

Report of Director of Environment and Housing

Report to: Housing Advisory Board

Date: 8th April 2014

Subject: STAR survey 2014/15 – Method & Approach

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. Although there is no longer a regulatory requirement to carry out a large tenant perception survey, Housing Leeds needs to understand current tenant concerns and priorities to continue to develop and improve services.
2. The approach used for STAR was suitable, effective and low cost. Following the same method and carrying out the survey at the same time of year, will enable robust tracking of trends.
3. Planning the survey to be accurate to Ward level would be beneficial to the new service, whilst not costing a significant amount extra.
4. Offering translated surveys incurred a fair amount of additional cost and staff time, but the number of tenants that used the service (10) was so small as to be statistically insignificant.
5. Following the review of housing services, there is now an opportunity for service improvements to be coordinated and monitored by a central function, which would be better-positioned to support with the development of strategic improvements.

Recommendations

6. A large scale tenant perception survey is carried out in 2014/15, by the internal Research Team who carried out the previous survey, repeating the same approach as STAR 2012 and at the same time of year.

7. To only produce an English language version of the survey (and versions for sight impaired customers), potentially saving over £1000.
8. For the survey to again be accurate to each management areas (and BITMO), but to improve reliability at WARD level, at an additional cost of up to £1500.
9. During the project planning phase a central function is agreed, through consultation with service managers, to coordinate and monitor planned service improvements across the city.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To provide a summary of what was learnt from STAR survey 2012, and how services have changed as a consequence.
- 1.2 To propose a method for carrying out a large city-wide customer perception survey of general needs tenants during 2014/15.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Until 2010 social housing providers were required to carry out tenant perception surveys following the STATUS survey methodology. Since then, HouseMark developed the STAR survey, following many of the key principles of STATUS and with similar questions, so that providers can track trends over time and benchmark with other similar organisations.
- 2.2 In 2012 the ABCL Research team carried out a STAR survey entirely in house, using council resources including the Print and Mail Room, and completed the project at a cost of £13,888 (less than half of what it had cost to out-source STATUS surveys in previous years).

2.3 Key findings from STAR 2012 survey:

In general the results were positive with increased satisfaction in many areas including the key question - overall satisfaction with services:

2.3.1 Successes:

- Increase in overall tenant satisfaction rising by 5% city wide to 74%,
- Dealing with enquiries generally (+9%),
- Neighbourhood as a place to live (+4%),
- Dealing with anti-social behaviour (+8%), and
- Landlord listening to tenants views and acting upon them (+5%).

2.3.2 Areas of concern:

- Repairs - decreases in satisfaction with **speed of repair** (-10%) and **quality of repair work** (-6%), and **repair right first time** was low at 61% - although **overall satisfaction with repairs** up slightly (+1%).
- Neighbourhood issues – responses showed low levels of satisfaction with **communal cleaning** and **overall estate services**. **Car parking & rubbish and litter** reported as major issues across the city.
- Advice and support - satisfaction with all advice and support questions was low, in particular **paying rent and managing finances** (-15% - although inclusion of extra element 'managing finances' this year) and advice and support to **vulnerable tenants** (-5%).

- Reputation of the landlord - agreement that the landlord has a **good reputation** was arguably low at 60%.

2.3.3 Key drivers identified that affect overall tenant satisfaction were:

- Satisfaction with **repairs and maintenance** – and tenants reported this was by far their most important priority.
- Satisfaction with **listening and acting upon views** – underlining the importance of feeding back to tenants after consultation and informing them of any actions taken.
- Tenant **age** - with the highest levels of dissatisfaction in the younger population.

2.4 Further research and analysis was carried out to consider the areas with the highest and lowest levels of satisfaction alongside a number of other information sources. This 'Insight Report' was shared with local housing services to inform discussion on 'what might be the reasons for greater or lesser satisfaction?', and so inform the development of future services.

Areas with the most satisfied tenants	Areas with the most dissatisfied tenants
1.Wetherby	1.Kirkstall
2.BITMO	2.Armley
3.Meanwood	3.Wortley
4.Harehills and Chapeltown	4.Halton Moor and Osmondthorpe
5.Swarcliffe	5.Seacroft South

2.5 **Key Service Improvements:**

The ALMOs produced local action plans using the findings of the survey, which included many planned improvements. Listed below are some of the key improvements that link to the survey findings.

2.5.4 Addressing **repairs and maintenance** concerns from the findings, including speed of repair and getting it right first time:

- On-going city-wide review of repair scripts and additional training provided to staff, with a view to reduce misdiagnosis - a key factor affecting repairs getting done right first time.
- The repairs policy has been reviewed city-wide and a new tenants' handbook produced, which sets out the service parameters and customer responsibilities, to enable the service to better focus resources where they are needed.
- Coordinating planned works city-wide in such a way as to pre-empt future responsive repairs and create a more efficient service.

