included reference to choosing a specific agency from the range of debt advice options. This issue may have been a factor for the small number of participants who expressed a preference for speaking directly to someone who can take account of their personal circumstances, and direct them to the best option.
- Very few participants referred to any gaps in the information available through the Welfare MAP. However, it is notable that a small number of participants struggled to complete the tasks based on identifying the benefits that they may be entitled to, and finding agencies that assist with internet access and IT skills.

#### **Experience example: Miss E**

Living with parents, under 35, with learning difficulties, in receipt of benefits.

Miss E described herself as “fairly confident” using the internet and was accessing the Welfare MAP via smartphone. While site navigation was not a problem, Miss E felt that she would struggle to choose one of the agencies or contacts from what she felt were long lists of options provided through the site: *“it is good to have a list of people to contact, just not sure which one would help.”*

### Experience example: Miss F

A homeowner, aged 45-64, with no disabilities and not in receipt of benefits.

Miss F described herself as “very confident” using the internet and was accessing the Welfare MAP via a laptop. She was able to complete two of the three tasks, but was unable to find agencies providing internet access and help with IT skills: *“Difficult to find. Wasn’t quite sure what I was looking for but nothing popped out at me either.”*

### Improvement suggestions

- 2.22. The final part of the interviews asked participants to suggest any improvements to the Welfare MAP, based on their experience of completing the tasks.
- 2.23. As has been highlighted over the previous pages, nearly all participants were able to complete the practical tasks without any difficulty, and views on the Welfare MAP were overwhelmingly positive. As such, a substantial number of participants could not suggest any changes to the site. Indeed more than half of all participants were not able to suggest any changes, including some who explicitly stated that they felt the site was well designed and the content useful.
- 2.24. However, there remained 23 participants who suggested potential changes to the Welfare MAP site. This included a small number of individuals who felt it important to highlight that web-based information was very useful, but is not accessible to all residents. These participants emphasised the importance of promoting the site widely to ensure that those who may find the Welfare MAP useful are aware of its existence. However, they also suggested that this cannot be the only means for residents who need information on welfare benefits: *“it’s a good thing, but if people are very desperate would they have access to internet and computers?”*, *“people still sometimes need personal advice especially if they are in an emergency situation”*.
- 2.25. In terms of specific suggested improvements to the Welfare MAP site, the main points emerging through interviews were:
- One of the most common suggestions was for the Welfare MAP to incorporate an interactive benefits checker which residents can use to check the benefits for which they may be eligible, and ideally giving an indication of the level of benefit to which they may be entitled.
  - Prominent information to help vulnerable adults and/or those facing a crisis situation – for example contacts who can talk through your circumstances and provide advice/assistance. Several participants suggested that those in crisis or vulnerable situations may struggle to negotiate the depth of information on the site, and that a prominent signpost on the homepage could be helpful.

- More prominent use of the “frequently asked questions” format as a way of helping users to navigate the site. Several participants felt that this was more intuitive than the headings used on the homepage, and took some time to find the frequently asked questions currently provided at the bottom of the homepage. This included a suggestion that this format may be easier to use for those in emergency situations who may be using the site for the first time while highly stressed.
- Reducing the number of “clicks” required to access information. This included reference to places (including the homepage) where a longer page of information would reduce the need to click on a short header to access further detail. It was also suggested that it is not always clear that further information is “hidden” until users click on a subheading.
- Making it clearer that the list of main section headings on the homepage have sub-sections – these remain hidden until the user clicks on the main section heading, and a number of participants missed this.
- Suggestions that the site layout could be updated to make the content easier to read. This included increasing the font size (particularly for section headings), and expanding the layout to make text “less cramped”.
- Updating the site design and use of images to make it clearer what the site is about.