

Dial-a-Ride Application Process Evaluation

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Summary

Abstract

Following the introduction of an enhanced assessment process for non-automatic Dial a Ride (DaR) applicants, research was conducted to check that the changes did not deter those in need from applying, or introduce any unfair obstacles. Analysis of the DaR database comparing the second half of the year in 2010 and 2011 showed a large fall in the total number and proportion of non-automatic entrants, however there was no evidence to suggest that particular groups were being discouraged from applying. In telephone interviews, successful applicants were more likely to think that the process was fair than those whose application had been rejected, however many interviewees admitted that these perceptions were mainly based on the outcome of the application, rather than an objective appraisal of the administrative and clerical procedures involved in applying.

Key findings

Comparison of the DaR database of accepted members from the periods 1/7/2010 – 31/12/2010 (before the introduction of the new application process for non-automatic applicants) and 1/7/2011 – 31/12/2011 (the corresponding period the following year, during which the new process was in operation) showed a large drop in both the number and proportion of non-automatic entrants.

This could be due to a variety of factors including changes to the categorisation of non-automatic applicants, as well as potential applicants realising that they were not eligible and deciding not to apply. There is some evidence of this from the telephone survey, in which some of those who had chosen not to return the application form that they had requested explained that they had realised they were not eligible.

There is no evidence that particular demographics were disproportionately less likely to apply than others. Although there had been an increase in the proportion of female non-automatic entrants in 2011 compared with 2010, this could be the result of random chance and should be monitored in future to confirm.

In the telephone survey, accepted members were more likely to agree that the application process had been fairly administered than those whose application was still pending or had been rejected. This was perhaps unsurprising and many explained that their appraisal of the fairness of the application process was based at least in part on the outcome of their individual application, rather than the clerical or administrative procedures involved in applying.

Of those non-members who had completed the form, 78% agreed that the information they were asked to provide was reasonable and just 6% disagreed. The majority of those applicants who had been asked for additional information intended to re-submit their application, with the main reasons they had not already done so being that they had not got around to it or they were waiting for information.

Based on the findings of this research, the greater assessment of DaR applicants should be continued as there are no signs that it is unfairly biasing applications to specific demographic groups, or that there are any significant difficulties for applicants in completing the forms. Additionally, auto-enrolment figures have remained relatively stable which indicate that there are no significant miscommunications for this group that deter them from applying.

Although the overall reduction in applicants may be due to a number of factors not all relating to the assessment process introduced, it has potentially played a role in the reduction of applicants. Reducing applications from those that are in less need will ultimately benefit those that the service is designed to help.

Background and methodology

Background

Dial a Ride (DaR) has been trialling the introduction of an enhanced assessment process for non-automatic applicants (the system for automatic applicants has not changed). The new assessment has been in place for applicants requesting membership since 27 June 2011.

The new process requires applicants to complete an application form which is assessed by a third party to determine their eligibility. The new process has been designed to capture more details about an applicant's disability and the difficulties they experience using public transport.

Transport for London (TfL) is keen to ensure that the process is fair and that it does not discourage those in need of the service from applying.

Methodology

To evaluate the new process, a two-stage research approach was taken:

- A review of the DaR database comparing the profile of entrants before and after the introduction of the new process.
- 300 telephone interviews with non-automatic applicants who have engaged with the new system, including those who have subsequently become DaR members as well as those currently going through the process and those whose application was unsuccessful
 - Where applicants were not able to speak on the telephone (either for language or any other reasons), a proxy was accepted
 - Interviewing was conducted from 9th to 19th January 2012

Sample analysis

From the sample supplied, a 50% response rate was achieved (up to the target of 300 interviews). Non-members were prioritised initially to ensure their views were gained and in total 81 interviewees who said they had not been accepted into the DaR scheme were interviewed, with a reasonable response rate.