- 2.5.5 Addressing **neighbourhood** issues from the findings including rubbish and litter, anti-social behaviour, drugs, and car-parking:
- EASAP project accessed £250k funding to carry out works to improve the appearance and the cleanliness of targeted estates.
 - In SSE Leeds, £150k set aside for environmental works, resulting in improvements to fencing and open spaces, parking, and to the council buildings within estates.
 - Working in partnership with LASBT and the Police, Operation Champion targeted hot spots in Seacroft South with increased officer presence, and resulted in tenancy action being taken against problem tenants.
- 2.5.6 Addressing issues from the findings around **advice and support with managing finances** and for **vulnerable tenants**:
- Across the city 19 additional officers brought in to support tenants affected by welfare reform.
 - In SSE Leeds, winter 'survival packs' containing food, warm clothing and blankets given to vulnerable people.
 - In ENE Leeds, Operation Champion assisted a number of vulnerable tenants, rehousing some due to safeguarding issues.
- 2.5.7 Addressing low satisfaction with **moving and swapping home** and with advice and support for this service:
- Changed procedures in ENE Leeds to ensure mutual exchange website kept up to date and carried out 'swap shops' in Seacroft and Halton.
- 2.5.8 Continuing to improve how we **listen to and act on tenants views**, and improving **landlord reputation**:
- Development of Social Media as a communication channel city-wide including Facebook, Twitter, and through Youtube videos that highlighted estate improvements. Targeted emails and text messages used to contact hard to reach groups including younger people.
 - In WNW Leeds, internal systems set up to identify and report positive stories.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 Although there is no longer a regulatory requirement to carry out a large tenant perception survey, Housing Leeds needs to understand current tenant concerns and priorities to continue to develop and improve services. The local service surveys currently in use neither provide overall satisfaction figures or the insight across all services that a tenant perception survey would provide.
- 3.2 Housemark's STAR survey framework is the industry standard tenant perception survey, providing accurate results that can be compared with other similar

organisations. Following the STAR approach again would enable tracking of trends over time - particularly useful during this period of change.

3.3 STAR 2012 was carried out through the post, supplemented by emailed web surveys. Postal surveys are generally more cost effective than other methods, such as phone surveys, and aren't restricted to a small number of questions.

Results can be skewed by a preference of certain demographic groups to complete surveys, however they can (as previously) be weighted to ensure they represent the views of all tenant groups. To help with this we could again supplement the returns with emailed web surveys to attract responses from younger tenants.

Different survey methods can affect overall satisfaction results. Repeating a postal method would ensure like-for-like comparison with previous results.

3.4 Research has shown that tenant satisfaction levels can differ slightly depending on the time of year. For this reason surveys should be sent out at the same time as previous surveys (October and November), so that results are comparable. Other times of year have been shown to negatively affect levels of satisfaction. This would be the result in the following project timeline:

Month	Activity	Phase
Apr	Agree high level method and approach	Project planning, preparation and design
May	Plan project. Collaborate with Service Managers to develop survey questionnaire from optional STAR questions.	
June		
July	Complete first draft of survey. Work with internal teams/external partners to get quotes for print/mail and schedule work.	
Aug		
Sept	Complete mail sample and send to printers with final draft of survey.	Field work
Oct	1 st mail out	
Nov	2 nd mail out	Data entry, cleansing and weighting
Dec	Complete data entry	
Jan15	Initial top line findings	
Feb15	Present findings to key stakeholders.	
Mar15	Publish detailed city-wide report.	

- 3.5 The previous surveys were designed to be highly reliable to the 3 ALMO areas (and BITMO). Following the same approach, would enable us to track trends and compare satisfaction in these areas, by which many services will continue to be managed.

In order to report by local governance areas, the survey could be planned to be reliable at Ward level. This would provide a more detailed picture than the Neighbourhood Office level previously used, but would consequently require 10% more surveys to be sent out, at an additional cost of up to £1500.

- 3.6 For STAR 2012 we offered translated versions of surveys, at a cost of £725 (plus incurring staff time and printing a further side of A4). We only received around 10 completed non English language returns, which will have made no effect on the figures and would not have affected the survey's validity in terms of being able to obtain a representative sample.
- 3.7 Working with a number of separate organisations in 2012 made it difficult to monitor that findings were used effectively to inform service improvement. Following the review of housing services, there is now an opportunity for this to be coordinated by a central function, which would be better-positioned to support with the development of strategic improvements. How best to do this could be considered in consultation with service managers during the project planning phase.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 The STAR survey is a key consultation tool, which collect tenant feedback around services provided and consults on their priorities.
- 4.1.2 We have previously used these surveys as an opportunity to ask tenants if they want to get involved – providing engagement teams with lists of interested tenants.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 Using a combination of survey questions and what we already know about tenants from the tenant profile, it is possible using the STAR method to gain a wealth of insight around the opinions and priorities of different social and demographic groups, which can be used to support future service development.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

- 4.3.1 The Best Council Plan includes the objective of ensuring high quality public services, with a focus on improving customer satisfaction. The STAR survey is a key tool for assessing whether this best council objective has been met.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 STAR 2012 was carried out by the ABCL Research Team using internal print and mail services at a cost of £13,888. It would cost around £30,000 to have this work

carried out by an external market research organisation. The team would be able to carry out STAR 2014 for a similar amount.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 The STAR survey is a confidential survey, subject to data protection laws around the use of market research.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 A key risk would be that the survey doesn't gain the insight needed to drive further service development in 2015/16. To reduce this the questionnaire will be created in consultation with service managers across Housing Leeds.

4.6.2 A Risk Register will be developed before May 2014 as part of the project management process.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Housing Leeds needs to carry out a large scale tenant perception survey in 2014/15 and if we again follow the STAR approach this would enable tracking trends over time and benchmarking with other similar organisations.

5.2 The approach used for STAR was suitable and effective and low cost. Following the same method and carrying out the survey at the same time of year will enable robust tracking of trends.

5.3 Planning the survey to be accurate to Ward level would be beneficial to the new service, whilst not costing a significant amount extra.

5.4 Offering translated surveys incurred a fair amount of additional cost and staff time, but the number of tenants that used the service was so small as to be statistically insignificant.

5.5 Following the review of housing services, there is now an opportunity for service improvements to be coordinated and monitored by a central function, which would be better-positioned to support with the development of strategic improvements.

6 Recommendations

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6.4 During the project planning phase a central function is agreed, through consultation with service managers, to coordinate and monitor planned service improvements across the city.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.