

Responsive repairs: telephone survey pilot

Background

Westlea and OCHA both currently test satisfaction with responsive repairs by sending out paper feedback surveys with the acknowledgement letter for the repair. Residents should send this back when we have completed the repair. In 2009/10, Westlea got a 23% response rate to their survey, and OCHA an 8.6% response rate.

The Residents' Scrutiny Panel were concerned that this response rate was low, and asked us to test whether doing these surveys by telephone would improve the response rate. They also felt that it was important to make the calls as soon after the repair was completed as possible (ideally on the same day).

Methodology

Working with the Scrutiny Panel, we decided to do a two week pilot (weeks starting 7th and 14th February), where the Westlea market research team would phone as many people as possible who had a repair completed in that time.

The researchers used the questions from the paper surveys, to make sure that the results were comparable with previous results.

For Westlea, lists of repairs were generated from the system three times per day (13:30, 16:45 and 23:00) for the works team. A list of jobs completed by contractors was produced at the end of the two weeks. For OCHA, as there are fewer repairs, we produced one report per day (at 14:30) for works staff, and a report on Mondays and Thursdays for contractor jobs. This made sure that residents were contacted either on the same day as their repair, or the morning after at the latest.

Response rates

	Total repairs in the period	Total residents called*	Total completed surveys	Response rate
Westlea	453	423	267	63%
Works	430	404	260	64%
Contractor	23	19	7	37%
OCHA	158	158	73	46%
Works	125	125	57	46%
Contractor	33	33	16	48%

* where this is lower than the number of repairs, it is because we did not call some residents (reasons included residents being on the SAFE register; residents having told us that they do not want to take part in phone surveys; or the repairs being to empty homes or shared areas).

The response rates for contractors are noticeably lower, which may be related to the fact that we were running reports less frequently for these jobs, and therefore were not calling people back on the day that their repair was complete. This seems to support the idea that we are more likely to make contact with people by calling them on the same day.

Satisfaction levels

Westlea responsive repairs satisfaction	Two week pilot													
	Apr-10	May-10	Jun-10	Jul-10	Aug-10	Sep-10	Oct-10	Nov-10	Dec-10	Jan-11	Cumulative to Jan 11	All	Works	Contractor
Easy to access repairs service?	99.7%	98.8%	99.7%	99.7%	99.4%	100%	99.1%	99.2%	99.7%	99.5%	99.6%	100%	100%	100%
Was the person who took your call polite and helpful?	99.7%	99.4%	99.4%	100%	99.7%	99.7%	99.7%	99.6%	99.7%	100%	99.7%	100%	100%	100%
Were you satisfied with the conduct of the person completing your repair?	99.7%	98.8%	99.7%	99.7%	99.4%	100%	99.1%	99.2%	99.7%	99.5%	99.5%	99.6%	99.6%	100%
Was the repair completed by the target date on your original letter?	94.8%	94.5%	95.1%	95.5%	96.8%	96.0%	96.9%	97.9%	95.5%	97.4%	95.9%	93.6%	93.4%	100%
Has the repair solved the original problem?	93.6%	96.6%	96.3%	96.1%	97.1%	97.2%	94.6%	98.3%	97.6%	97.9%	96.4%	90.9%	90.7%	100%
Overall, are you satisfied with the service you received?	96.7%	97.5%	98.5%	99.1%	99.1%	97.2%	97.8%	97.9%	99.1%	97.9%	98.1%	95.5%	96.2%	71.4% ¹

¹ Note this was 2 jobs out of 7 where the resident was dissatisfied

Satisfaction has stayed same or increased
Satisfaction has dropped by up to 5%
Satisfaction has dropped by over 5%
<i>From the cumulative to January 2011 figure</i>