Table 1.1 sample analysis

Assessment process research sample	Sample available	Completed interviews	Conversion rate
Passed new assessment	391	219	56%
More information requested	65	14	22%
Failed assessment	54	24	44%
Not returned form yet	76	38	50%
Total	586	300 ¹	51%

The sample file flagged which stage applicants had reached, however they were given the opportunity to update that information during the interview and the figures in the table above are based on interviewees' confirmation of their application stage.

¹ Note: five respondents categorised themselves as at an 'other' stage in the application process (sent back form and waiting for response / not yet received form).

Database analysis findings

Comparing the two time periods (1 July 2010 - 31 December 2010, and 1 July 2011 – 31 December 2011) there has been an overall fall in the number of new entrants accepted on to the DaR scheme – from 4,156 in the second half of 2010 to 2,943 in the corresponding period of 2011 (a reduction of 29%). Please see the next page for a full breakdown.

There were 1,027 fewer non-automatic applicants in 2011, while there were 179 more automatic applicants. Therefore the overall number and proportion of non-automatic members is substantially lower in 2011 than in 2010. There are a number of possible reasons for the reduction hypothesised by DaR:

- Applicants who previously didn't bother to provide evidence of automatic eligibility are now doing so as this is easier than providing evidence for non-automatic eligibility
- Applicants from nursing homes are now recorded as automatically eligible even though they do not receive the relevant benefits
 - DaR has advised SPA Future Thinking that 25% of the reduction in non-automatic registrations can be attributed to the new automatic eligibility of nursing home residents
- Applicants requesting forms but not returning them because they realise they would not be eligible
- Applicants returning the forms but without sufficient medical evidence so the membership is not completed
- Applicants requesting forms but not returning them because it is too difficult to obtain the medical evidence

In addition, some applicants failed their assessment in 2011, and these would in 2010 have been granted non-automatic membership².

On the following pages, DaR applicants in the two time periods are broken down by various demographic factors and borough of residence. As well as detailing the relative proportion of applicants associated with each demographic, the analysis looks at the difference in the proportion of all applicants between waves. This analysis aims to understand whether the new application process applies equally across all groups (in which case we would expect there to be little difference in the proportion of applicants each wave associated with each demographic) or whether some demographics find it easier or harder to qualify under the new system.

² This information was provided by DaR to SPA Future Thinking

This sub-group analysis shows no substantial change in the demographic profile of entrants, and therefore does not provide any evidence to indicate that there are barriers for particular groups when applying. (Although there has been a slight swing away from male and towards female entrants amongst non-automatic applicants, this could be the result of random chance, and should be monitored in the future to confirm).

Based on the sample of applicants made available to SPA Future Thinking – and making the assumption that this reflects all applicants – we can provide an estimate of the total number of successful and unsuccessful applicants.

Assessment process research sample	Sample available	% of total sample	Estimated total applicants in 6 month period 1 July – 31 December 2011
Passed new assessment	391	67%	2,943
More information requested	65	11%	483
Failed assessment	54	9%	395
Not returned form yet	76	13%	571
Total	586	100%	4,392

Prior to the introduction of assessment all of these applicants would have been accepted as members. Therefore, a conservative estimate of the impact of assessment would be that almost 1,500 fewer members joined DaR in this period as a result of its introduction. This figure may be higher if pre-application information sources make the assessment process clear, as this may put-off those who are not eligible from even making a request for forms.

