

Customer feedback – some tips

Euan Ramsay, a Director of Feedback, has put together a summary presentation for social landlords on how to design the collection of customer feedback in order to improve the performance. Euan gave this presentation at four recent CIH sessions on Customer Insight – you can hear it yourself at one of the further sessions that are coming up in London (21 July), Manchester (11 August) and Bristol (21 September). The presentation can be downloaded from our website at www.feedbackservices.co.uk/Archive.aspx

There is a growing requirement for social landlords to ask their customers on a regular basis for their views on key services, so that their specific needs can be identified and improvements made. It is important to follow a few simple rules, to ensure that the results from these surveys are robust, accurate and representative. For example:

- ◆ Be careful about the survey method – remember that postal surveys tend to encourage the older, loyal customers to reply and you may miss the views of the newer tenants with families and busy lives. If your response rates to a survey are below 40%, you will probably be getting an unrepresentative picture.
- ◆ Consider telephone or face to face interviews of a random sample of customers instead, these eliminate response bias to a large extent and telephone interviews at least can be very cost effective
- ◆ Use random samples where practical – no need to do a census for most surveys, as long as you are getting sufficient replies
- ◆ Aim to get enough replies to make the survey results accurate to at least $\pm 4\%$ sampling error at the 95% confidence level overall, and to at least $\pm 7\%$ sampling error at the sub group level (such as area office).
- ◆ Keep survey questions short and to the point, try not to use 'Don't know' responses
- ◆ Include diversity characteristics in the analysis – where possible, read these demographic details from your customer database into the survey data file, rather than asking customers to continually complete this information in a survey
- ◆ Develop a co-ordinated approach to all customer surveys across the organisation, so that you can track the performance of key services over time in a structured way, without lots of ad hoc surveys being carried out by different service teams.

Further advice and support in designing your approach to customer surveys is available from Feedback. Please contact Euan Ramsay on 01865 584332 or email him at euanramsay@feedbackservices.co.uk.