

Summary

Epping Forest District Council commissioned Feedback Services to carry out a STAR tenant satisfaction survey. General needs and sheltered housing tenants were included in the postal survey, which took place between March and April 2012.

The results from the 2012 STAR survey demonstrate that the majority of tenants believe that Epping Forest District Council is providing a good, and on occasions excellent, housing service. The headline rating of 88% overall satisfaction from tenants with landlord services closely matched that awarded for the quality of the home (89%) and the neighbourhood as a place to live (88%). High ratings were also recorded for satisfaction with the condition of the home (85%), value for money of the Housing service for the level of rent charged (84%), ability of staff to deal with queries (83%) and enquiries generally (85%) and being kept informed of things that might affect them (83%). The individual aspects of the repairs service were very highly rated (88% - 93%).

The overall rating for the services provided by Epping Forest District Council (88%) is 3% higher than the level of satisfaction found in the previous full survey of all tenants undertaken in 2006 (85%). The overall rating is also higher than many individual ratings for specific aspects found in the survey, suggesting that Epping Forest District Council tenants hold the Council in good favour.

The survey also found increased satisfaction since the 2006 survey with the condition of the home (4% higher). The neighbourhood is a good place to live according to seven out of eight of Epping Forest District Council's tenants (88%) – an 8% increase in satisfaction since 2006.

Satisfaction with the overall repairs service has fallen slightly since 2006 (3% lower) and the decline can be seen in both general needs and sheltered tenants ratings. However, it should be noted that the 2006 results were exceptionally high, compared to other landlords. Individual ratings are still high and the survey found higher

levels of satisfaction with the time taken before the work started and the quality of the work.

Marginally fewer tenants in 2012 felt that Epping Forest District Council kept them informed about things that might affect them as tenants.

Key drivers

Key driver analysis reveals the importance to tenants of the repairs and maintenance service, followed by value for money. The condition and quality of the home, neighbourhood and listening to tenants views are also influential on overall satisfaction; as is being kept informed.

Key driver analysis also revealed that overall satisfaction with the repairs service is linked to the quality of the work, the speed of the workers and being able to make an appointment. It should be noted that the survey was undertaken **before** the Council introduced appointments for all repairs.

Areas of dissatisfaction

The survey found a small number of areas where approximately one in eight or more tenants are dissatisfied and these perhaps suggest the issues that the Council should focus upon.

Table 1. Services with the higher percentage of dissatisfied tenants	Dissatisfied (%)
Final outcome of enquiry	20%
Cleaning of internal communal areas	17%
Cleaning of external communal areas	17%
Anti-social behaviour	17%
Complaints	14%
Ability of staff to deal with queries quickly and efficiently	13%
Listens to views and acts on them	13%

Comparison with other Landlords

As Epping Forest District Council has been one of the first landlords to have taken the initiative

of carrying out a survey using the newly designed STAR question sets, it has not been possible to benchmark using 2012 data. However, over the last ten years Feedback Services has carried out over 800 STATUS surveys (the predecessor to the STAR survey) and although the last one was carried out in June 2011, the results from recent years provide some comparative analysis for Epping Forest District Council.

The comparison reveals that generally, Epping Forest District Council tenants are more satisfied (1% lower to 5% higher) than tenants of other social landlords. When the results are compared with the new HouseMark STAR averages (3% lower to 3% higher) the Council's ratings were close to the average ratings. The comparison revealed only exception, satisfaction with listening to tenants' views and acting upon them was rated considerably below the HouseMark average.

Table 2. Satisfaction of general needs and sheltered tenants (% satisfied or good)	2012 Epping Forest District Council STAR survey	House-Mark STAR surveys June 2012	2010/2011 STATUS survey (Ave of 41,000 tenants)
Services provided by landlord	88%	88%	85%
Quality of home	89%	87%	86%
Condition of property/home	85%		83%
Neighbourhood as a place to live	88%	85%	84%
Value for money of rent	84%	86%	83%
How enquiries are dealt with generally	85%		81%
Ability of staff to deal with query	83%		80%
Satisfaction with outcome	72%		72%
Repairs and maintenance service	82%	86%	82%
Being told when workers would call	90%		87%
Time taken before work started	88%		83%
Speed of completion of the work	91%		89%
Attitude of workers	93%		94%
Quality of repair work	90%		88%
Keeping tenants informed	83%		83%
Listen to views and act upon them	61%	74%	83%

