



# Capturing the customer voice



How social landlords  
are gathering and using  
resident feedback in 2019



Report researched and  
produced by HouseMark

HouseMark 

September 2019

## Capturing the customer voice in 2019

Resident satisfaction surveys continue to be an essential tool used to shape services, improve ways of working and enhance the customer experience of residents across the housing sector. In 2011, HouseMark launched what is now the dominant framework for capturing and comparing customer satisfaction, STAR. With more than 300 landlords regularly using it to consistently compare customer satisfaction metrics, the framework has been successfully delivering data-driven insights to make measurable improvements for housing providers. So, what's next?

Motivated to maintain a modern approach to capturing customer satisfaction data, HouseMark has launched a review of the STAR framework to ensure that it provides social housing landlords with the best possible insights to deliver and demonstrate an excellent customer experience. As a first step, HouseMark invited social landlords and sector specialists to complete a survey to

share how they currently collect resident feedback and what they do with this data. Over 250 landlords responded, reaching all types of social housing provider – from big to small, ALMOs to associations – delivering the most extensive piece of research of its kind. This fantastic response demonstrates the huge interest, appetite and enthusiasm from landlords to engage with residents to improve their services. This research forms a strong foundation for HouseMark to build a framework for the future.

This short summary report shares the findings from the first phase of research.

We have also consulted with residents and the response has been overwhelming. With more than 7,000 people responding to our online survey, this represents one of the largest resident consultation activities in recent years. This level of interest shows a clear desire from residents that their voices are heard.

### Who took part in the survey?

257 social landlords representing more than 3,000,000 social housing units.



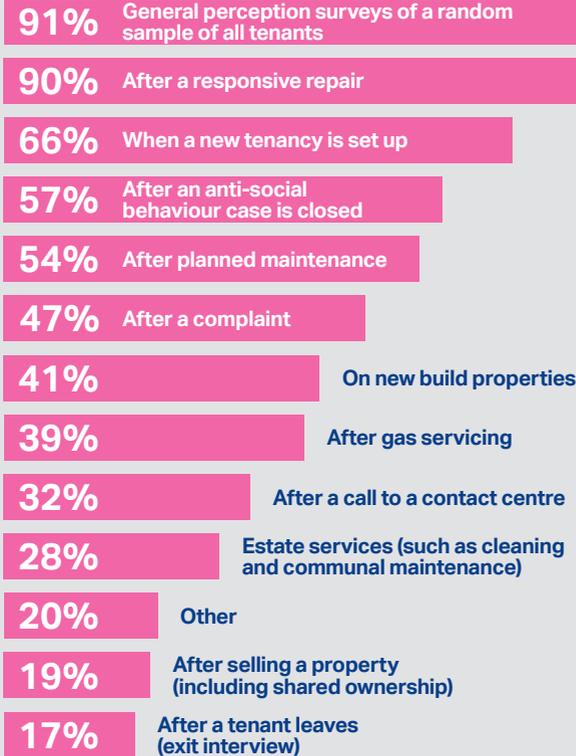
**257 Social Landlords**



## What surveys are social landlords carrying out?

The vast majority of landlords still carry out general perception surveys, but supplement these results with additional transactional surveys, most commonly following a repair.

### 257 Social Landlords



We use our perception surveys to understand how residents feel about us more generally through a trust measure, and use our transactional surveys to understand how easy it is to deal with us.



**Anita Khan**, Executive Director of Customer Services, Settle Group



## How perception surveys are being digitalised

Most landlords still carry out perception surveys by post or telephone, but increasing numbers are adopting a multi-channel approach and embracing online and SMS surveys.

**117**  
landlords are currently doing postal surveys – of these 68 are only using post

**149**  
landlords carry out telephone surveys – of these 78 are only using telephone

**19**  
landlords also carry out face-to-face surveys

**73**  
landlords carry out online surveys – of which 17 have moved completely online

## What do response rates look like?

Telephone and postal surveys receive significantly better response rates than more digital methods.



Face-to-face



Telephone



Postal



SMS



Online



Overall



We have a rolling programme of tenancy surveys collecting data on a range of subjects, such as updating contact details and establishing any support needs. We now use these face-to-face opportunities to collect tenant perception data at the same time, either by handing over the device for residents to complete or reading out the questions to them.



Lucy Malarkey, Director (Customer), Gentoo

## What are landlords doing with the results?

The majority of landlords share their survey results with boards and residents. Perception survey results are more likely to be benchmarked and communicated widely, but transactional survey results are more likely to be used for staff training and linked to staff and contractor rewards. Both types of survey are commonly being used to identify actions to improve, but there is limited use of the data to train and develop staff.

	Perception surveys	Transactional surveys
Report the results to the board / exec teams (for example in KPI reports)	88%	83%
Identify actions that need to be taken	82%	74%
Communicate results to tenants (for example in an annual report)	79%	60%
Benchmark the results	73%	30%
Staff training and development	30%	37%
Manage third party suppliers (for example repairs contractors)	21%	47%
Link satisfaction scores with staff bonus	7%	9%



At Bromford we use rolling perception and transactional surveys to understand our customer experience. Results are shared on a real-time basis to enable the continuous improvement of our services and to support the learning and development of our colleagues. At the end of each year, if we meet our customer recommendation target which is one of our Strategic goals, colleagues can receive a bonus.