Table 2.1 Analysis of DaR database

	All						Auto						Non-Auto					
	2010		2011		Difference		2010		2011		Difference		2010		2011		Difference	
Total	4,156		2,943		-1,213		2,666		2,487		-179		1,479		452		-1,027	
Male	1,308	31%	904	31%	-404	-1%	826	31%	794	32%	-32	1%	480	32%	109	24%	-371	-8%
Female	2,847	69%	2,039	69%	-808	1%	1,840	69%	1,693	68%	-147	-1%	998	67%	343	76%	-655	8%
Inner London	1,229	30%	808	27%	-421	-2%	754	28%	682	27%	-72	-1%	474	32%	125	28%	-349	-4%
Outer London	2,919	70%	2,132	72%	-787	2%	1,908	72%	1,802	72%	-106	1%	1,001	68%	327	72%	-674	5%
Up to 15	15	0%	11	0%	-4	0%	11	0%	11	0%	0	0%	4	0%	0	0%	-4	0%
16 to 24	48	1%	30	1%	-18	0%	27	1%	28	1%	1	0%	21	1%	2	0%	-19	-1%
25 to 34	48	1%	58	2%	10	1%	34	1%	49	2%	15	1%	14	1%	9	2%	-5	1%
35 to 44	108	3%	81	3%	-27	0%	72	3%	68	3%	-4	0%	35	2%	13	3%	-22	1%
45 to 54	212	5%	150	5%	-62	0%	137	5%	119	5%	-18	0%	75	5%	30	7%	-45	2%
55 to 64	335	8%	227	8%	-108	0%	194	7%	185	7%	-9	0%	141	10%	42	9%	-99	-1%
65 to 74	705	17%	403	14%	-302	-3%	349	13%	300	12%	-49	-1%	354	24%	102	23%	-252	-1%
75 to 84	1,368	33%	873	30%	-495	-3%	541	20%	617	25%	76	5%	825	56%	254	56%	-571	0%
85 to 94	1,191	29%	1,024	35%	-167	6%	1,180	44%	1,024	41%	-156	-3%	5	0%	0	0%	-5	0%
95+	116	3%	82	3%	-34	0%	115	4%	82	3%	-33	-1%	1	0%	0	0%	-1	0%
White	2872	72%	2023	73%	-849	1%	1895	71%	1742	70%	-153	-1%	971	66%	279	62%	-692	-4%
BAME	1111	28%	733	27%	-378	-1%	657	25%	582	23%	-75	-2%	453	31%	149	33%	-304	2%
Ambulant	2924	70%	1962	67%	-962	-3%	1804	68%	1599	64%	-205	-4%	1111	75%	359	79%	-752	4%
Wheel-chair	1231	30%	981	33%	-250	3%	862	32%	888	36%	26	4%	367	25%	93	21%	-274	-4%

	All						Auto						Non-Auto					
	2010		2011		Difference		2010		2011		Difference		2010		2011		Difference	
Total	4,156		2,943		-1,213		2,666		2,487		-179		1,479		452		-1,027	
Barking And Dagenham	108	3%	126	4%	18	1%	76	3%	115	5%	39	2%	32	2%	11	2%	-21	0%
Barnet	292	7%	170	6%	-122	-1%	181	7%	138	6%	-43	-1%	110	7%	32	7%	-78	0%
Bexley	76	2%	79	3%	3	1%	53	2%	65	3%	12	1%	23	2%	14	3%	-9	1%
Brent	164	4%	121	4%	-43	0%	96	4%	95	4%	-1	0%	68	5%	26	6%	-42	1%
Bromley	203	5%	139	5%	-64	0%	132	5%	123	5%	-9	0%	71	5%	16	4%	-55	-1%
Camden	64	2%	50	2%	-14	0%	36	1%	47	2%	11	1%	28	2%	3	1%	-25	-1%
Croydon	163	4%	133	5%	-30	1%	109	4%	108	4%	-1	0%	53	4%	24	5%	-29	1%
Ealing	205	5%	196	7%	-9	2%	122	5%	168	7%	46	2%	82	6%	27	6%	-55	0%
Enfield	194	5%	140	5%	-54	0%	107	4%	102	4%	-5	0%	85	6%	38	8%	-47	2%
Greenwich	168	4%	61	2%	-107	-2%	113	4%	51	2%	-62	-2%	55	4%	10	2%	-45	-2%
Hackney	199	5%	105	4%	-94	-1%	122	5%	93	4%	-29	-1%	76	5%	12	3%	-64	-2%
Hammer-smith and Fulham	54	1%	44	1%	-10	0%	34	1%	34	1%	0	0%	20	1%	10	2%	-10	1%
Haringey	139	3%	95	3%	-44	0%	69	3%	79	3%	10	0%	70	5%	16	4%	-54	-1%
Harrow	180	4%	79	3%	-101	-1%	110	4%	70	3%	-40	-1%	69	5%	9	2%	-60	-3%
Havering	175	4%	124	4%	-51	0%	131	5%	105	4%	-26	-1%	44	3%	18	4%	-26	1%
Hillingdon	183	4%	121	4%	-62	0%	103	4%	95	4%	-8	0%	80	5%	26	6%	-54	1%
Hounslow	92	2%	90	3%	-2	1%	67	3%	77	3%	10	0%	24	2%	13	3%	-11	1%
Islington	80	2%	42	1%	-38	-1%	39	1%	35	1%	-4	0%	41	3%	7	2%	-34	-1%
Kensington and Chelsea	35	1%	22	1%	-13	0%	25	1%	17	1%	-8	0%	10	1%	5	1%	-5	0%