Satisfaction at area level

The results from tenants were analysed at area level and the survey found considerable differences in some areas, some of which may require further investigation once tenant demographics, property type, stock condition and neighbourhood/environmental issues are taken into account. The survey found slightly lower levels of satisfaction amongst general needs tenants living in several areas:

- Buckhurst Hill - overall services (80%) and condition of the home (77%)
- Chigwell - overall services (82%), condition of the home (75%), value for money (73%), place to live (67%), appearance of neighbourhood (57%), ability to deal with query quickly and efficiently (70%), final outcome (57%), listens to views and acts on them (41%), kept informed (69%), repairs and maintenance service (76%), time taken before repair work was started (82%), speed work completed (87%)
- Waltham Abbey – listening to views (55%), overall repairs service (78%) and aspects of the repairs service (being told when workers would call (84%), being able to make an appointment (84%), time taken before the work was started (81%), speed work completed (86%), quality of repair work (88%))
- Loughton – satisfaction with final outcome of contact (65%)

General needs and sheltered housing residents

Sheltered residents generally are far more satisfied than general needs tenants, consistently awarding ratings higher than general needs tenants.

Sheltered residents awarded ratings in the high 80% and 90% and the survey found only a few instances where satisfaction was slightly lower than for all tenants – listening to views and acting upon them (68%), satisfaction with final outcome of contact (76%), dealing with anti-

social behaviour (77%), handling of complaints (81%) and the cleaning of internal communal areas (83%).

Overall, the ratings reflect a very high level of satisfaction amongst sheltered housing tenants. They awarded a higher rating for the overall services provided by the landlord (93%) compared to general needs tenants (86%) and key aspects of the services that affect them directly were also rated highly - including contact with the scheme manager (96%) and the Careline system (98%).

Analysis by key strands of diversity

Throughout the report, satisfaction with different services is analysed by the key strands of diversity. Younger residents almost consistently awarded lower ratings across all services measured in the survey compared with other residents, and the pattern is similar to that found by many social landlords.

In terms of household composition, family households and adult households (under 60) are often not as satisfied with services compared with older households. Female residents are less satisfied than male residents.

The considerable differences found in the subgroup analysis may require further investigation once resident demographics, property type, stock condition, neighbourhood and environmental issues are taken into account.

Service reviews

Epping Forest District Council should look to review service delivery in those areas, highlighted by the results in this survey, which indicate that service improvements may be needed. These should also provide further avenues that could usefully be explored with tenants. In particular:

Satisfaction with outcome of contact - One of the highest levels of dissatisfaction in the survey was linked to satisfaction after contacting the Council, with one in five tenants left

dissatisfied. This was the one area where sheltered tenants were not considerably more satisfied than general needs tenants, and comparison with previous surveys reveals that satisfaction has fallen for both groups. Any further analysis or investigation needs to ensure that the rating reflects the Council's Housing Directorate and not the wider services provided by the Council generally to residents of the District. It also needs to identify how much satisfaction is outside the control of the Council (for example the ability to provide tenants with transfers to alternative accommodation).

Listening to views and acting upon them

Epping Forest District Council is not alone in recording a much lower level of satisfaction with tenant communication and involvement than previous surveys. Although it is likely that the Council has recruited more residents to get involved in advising on improvements to housing services, residents still do not seem to feel that the Council listens to their views and acts upon them. Residents certainly consider that they are kept well informed, however perhaps not enough information is fed back on what action has been taken as a result of residents' views and suggestions.

Repairs and maintenance service – Unlike other services measured in the survey satisfaction with the overall repairs service has fallen slightly since the last survey (although satisfaction at the time of the last survey was exceptionally high). Key driver analysis reveals that satisfaction with the repairs service is the biggest driver of overall satisfaction with landlord services. However, the change in the headline result does not reflect the very high ratings for the different elements of the service, nor the fact that satisfaction in some areas have increased since the last survey. The finding suggests that the general perception amongst tenants is slightly adrift from reality and the results from the survey should be used to promote the service to tenants.

Overall Epping Forest District Council are to be congratulated on continuing to carry out

satisfaction surveys with tenants and working with them to measure trends and improve services with the aim of fulfilling their aims of providing and maintaining safe and attractive neighbourhoods that meets the needs and aspirations of the community.