
REPORT TO:	HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 8
DATE OF MEETING:	4th FEBRUARY 2016	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	PERFORMANCE AND POLICY MANAGER	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	MARTIN GUEST (5940) martin.guest@south-derbys.gov.uk	DOC:
SUBJECT:	STAR SURVEY 2015	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: HCSO1

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Members note the findings of the recent all tenant satisfaction STAR survey.
- 1.2 Members approve the follow up actions arising out of the survey, which are shown in 3.20.

2. Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To outline to members the main findings of the STAR survey, this was concluded in August 2015.

3. Detail

- 3.1 Following Committee approval in February 2015 this consultation was undertaken using a questionnaire designed by SMSR Ltd in conjunction with Council Officers.
- 3.2 The aim of the consultation was to assess tenants' satisfaction with South Derbyshire District Council's Housing Services. More specifically the objectives of the consultation were:
 - To assess satisfaction with Housing Services,
 - To gather information about tenants' awareness of the complaints procedure,
 - To gather opinion on our estate services,
 - To assess satisfaction with the advice and support provided by the Council for new tenants, vulnerable tenants and those moving home,
 - If a repair had been undertaken, to gather satisfaction regarding this repair,
 - To assess opinion of contact and communication with Housing Services
 - To gather opinion of supported housing,
 - To understand the views of those tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit on how easy it was to complete the application form and alternative ways of using technology and information to improve this service.

- To understand our tenants awareness of Universal Credit, what information they need and how the changes may impact on their payment methods.

3.3 The STAR survey provides valuable information on how tenants view the services we provide. We will use this information to ascertain what we are doing well and areas we may need to improve on and this will form a major part of the Housing Services priorities over the next 5 years.

3.4 The questionnaire was sent to all South Derbyshire District Council housing tenants on the 21st May 2015. Tenants were given two weeks to complete and return the questionnaire and tenants who did not respond were then sent a reminder survey. Responses were tracked and those who did not respond to either the initial mail out or the first reminder were sent a second reminder giving them a further two weeks to take part in the consultation. The consultation period ended on the 24th July 2015.

3.5 In total 1,326 completed questionnaires were received, giving an excellent response rate of 45%. This was down on the response rate of 1,958 (65%) completed questionnaires in 2012 but still represents an excellent response rate to a survey of this type.

3.6 The vast majority of respondents were satisfied with the service provided by Housing Services (93%); including 52% that were very satisfied.

3.7 Overall there has been a 1% increase in satisfaction levels since the STAR survey in 2012.

3.8 The results of the STAR Survey place us as the highest performing Housing Services in any Council in England based on the STAR returns submitted to Housemark. In addition, we were placed 29th out of 300 social housing providers throughout England.

3.9 We have benchmarked our STAR results against approximately 360 other providers (not all providers submitted returns for all questions.)



- Housing Services achieved 'upper quartile' performance across all of the eight core areas (six of which are detailed in the table above.)