	All						Auto						Non-Auto					
	2010		2011		Difference		2010		2011		Difference		2010		2011		Difference	
Kingston Upon Thames	122	3%	50	2%	-72	-1%	93	3%	43	2%	-50	-1%	29	2%	7	2%	-22	0%
Lambeth	163	4%	67	2%	-96	-2%	105	4%	58	2%	-47	-2%	58	4%	9	2%	-49	-2%
Lewisham	128	3%	93	3%	-35	0%	76	3%	69	3%	-7	0%	52	4%	24	5%	-28	1%
Merton	87	2%	72	2%	-15	0%	52	2%	62	2%	10	0%	35	2%	10	2%	-25	0%
Redbridge	219	5%	149	5%	-70	0%	157	6%	133	5%	-24	-1%	60	4%	16	4%	-44	0%
Richmond Upon Thames	32	1%	27	1%	-5	0%	26	1%	27	1%	1	0%	6	0%		0%	-6	0%
Southwark	126	3%	68	2%	-58	-1%	80	3%	58	2%	-22	-1%	46	3%	10	2%	-36	-1%
Sutton	100	2%	125	4%	25	2%	66	2%	109	4%	43	2%	33	2%	16	4%	-17	2%
Tower Hamlets	57	1%	65	2%	8	1%	32	1%	58	2%	26	1%	25	2%	7	2%	-18	0%
Waltham Forest	156	4%	130	4%	-26	0%	114	4%	116	5%	2	1%	42	3%	14	3%	-28	0%
Wandsworth	104	3%	77	3%	-27	0%	74	3%	67	3%	-7	0%	30	2%	9	2%	-21	0%
Westminster	80	2%	80	3%	0	1%	62	2%	67	3%	5	1%	18	1%	13	3%	-5	2%

Note: percentages around rounded to the nearest whole number which means that in some cases a difference which appears to be, say, 2%, may actually be 3% or 1%.
Figures represent age at application.

