

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Housing Options Service

Customer Satisfaction Survey Summary

September 2013

Introduction

This document is the summary of the results from our annual Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS), conducted in August 2013.

The CSS is our main method of mass service user consultation, being sent to nearly 1700 temporary accommodation tenants this year. With an incentive of entry into a £250 prize draw, we received nearly 155 responses, equalling a response rate of 10% - our best yet - and another welcome improvement in service user engagement levels.

Communication

We generally communicate with service users by letter, telephone calls and by using information contained on our website – the related survey questions help to validate the effectiveness of each of these communication channels. We also produce up to four newsletters a year – InTouch – which is sent to all of our customers living in temporary accommodation.

This survey showed that 82% of respondents preferred to be contacted via letter, which is an increase from our last CSS which indicated that only 80% preferred this method of contact.

We value our Tower Hamlets customer promise and aim to answer calls within 5 rings. When conducting this survey 76% of customers were satisfied or very satisfied with the time taken to answer their call.

Overall 74% of our customers were satisfied or very satisfied with the way their call was dealt with which was the same response from our 2012 findings.

We asked whether customers felt we could improve on the way we answer calls. There was a mixed response, with 57% indicating that improvements could be made. A significant number (42) of the freehand responses indicated that Staff should respond quicker and answer the calls faster. Also which was alarming 14 free hand responses complained that politeness was an issue and needed to be looked at.

This is something that the Business Support team will be discussing with SMT to look at ways in which we can improve.

Complaints

The majority of our feedback comes in the form of complaints, comments and compliments. To help capture these, we have put customer feedback cards in our reception area, in addition to the LBTH complaints forms occasionally received and correspondence received from service users.

When asked, 33% of respondents said that they were aware of the feedback cards in reception. This was a disappointing response as we have used both previous and the current surveys and also our Customer newsletter to tell our customers that this service is available. We will continue to do so for future improvement.

We welcome complaints as an effective way of obtaining feedback about the service and identifying areas for improvement.,

50% of our customers stated they were aware of the complaints procedure and 20% of respondents had made complaints about the service. Of these 50% were satisfied with the outcome, which compared to last years survey was a small improvement following the bigger response that we received.

We will continue to raise awareness of the complaints procedure through our newsletters, website and via our reception with posters on the walls.

InTouch Temporary Accommodation newsletter

69% of our customers found our InTouch customer newsletter useful. With only 10% stating “No” it was not useful.

When asked how we can improve InTouch we had a very positive response and will be analysing the free hand comments to identify any improvements that can be made.

A main free hand response was that our Customers wanted to know about their bidding positions, as our Lettings allocation scheme has changed and one of the main changes will be that our customers will now know there bidding positions when bidding for a property we aim to publish this in our next edition of InTouch informing our customers.

Also what was a concern was that we received many comments saying that our customers didn't receive the newsletter, as the Survey was attached to the newsletter this was worrying.

Housing Management

Since our last survey it has been over 2 years since we have gone through an organisation review and as part of this process the generic Housing Management Team was formed by merging the functions previously carried out by the separate Customer Liaison, Income and Accommodation teams. This merger has improved

the customer journey by reducing the number of officers they need to deal with in relation to their temporary accommodation from three to one.

82% of our customers stated they knew their housing officer. This was around the same mark as 2012.

49% of customers in temporary accommodation had been visited at least once by their housing officer in the previous 12 months. This was an improvement of around 5% more than the previous year. Our aim was to have 90% of our customers visited twice in the last 12 months so this is an area which we really need to look at with SMT to look at ways we can improve.

61% of our customers in temporary accommodation knew who their Managing agent was and a further 38% of these customers had been visited by their managing agent at least once within the last year. These figures must also be looked at as it shows the Managing Agents are not meeting their contractual duties.

65% of customers said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the location of the temporary accommodation. This is a slight reduction on the results for 2012 & 2009, reflecting the need to place more customers out of the borough due to a reduced supply of in-borough accommodation.

60% of customers were satisfied or very satisfied with the condition of their property, this was the same amount of percentage as the 2012 Survey but the numbers of who was satisfied made a significant increase as more customers answered the 2013 Survey. This reflects the success of work undertaken to set minimum property standards in all temporary accommodation, improved training for staff and recruiting staff with more expertise in maintenance and housing management.

Satisfaction with the Managing Agent, at 59% was on a par with the 2009 & 2012 results.

Overall satisfaction

63% of customers were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall service they received. Targets on customer satisfaction vary between teams. The SMT has identified the need to review target setting and monitoring, which is one of the areas to be addressed by the review of Admin and Business Support services currently underway.

Many freehand responses complained of the length of time spent in temporary Accommodation, this is something we are always looking to improve but with the number of applicants always increasing and the Borough being very over populated, we are hoping to secure further procurement outside the Borough to meet the demand.

What next?

The findings from the CSS will be fed back to our Management Team, along with copies to all teams for consideration at team meetings. Please look at these results and feedback to the Business Support Team with your comments. We want to know:

- What actions your team will be taking
- Any ideas you have that you can work on with the Business Support Team
- Any other comments on the Customer Satisfaction Survey