OCHA responsive repairs satisfaction	Two week pilot													
	Apr-10	May-10	Jun-10	Jul-10	Aug-10	Sep-10	Oct-10	Nov-10	Dec-10	Jan-11	Cumulative to Jan 11	All	Works	Contractor
Were our staff helpful and courteous when you reported your repair?	94.3%	97.95%	100%	99.2%	98.4%	98.8%	99.2%	97.3%	96.8%	96%	98.1%	98.6%	98.1%	100%
Was it clear when to expect the work to be carried out?	90.7%	83.7%	90.5%	89.4%	94%	94.2%	90%	93.3%	90.5%	89.3%	91.1%	87.5%	84.6%	95%
Did our staff make an appointment with you?	86.7%	78%	80.5%	83.4%	86.9%	85.7%	88.5%	88.6%	88.5%	86.2%	85.7%	84.7%	84.3%	85.7%
Were you satisfied with the way our staff handled your repair?	88.8%	93.61%	92.2%	95%	94.7%	93.2%	92%	95%	93.5%	91%	93.2%	95.8%	94.1%	100%
Did the contractor make an appointment with you?	70.3%	59.6%	75.7%	69.6%	70%	67.5%	71%	67.8%	65%	76.7%	70%	60%	66.7%	57.1%
Was the repair completed by the date shown?	88.4%	88%	93.3%	93.3%	93.2%	93.3%	89.3%	94.7%	92%	83.6%	91.4%	89.9%	90%	89.5%
Was the contractor polite and courteous?	98.1%	97.8%	99%	100%	100%	98.8%	99%	100%	98.4%	98%	99.1	97.2%	98.1%	94.7%
Did the contractor fix the problem first time?	78.4%	83.7%	83%	84.4%	83.7%	84%	89%	84.4%	88.8%	78.3%	84%	76.7%	78.8%	71.4%
Did the contractor leave it clean and tidy?	98%	95.7%	95.2%	98.3%	96.2%	96.6%	98.4%	98%	98.4%	94%	96.9%	98.6%	98.1%	100%
How would you rate contractor 1-5 (5 good)	4.28	4.48									4.53	4.6	4.8	4.7
Are you satisfied with this repair?	83%	93.8	92%	91%	94.5%	96.5%	95%	92%	95%	93%	92.3%	95.7%	98%	89.5%
Are you satisfied with the repairs service overall?	83.3%	93.9%	91%	94.5%	94.9%	97.5%	94.8%	90.9%	91.9%	87.4%	92%	86.3%	88.5%	81%

Costs

	Per contact ¹	Per completed survey ²
Westlea	£1.00	£1.61
OCHA	£2.24	£4.84

¹ Cost of total time spent divided by total calls made

² Cost of total time spent divided by people who actually took part in the survey

The cost for OCHA surveys was higher because the questionnaire is longer (it has 12 questions, whereas Westlea's has 5).

We experimented with the number of attempts made to call residents, to see how this affected the costs, first making two attempts and then cutting this to one attempt. It proved to be more cost effective to make two calls, as this did raise the response rate.

Conclusions

Response rates: carrying out these surveys by phone increases the response rate substantially. *However*, the response rates were within recommended statistical levels already (they should be between +/- 0% and +/- 4%).

	Westlea	OCHA
2009/10 response rate	23%	8.6%
Statistical accuracy	+/- 1.4%	+/- 3.2%
Pilot response rate	63%	46%
Statistical accuracy ¹	+/- 0.56%	+/- 1.06%

¹ recalculating the 2009/10 figure, but using the increased response level

We can also see that it doesn't substantially change the satisfaction levels achieved (see section below).

The approximate annual costs of doing this survey by phone are below

	Westlea	OCHA
Annual cost at 2009/10 response rate	£6,536.60	£4,181
Annual cost at pilot response rate	£18,107.17	£22,297
Saving on pre-paid envelopes	4060 x 35p = £1,421	864 x 35p = £302.40

Unfortunately, as the cards are currently sent out printed on the back of the repairs acknowledgement letter, we won't save any postage by not sending these out. We will save some on the pre-paid envelopes.

Therefore, there is a decision to be made about whether the benefits of doing this outweigh the costs.

More value might be gained by using the market research team to complete other surveys within the organisation (antisocial behaviour, complaints, new homes) where the statistical accuracy is much more of a concern.

Satisfaction levels

The results on pages 3 and 4 show that generally, they are consistent with the results that we achieved while using paper-based surveys. In the Balanced Scorecard, we would give something an “amber” light if it dropped by up to 5% and a red light if it dropped more than 5%. The traffic lights in the tables are based on this.

Westlea’s only red light was for the 5.5% drop in terms of whether the repair has solved the original problem. Similarly, OCHA has a red light for a 7.3% drop in terms of whether the repair was fixed first time. However, this may have been caused by the fact that the survey was done so quickly after the repair. With many repairs, it may take some time for the resident to feel convinced that the problem is fixed (a leaky roof may not be tested until the next rainy spell), or the repair may have been one part of a larger job which needs other trades to come out before it is finished to the residents’ satisfaction.

OCHA also had red lights for the contractor making an appointment and overall satisfaction with the repairs service.

However, several results actually improved, or stayed in a very similar ballpark to the paper survey results. On balance, there is no great cause for concern.

The survey

The pilot showed that OCHA’s survey is more expensive to run because of the number of questions, and that residents found some of the questions confusing). We would recommend that the survey is a) made the same across the Group and b) kept to the shorter and cheaper length.