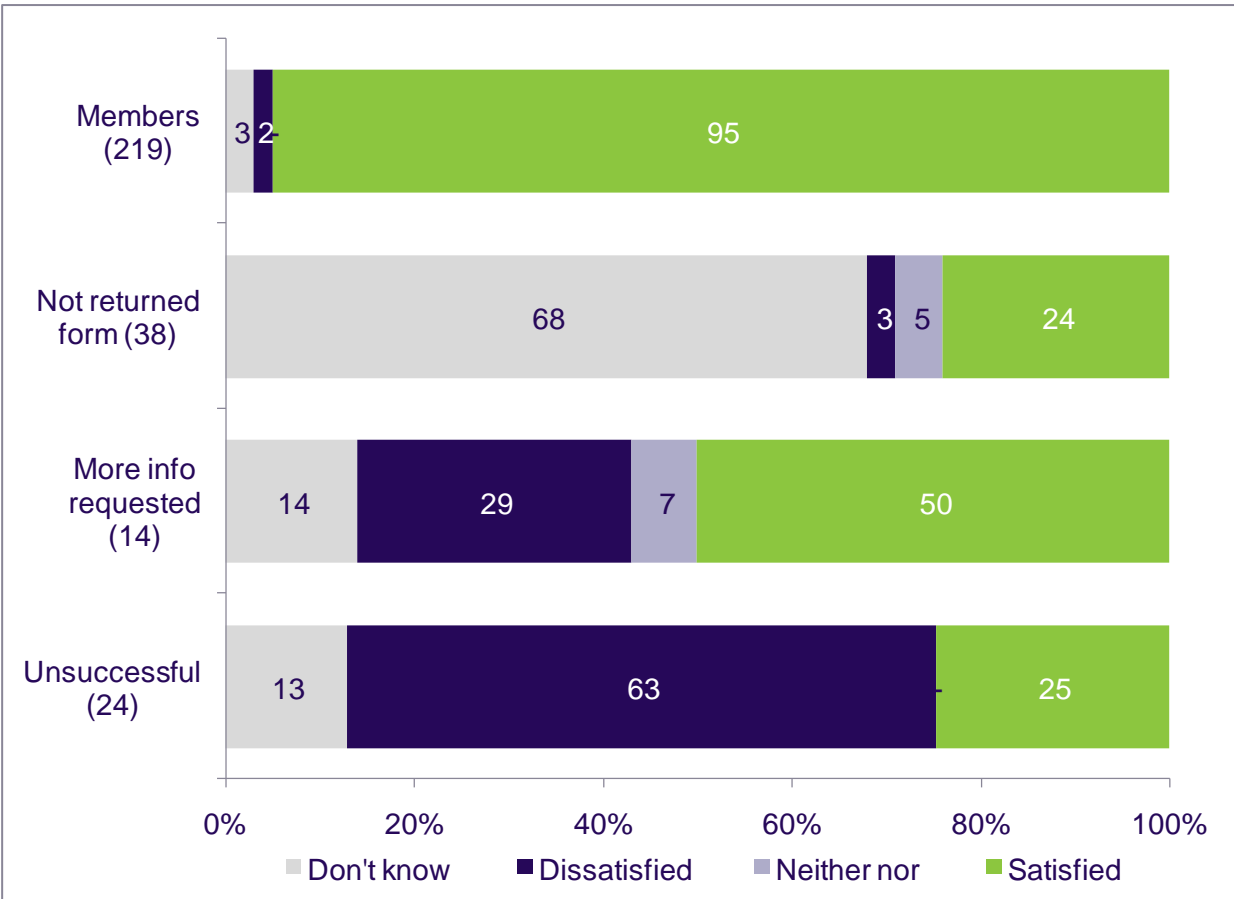
Telephone survey findings

Perceptions of the overall fairness of the process

When asked whether DaR had assessed their application fairly³, the vast majority of those who had become members did think that their application had been fairly assessed, while those who were unsuccessful were more likely to think that their application had not been fairly assessed.

No differences were observed when comparing different demographic groups including age, gender and ethnicity.

Chart 3.1 Satisfaction that the process was handled fairly by DaR



A3. Dial a Ride is responsible for assessing membership applications and informing applicants of the outcome of their application. How satisfied are you that Dial a Ride has assessed your application fairly? Please think of the administrative and clerical procedures rather than the outcome of your application.
 Base: all(NOTE: VERY LOW BASE SIZES FOR 'MORE INFORMATION REQUESTED' AND 'UNSUCCESSFUL')

³ Respondents were asked to consider only the administrative and clerical procedures rather than the outcome of their application.

By weighting these satisfaction figures by the number of applicants in each category (i.e. 67% successful, 11% more information requested, 9% failed assessment and 13% not returned form) the average proportion of applicants that are satisfied is 75%.

Reasons for thinking the process was fair

Although they were asked not to consider the outcome of their application when judging how fairly it had been assessed, it is perhaps unsurprising that many interviewees did base their opinion in part on whether they were accepted – particularly for those whose application was unsuccessful.

Amongst successful applicants, 31% mentioned this as a factor in judging the fairness of the application process – the joint highest mention alongside the perception that the process was quick.

