Area Panels: December 2014
Briefing Paper: STAR Survey 2014

Background:

This survey is called STAR (Survey of Tenants and Residents) and is undertaken by landlords on a voluntary basis to allow them to benchmark tenant satisfaction with other housing providers. Housing last carried out a STAR survey of resident satisfaction in 2011.

The survey was undertaken in June this year, using a postal methodology with a randomly selected sample of tenants as recommended by Housemark. The survey achieved a response rate of 24% - 724 respondents.

Key findings:

Comparison of 2008, 2011 and 2014 figures with benchmarking data

	% satisfied (2008)	% satisfied (2011)	% satisfied (2014)	Benchmark figure	Ranking in 2014
Satisfied overall with the service from housing	72%	83%	78%	82%	6 of 9
The overall quality of your home	79%	81%	80%	82%	6 of 9
Your neighbourhood as a place to live	80%	83%	84%	80%	2 of 8
Satisfaction with the last completed repair	77%	81%	76%	80%	No ranking data
That your rent provides value for money	84%	86%	84%	79%	2 of 8
Listen to views and acts upon them	60%	62%	64%	56%	2 of 6

Next steps:

The results will be published in the winter edition of homing in and on the council website.

Contact: James Pemberton
Performance & Improvement Officer
E-mail: james.pemberton@brighton-hove.gov.uk
Telephone: 01273 290562

Area Panels	Agenda Item Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:		**STAR tenant satisfaction survey 2014**	
Date of Meeting:		**1,3, 4, 8 December 2014**	
Report of:		**Executive Director of Environment, Development and Housing**	
Contact Officer:	**Name:**	**Ododo Dafé**	**Tel: 293201**
	Email:	**ododo.dafe@brighton-hove.gov.uk**	
Ward(s) affected:		**All**	

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

1.1 This report provides feedback from a satisfaction survey of a sample of council tenants carried out in June 2014.

1.2 The survey results provide an up-to-date and statistically significant indication of customer satisfaction on a range of council housing services.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 That the Area Panels note and comment on the contents of this report.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

3.1 Housemark, a national housing organisation, has consulted widely with social housing providers to produce a set of questions that organisations prefer and that enable comparison, but with the freedom for each organisation to add local questions as they wish. This survey is called STAR (Survey of Tenants and Residents) and is undertaken by landlords on a voluntary basis. Housing last carried out a STAR survey of resident satisfaction in 2011.

3.2 Housemark's recommended standard questions were adopted, along with some of our own, and we will be in a position to compare ourselves against other housing providers as many of them undertake this survey and upload their results onto Housemark.

3.3 The survey was undertaken in June this year, using a postal methodology with a randomly selected sample of tenants as recommended by Housemark. The survey achieved a response rate of 24% - 724 respondents. This compares with 42% - 1,251 completed questionnaires in 2011. However, this lower response rate reflects a decision not to undertake a second postal mailing to those tenants who had not replied. Tenants on the selected list with emails were contacted a second time. By avoiding a second postal mailing we reduced costs from £9,473 in 2011 to £6,121 in 2014. It also had considerable sustainability implications saving greatly on paper and print.

3.4 The results have been analysed by APR, a research company. The table below shows the results of key indicators in this survey compared with the STAR survey in 2011 and 2008, and the comparison benchmarking figure.

Comparison of 2008, 2011 and 2014 figures with benchmarking data

	% satisfied (2008)	**% satisfied (2011)**	**% satisfied (2014)**	**Benchmark figure**	**Ranking in 2014**
Satisfied overall with the service from housing	72%	83%	78%	82%	6 of 9
The overall quality of your home	79%	81%	80%	82%	6 of 9
Your neighbourhood as a place to live	80%	83%	84%	80%	2 of 8
Satisfaction with the last completed repair	77%	81%	76%	80%	No ranking data
That your rent provides value for money	84%	86%	84%	79%	2 of 8
Listen to views and acts upon them	60%	62%	64%	56%	2 of 6

3.4.1 This benchmarking data is a comparison with eight other stock retained authorities in urban areas who subscribe to Housemark and who have completed a STAR survey in the past two years. In some categories not all authorities provide data so the ranking numbers vary. Unfortunately this group does not provide repairs ranking data.

3.5.1 Overall satisfaction

3.5.1 Overall the tenant satisfaction survey results in 2014 are broadly similar to those attained in the 2011 survey, with most questions varying by only one or two percentage points.

3.5.2 Some of the positive drivers for satisfaction arising from the survey results include how Housing listens to and acts on resident's views, and our standards of customer service and enquiry handling.

3.5.3 However the fall in the overall satisfaction figure from 83% to 78% is disappointing. There seems to a clear link between the decline in overall satisfaction and the decline with the last completed repair (discussed further in paragraph 3.7 of this report). Another factor that contributed was a fall in the satisfaction with grounds maintenance (down from 74% to 69%). We need to understand the reasons for this dissatisfaction particularly in the west of the city (51%) so focus groups will be arranged with residents and discussions will be held with our grounds maintenance provider, City Parks.