- 3.10 A summary of the key findings from the report were that more than nine out of ten respondents were satisfied to some extent with their neighbourhood as a place to live (91%), the quality of their home (91%) and the way in which Housing Services dealt with repairs and maintenance (91%). Around nine out of ten respondents expressed satisfaction towards the friendliness and approachability of Housing Services staff (92%), and said they were satisfied that Housing Services were providing an effective and efficient service (89%) and the level of service which they expected (90%). All aspects of the survey relating to the home and neighbourhood satisfaction had increased when compared with 2012.
- 3.11 **Complaints:** six out of ten respondents indicated an awareness of the Council's formal complaints procedure, which although fairly high, represented a significant decrease in awareness when compared with 2012 (-6%)
- 3.12 **Estate Services:** almost nine tenths of respondents were satisfied with the overall appearance of the neighbourhood (87%), and 79% were satisfied with the grounds maintenance in their area.
- 3.13 **Advice and Support:** more than two-thirds of respondents were satisfied with the provision of advice on claiming benefits (69%) and information on managing finances (67%); if we remove non-applicable responses (that did not need or use this service) then satisfaction increases significantly (claiming benefits: 82%, managing finances: 81%). More than two-fifths of respondents were satisfied with the support the Housing Service provides for new tenants (48%), vulnerable tenants (46%) and those moving home (43%)
- 3.14 **Repairs and Maintenance:** the majority of respondents reported satisfaction towards all statements relating to when a recent repair which was undertaken, with satisfaction for each aspect being 86% or above. Respondents were more positive in regards to the attitude of workers (95%), that dirt and mess was kept to a minimum (93%) and the overall quality of the work which was undertaken (91%). In addition, 94% said the appointment which they were given had been met. Although this satisfaction was very high, positive opinion towards each aspect considered has decreased marginally when compared with 2012.
- 3.15 For **Contact and Communication**, the majority of respondents said that Housing staff had been helpful (87%), were able to deal with their query quickly (83%) and that their query had been dealt with in a reasonable time (84%). Fewer respondents reported that it had been easy to contact the right person (76%), with perceived ease of contact decreasing by 2% when compared with 2012. In addition although 78% were satisfied with the final outcome of the query, a further 14% said they were dissatisfied. Eight out of ten respondents were satisfied that Housing Services were good at keeping them informed, however, when compared with 2012 there has been an 8% decrease in those who described themselves as being 'very satisfied'. The majority (86%) of respondents supported the continuation of Housing publications, with almost all indicating a preference for receiving this publication in postal format. Postal communication also emerged with the most preferred methods of contacting the council, with 58% expressing a preference for written communication and 43% saying they preferred contact via a newsletter.
- 3.16 **Supported Housing:** among those living in supported housing, more than nine-tenths were either very or fairly satisfied with the safety and security of their home

(91%) and how easy it was to access all areas of their home and scheme (89%). When responses of not applicable are removed, levels of satisfaction were 84% or above towards all aspects of supported housing.

3.17 **Housing Benefit:** Among the 15% of respondents who had made a claim for Housing Benefit for the first time during the past 12 months, 86% said it had been easy to complete the application form and 84% had been able to provide the evidence which was required with ease. Respondents were positive towards the information provided in regards to Housing Benefit, with 87% saying they were satisfied with the information which the council provided on this topic and 92% rating this information as either very or fairly good. Opinion was divided on whether the council should make better use of technology in the future, however, a slightly higher proportion (53%) felt that the council should not take the opportunity to do so. Only 37% of respondents said they would be willing to use a mobile phone application to report changes to their circumstances however, willingness to do so increased to 81% among those aged 16 to 34.

3.18 **Universal Credit:** Awareness of upcoming changes was low, with 38% of respondents being aware of the introduction of Universal Credit and only 13% knowing that in the future they would be asked to apply for benefits online. Almost three-fifths (56%) of respondents were unable to access the internet through a computer or laptop, either at home or within another location, and only 27% of respondents were confident that they would be able to access and complete a detailed online application form without assistance. Few respondents anticipated that the introduction of Universal Credit would impact upon how their rent was paid. Around two-fifths (38%) of respondents said the introduction of Universal Credit would impact upon how they budgeted their finances, with 14% saying it would have a great impact. Most respondents saw use in having information on when Universal Credit will start (83%) and which benefits will be affected by its introduction (83%).

3.19 A full copy of the results table and a summary of the STAR 2015 results have been provide to the Tenants Performance and Scrutiny Panel. The Panel have met twice on the 12 and 26 November and have prioritised their feedback.

3.20 This feedback along with officer input has identified actions to address areas including grass cutting on estates, cleaning of internal/external communal areas, support for vulnerable tenants and the speed and quality of officer response to tenants. These actions will be included into the relevant Housing and Environmental Services service plans from April 2016.

3.21 Officers have previously met with our Tenants Panel to discuss the grass cutting service and the costs associated with the different methods of delivering this service, this will be looked at again in 2016. We have refreshed our customer service standards and will be monitoring these in 2016/17. We are also planning to schedule in updated customer service training later in 2016 for our employees.

4. **Financial Implications**

4.1 None

5. **Corporate and Community implications**

5.1 Providing services that meet the needs and aspirations of customers is a key aim of the Service and Council and delivers on several Corporate Plan outcomes.