**Helen Lloyd**, Feedback Manager, Bromford



## What measures are being used?

It is clear some existing STAR measures remain very useful to landlords. Many landlords are now asking additional questions about trust and ease of access.

Existing STAR measure	Percentage of landlords describing as very useful
Overall satisfaction	81%
Satisfaction with repairs and maintenance overall	74%
Quality of home	62%
Listens to views and acts on them	60%
Rent provides value-for-money	48%
Neighbourhood as a place to live	44%
Service charges provide value-for-money	39%
Net Promoter Score	39%

### New kids on the block – proportion of landlords using other measures



We have committed to improving our Net Ease Score. The Group regularly report on performance and have successfully increased our NES by +15 YTD. This improvement has been achieved through the dedication of our colleagues who have ensured that ease is a continuous focus across the Group.

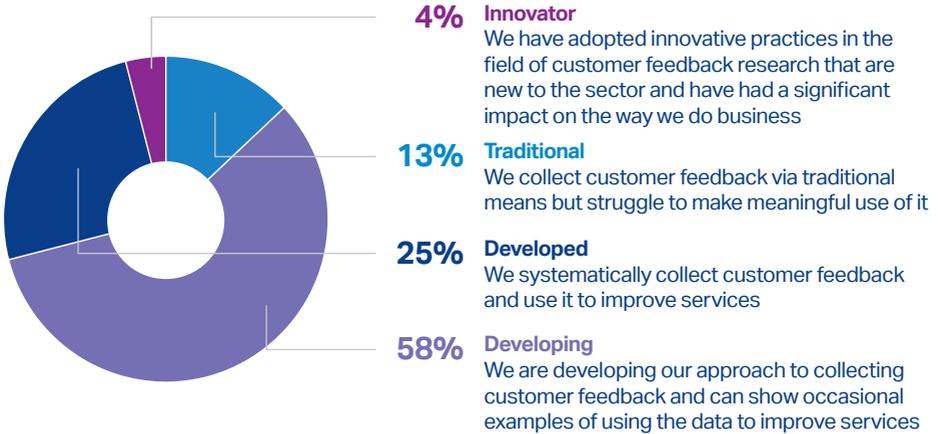


**Charlotte Bougon**, Head of Customer Engagement & Insight, Southern Housing Group



## How advanced does the sector consider itself to be in the field of customer feedback research and analysis?

The majority of landlords currently struggle to consistently make good use of tenant satisfaction data to drive service improvement, with some notable exceptions.



## What plans do landlords have for the future?

185 of the landlords who completed the survey (72%) said they were currently reviewing their approach to gathering and using customer feedback. Most landlords are reviewing their customer feedback processes with a focus on automation, digitalisation, and better segmentation and analysis.

The most common enhancements being developed by landlords include moving to more real-time/SMS surveys, using the data to train staff and embed a customer focussed culture, and collecting qualitative data with survey responses and/or via social media to carry out sentiment analysis.



We use a text analytics service to analyse the adjectives used and give each comment a sentiment score, reflecting how positive or negative the customer was about the topics raised.



**Chris Haynes**, Head of Insight, The Guinness Partnership

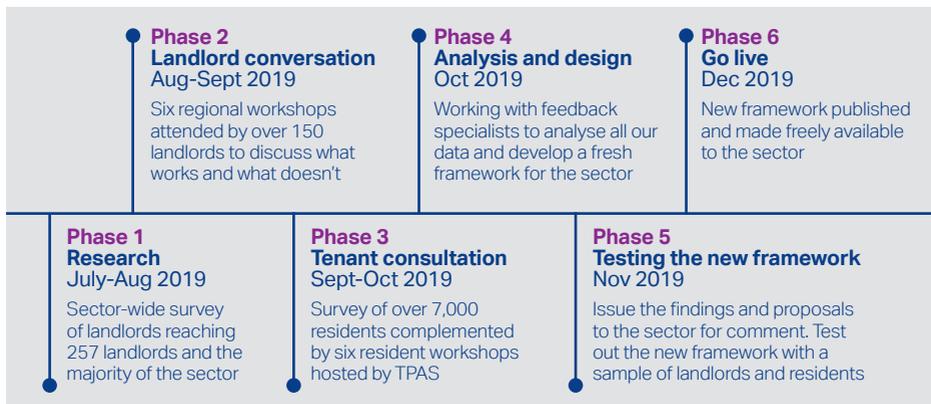


## What comes next?

It's clear that higher customer expectations, new technologies and an appetite from landlords to listen and respond to resident feedback, presents an amazing opportunity to positively respond to the emerging policy environment.

Housing providers are taking resident feedback seriously and want to use it to drive service improvements. However, this research shows that the majority of landlords do not feel like they are currently making the best use of resident feedback, with a great number of landlords currently reviewing their approach. They also value comparisons with other landlords, when they have the confidence they are comparing like-with-like.

This research sets the foundations for the review, and coupled with the other consultative phases outlined below, will inform the design of a modern, relevant and exciting framework for the future.



HouseMark invited representatives from across the sector to support the STAR review. We're proud to be working with the following organisations to shape the future of resident satisfaction for the sector:



HouseMark is the data-driven solutions provider for the housing sector. If you'd like to know more about the findings within this summary report, the STAR review or how HouseMark data analysis can drive evidence-based decision making in your organisation, please contact us at [info@housemark.co.uk](mailto:info@housemark.co.uk).