3.5.4 Younger people also expressed less satisfaction with services. Over the last three years a number of projects have tried to engage younger tenants – however, the results have largely been disappointing and only a few younger engaging with Housing. Currently, we are considering pre-tenancy workshops to engage younger people with Housing before their tenancy begins, and we continue to use preferred ways of communicating with younger residents such as email (63% of 16-34 year olds preferred this as a communication channel). We will also expand our use of Facebook as 17% would use this form of social media.

3.5.5 It is however pleasing to report that sheltered housing tenants indicated high levels of satisfaction with sheltered housing services – 90% including around two thirds (63%) who were very satisfied.

3.6 Home and Neighbourhood

3.6.1 This result for satisfaction with the quality of their home remains at a similar level to 2011 (80% compared to 81% in 2011). Once again older tenants were significantly more satisfied than their younger peers with 89% of over 65's satisfied, compared to 65% of those aged under 35.

3.6.2 The ability to move or swap house remains low at 42% (38% in 2011), although a number of responses were of an ambivalent nature with 36% selecting the 'neither' option. One way we have tried to address this is to ensuring the mutual exchange process is centrally managed by one team, and our performance data demonstrates applications are being well managed with 92% of decisions being made within 42 days. We have also improved our service offer to tenants wishing to move by mutual exchange to provide some practical and financial support to remove barriers tenants may experience in carrying out a mutual exchange. Building on the success of a mutual exchange event held in 2013 a series of community based mutual exchange events in partnership was housing associations are planned over the next year with the first one due to take place in December.

3.6.3 Satisfaction with the local neighbourhood as a place to live remains high - 84% compared with 80% for benchmarked authorities. There was a slight fall in satisfaction with the way we dealt with ASB (down from 64% from 62%) with satisfaction lower in the central area. The introduction of the ASB, Crime and Policing Act 2014 in October provides further potential powers for us to tackle ASB. The theme of November's City Assembly is Safer Communities which provides a further platform to discuss resident experiences of our service.

3.6.4 We have also reviewed the way we carry out estate inspections, and during this year we will be introducing a new way for residents to engage in rating their satisfaction through the introduction of a 'scores on the door' scheme.

3.6.5 Another area for closer scrutiny is that satisfaction with the cleaning of internal areas remains static at 73%, however our performance data indicates that the cleaning quality inspection pass rate is 98%. The Estates Service Team carry out a random sample of satisfaction surveys which will assist us with tracking this on a regular basis. This disparity between satisfaction and quality will be discussed with the Neighbourhoods Service Improvement Group to identify how improvements can be made.

3.7 Repairs and Maintenance

3.7.1 Satisfaction with the last completed repair (76%, down from 81% in 2011) is a major factor in reduced satisfaction with Housing. However these findings are in conflict with our performance report data where surveys of individual tenants in Quarter 1of 2014/15, showed that of the 477 residents telephoned, 93% state they were satisfied with their repair.

3.7.2 However for the STAR survey, this issue of the timeliness of our repairs response was a negative driver of satisfaction. Again we have an anomaly with our performance data which shows that for both emergency repairs and routine repairs the performance was above 99%, against a target of 99% and 98.5% respectively. This may be because the performance data is for our responsive repairs service whereas the STAR survey does not differentiate between this and our planned and major works programme which naturally does involve longer lead times for these works due to planning, leasehold consultations and the delivery of a planned programme.

3.7.3 Better communication of programmes is therefore a key area for the service to focus on to ensure that residents are better informed around the timing of major and planned works for their area. At the same time the service has made significant changes to better deal with roofing and scaffolding delays that have been experienced this year. These include bringing more local roofing specialists into the partnership, expanding the scaffolding contractors used and using a mobile platform vehicle in order to speed up the safe completion of inaccessible repairs and reduce the need and disruption of scaffold.

3.7.4 Working alongside tenant representatives, Mears and officers will continue to consider and take action on all aspects of the repairs service where further improvements can be made.

3.8 Value for money

3.8.1 These figures remain favourable compared with other authorities with 84% of respondents satisfied that their rent levels represented good value, including nearly a half (47%) who were very satisfied. It is also encouraging to find 71% were satisfied with service charge in terms of value for money. The slight fall in satisfaction from 73% may be linked to the new services charges that were introduced at the beginning of this financial year and impacted most upon residents in high-rise properties.

3.9 Customer Service

3.9.1 It is pleasing to see that four out of five (81%) respondents said the standard of customer service they receive is good. This included 40% who said that it was very good. 19% of people who contact the Housing Customer Service Team made a positive comment when provided the opportunity to offer free text.