Table 3.2 Reasons for agreeing that the process was fair

Number of mentions UNPROMPTED	Members (207)	Non- members ⁴ (22)
Process was quick	64	5
My application was successful	64	1
Information provided was straightforward	28	2
Process was easy	25	-
Staff were helpful, friendly and polite	21	1
I was able to provide all the required information	10	1
No complaints / problems / process straightforward	10	-
I was treated fairly	8	-
I received accurate and timely responses to my queries	7	1
Staff were knowledgeable	7	-
I was kept informed	7	-
Staff listened to me	3	1
It is a good service	3	-
Easy to contact / available / given contact number	2	-
My application has been handled sensibly	1	1
Don't know	19	8

A4. Why do you say that you were satisfied?

Base: all satisfied

⁴ NB: very low base size for non-members, treat findings as indicative only. Includes 9 who had not returned their form, 7 who had been asked for more information, and 6 whose application had been unsuccessful. Grouped together as very small number of people.

Reasons for thinking the process was not fair

Of the 20 non-members who disagreed that the process was handled fairly, the most commonly given reason related to the negative outcome of the application. A handful of respondents mentioned other factors, including four who mentioned that they were not kept informed.

Five members disagreed that the process was fair, giving a variety of mainly individual explanations.

Table 3.3 Reasons for disagreeing that the process was fair

<u>Number</u> of mentions(not percentages) UNPROMPTED	Non-members ⁵ (20)
My application was unsuccessful	12
I was not kept informed	4
I was not treated fairly	3
Process was complicated	2
They should have come to see me	2
I was not able to provide all the required information	1
Had to pay	1
Don't know	2

A5. Why do you say that you were dissatisfied?

Base: all non-members dissatisfied

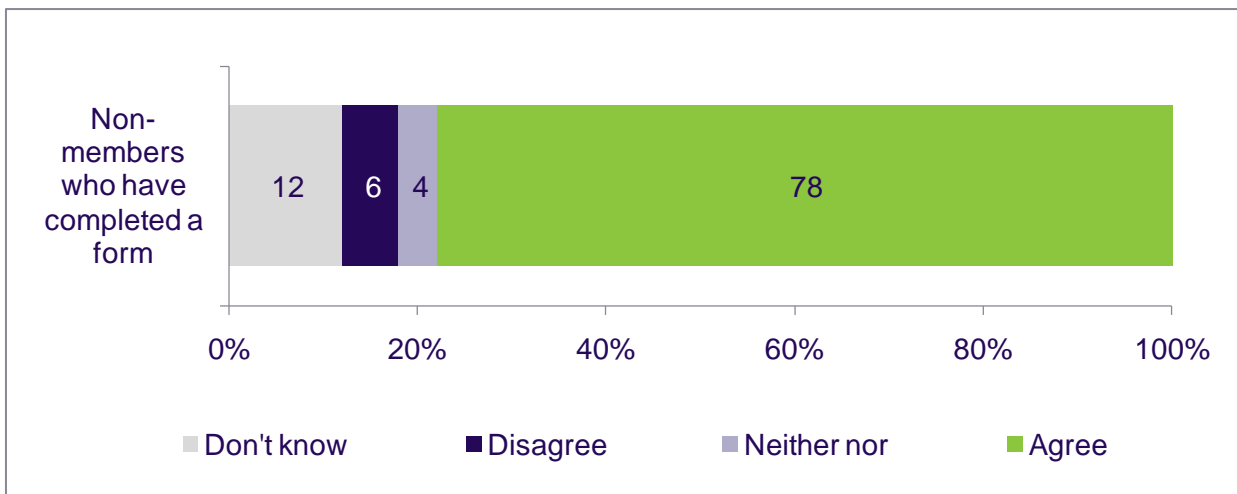
Three non-members and one member said that they were not treated fairly; of these, two said that they felt that they needed or were entitled to be members of the Dial a Ride service, and one each said that staff were not knowledgeable, staff were not understanding, and poor communication.