3.9.2 The majority of respondents also found it easy to access services (84%), including over a third (36%) who said it was very easy, and residents in the Central area were more satisfied than those in other areas. A small proportion of respondents said they had some difficulty accessing services with around one in ten (9%) saying this was the case for them. When asked how this could be improved, the most commonly cited issue was the time it took to get through on the telephone. The team will continue to review resources at peak times to assist with call handling. The Housing Customer Service Team also undertakes customer satisfaction surveys every six months and performance data will be included in the performance report twice a year.

3.10 Resident Involvement

3.10.1 The proportion of tenants who say we listen to their views and act on them is increasing - 64% compared with 62% in 2011 and 60% in 2008 and above the benchmark for similar authorities at 56%. It is worth noting that while we can be pleased with this finding from the survey, it also represents a significant area where future improvements can be found. This is not least because the main driver that reportedly negatively impacted the results was the lower levels of satisfaction amongst lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender residents. The Resident Involvement Team will be carrying out some work to look into this further and ascertain whether lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender residents might be interested in forming a consultative group. If there is little appetite for an ongoing group, there may be some gains in achieving understanding from carrying out a focus group with some residents from this community group.

3.10.2 The result for satisfaction with opportunities to get involved has remained static (63%). The Business and Value for Money Service Improvement Group identified that it wishes to review levels of involvement to see whether or not the changes identified through the 'Everyone Counts' report has increased participation. This piece of work will be included in the group's work programme for the year ahead.

3.11 Information and communication

3.11.1 Three quarters of tenants (76%) said Housing is good at keeping them informed about things that may affect them. Nine out of ten respondents say they have read the 'Homing in' magazine (90%), more than half of whom said they 'always' read it (57%). The number of under 35s stating that they read Homing In was considerably lower than the over 65s at 17% and 70% respectively, and it will be important in future to consider how it can be made more appealing and relevant to younger tenants, while maintaining the aspects that are of interest to older residents.

3.11.2 There was mixed feedback in the area of internet communication and access to services, with some residents feeding back that they wanted access to traditionally based services, yet with others wanting more access to online services. On a survey question relating to the possible development of a Housing App it is interesting to note that 26% of respondents would be interested in using such a service, with interest highest amongst the under 35's (63%).

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

4.1 The report feeds back on consultation with a representative sample of tenants, and is valuable in providing information about satisfaction levels on a range of housing services, communication preferences, involvement, and tenant profile data against which comparisons can be made. The work also provides a platform for further engagement of residents in service improvement.

4.2 The report was presented to Housing Committee on 12 November prior to going to Area Panels on 1 to 5 December, in order to avoid delaying publication of the survey findings in the winter edition of Homing In in December. This route for the report was also desirable in order to meet the Scrutiny Panel's request for access to the STAR survey results to inform its current scrutiny review of aspects of the repairs service

4.3 The contents are for noting and comment and no decision is required. Any significant feedback from Area Panels will be reported to the Housing Committee in January 2015 under Chairs Communications, or as a separate information paper for Housing Committee members.

4.4 The findings have been subject to discussions with service managers and our repairs partner, Mears and these discussions will continue. Future actions to address increased resident satisfaction with Housing services will feature in service business plans and in annual and mid-term performance reviews with managers and staff.

4.5 A full copy of the report will be made available on the council's website.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

5.1 As mentioned in the report the cost of this survey was £6,121. These costs have been met from the current HRA revenue budget 2014/15.

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks Date: 30th October 2014

Legal Implications:

5.2 This is for note and comment only and so does not have any legal consequences arising. Should it lead to any actions, then this would be the subject of further legal advice at a later time.

Lawyer Consulted: Simon Court   Date: 30th October 2014

Equalities Implications:

5.3 Equalities implications have been considered within the report. Most groups within equalities strands are well represented within the survey respondent group. There are variations to levels of satisfaction that we now need to consider how to address.

5.3.1 As in previous surveys those aged 45 and over were over represented compared to younger residents. Similarly one bedroom properties were over represented compared to family homes, as were high rise properties. The fact that tenants with disabilities were over represented is likely to be due to the age profile. The sample was representative by gender, there was a good response rate amongst Black and Asian tenants, as well as gay men. Whilst some other characteristics such as hindu, mixed ethnic background or lesbian were under represented these were small groups in the sample and therefore prone to greater variability.

Sustainability Implications:

5.4 The avoidance of a second mailing greatly reduced paper and print used in producing the report compared with previous years. We also worked with a local charity Paper Mates to assist with the mail out. This provided a joint working opportunity and helped the sustainability of its service.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

5.5 There was a slight fall in satisfaction with the way we dealt with ASB (down from 64% from 62%) with satisfaction lower in the central area. The introduction of the ASB, Crime and Policing Act 2014 in October provides further potential powers for us to tackle ASB. The theme of November's City Assembly is Safer Communities which provides a further platform to discuss resident experiences of our service.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

5.6 There are no risk and opportunity management implications arising from this report.

Public Health Implications:

5.7 There are no public health implications arising from this report.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

5.8 There are no corporate or citywide implications arising from this report.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices: None

Background Documents None