⁵ NB: very low base size for non-members, treat findings as indicative only. Includes 15 unsuccessful applicants, 4 who had been asked for more information, and 1 who had not returned their form.

Satisfaction with the information requirements of the application form

Of those non-members who had completed a form (including those who had returned it, and those who had still to do so), three quarters (78%) agreed that the information they were asked to provide was reasonable, with just three interviewees disagreeing (of these, two had no specific reason for saying so, the other that the information requested was 'too intrusive').

Chart 3.4 Satisfaction that the information needed was reasonable



B3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the information you were asked to provide in the application form was reasonable?

Base: all non-members who had completed an application form (49)

Non-returners

68% of those who had not yet returned their application form intended to do so, while 13% did not intend to return the form and 18% had not yet decided whether to return it or not. Of those 26 interviewees who had not returned the form yet, there were various reasons as shown in the table below. Only one thought that they would not be eligible, with the main reasons relating to not having had time, or waiting for more information or assistance.

Table 3.5 Reasons for not yet having returned application form amongst those intending to do so

<u>Number of mentions(not percentages)</u>	All (26 ⁶)
Haven't got around to it yet	7
Waiting for information to complete the form	5
Lost application form	5
Form is complicated / require assistance	3
No immediate need for the service	3
Need copies of ID	1
Need to provide proof of condition / other information	1
Do not think I qualify for the service	1

B6. Can I ask, why haven't you returned the application form yet?
Base: all who have not returned the form but intend to do so (26)

Amongst the five interviewees who did not intend to return their application form, three said that there had been a change in their circumstances meaning that they no longer wished to apply, one said that they had realised they were probably ineligible, and one interviewee was representing a potential applicant who had decided not to go ahead with the process.

Applicants who had been asked for additional information

A small number of interviewees (14) identified themselves as having been asked for additional information by DaR to complete their application. Of these, 12 said they intended to re-submit their application with the required information (six by themselves, six with assistance from someone else); one did not know whether they would re-submit, and the other said they would not because they couldn't be bothered.

⁶ NB: very low base size, treat findings as indicative only.

Unsuccessful applicants

Twenty-four respondents said their application to join DaR had been rejected. Of these, five had appealed the decision.

Table 3.6 Unsuccessful applicants

<u>Number</u> of people (not percentages)	All unsuccessful (24)
Have appealed the decision	5
Have not appealed the decision	19

D1. Did you appeal the decision?

Base: all unsuccessful (24)

Five out of the 24 rejected applicants said that DaR had explained to them why their application was unsuccessful and, of these, three did not feel that the explanation was acceptable – in all three cases on the reasons that the explanation was not considered acceptable was that the applicant felt they were entitled to the DaR service.

Table 3.7 Satisfaction with explanation of decision

<u>Number</u> of people (not percentages)	All feeling explanation was unacceptable (3)
Felt they were eligible for DaR	3
Information / doctors report not accepted	1
Other answers	1

D3. Why do you say that [the explanation was not acceptable]?

Base: All not thinking the explanation was acceptable (3)

Of all 24 rejected applicants, six said they understood why their application had been unsuccessful. However, when asked if they thought the outcome was fair overall, seven out of the 24 unsuccessful applicants said yes, while 15 said no and two didn't know.

Table 3.8 Whether unsuccessful applicants understood why their application as unsuccessful

<u>Number</u> of people (not percentages)	All unsuccessful (24)
Yes	6
No	13
Don't know	5

D4. Do you understand why your application was unsuccessful?

Base: all unsuccessful (24)

Table 3.9 Perceptions of whether the outcome was fair

<u>Number</u> of people (not percentages)	All unsuccessful (24)
Yes	7
No	15
Don't know	2

D4. Do you understand why your application was unsuccessful?
 Base: all unsuccessful (24)

Extra support

Just one interviewee requested specific support from DaR to assist with completing their application. That person was very dissatisfied with the support that DaR had provided, saying that they had not received any support and that a telephone application would have been more appropriate to their circumstances – although they did not elaborate on what would have assisted them in their application.