

## **Service users and carers survey - guidance for the local authority**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of the questionnaire is to gain a broad picture of the views of users and carers about their experience of social services. In particular, the questions focus upon the seven areas incorporated in the *how good are the services?* Dimension of the overall judgement:

- access to services;
- assessment;
- care management and review;
- range of services provided;
- quality of services provided;
- arrangements to protect vulnerable people;
- success in promoting independence and social inclusion.

The survey is conducted at an early stage of the review process as a means of engaging with a large, representative cross-section of service users and carers, chosen at random. Some of the evidence can be shown in a quantified way that, used carefully, enables some comparisons to be made between local authorities. Analysis of the survey will be included as an appendix to the report of the joint review.

The questionnaire is in two parts. The first part sets out a series of straightforward statements, with a tick-box rating scale to ascertain the extent to which the person who completes the questionnaire agrees with the statement. Part 2 provides space for additional comments and its use is optional. There are some personal questions (including ethnic background and nationality) to allow some analysis of the extent to which the survey is completed by people from the whole range of groups who use social services. Service users and carers

are given an assurance that their comments will not be traced back to them.

The sample is chosen using a uniform formula to ensure that it is representative and that a proportionate return is received from the whole range of service users and carers within the authority, across both open and recently closed cases (within the last 4 months). The joint review team provides the questionnaire materials and analyses the results. Financial assistance can be provided to help with advocacy and translation services, if the local authority is unable to meet this need.

### **The nature of the sample**

Please nominate an officer to help create the sample. It is helpful if this is the same person who has responsibility for the case file-reading sample. The review-planning meeting provides an early opportunity to begin the process. It will include a discussion about the practical arrangements and whether any changes in the methodology are needed to accommodate the particular context within the local authority.

The sample is derived from all cases known to the authority, although it is possible for especially sensitive cases to be excluded by agreement with the lead reviewer. It should comprise of mainly open cases (a mixture of long and short term) but with some cases closed within the last four months. Questionnaires should not be sent to children under the age of twelve.

To obtain views that are representative across the range of social services provision, questionnaires are sent to a sample of service users and carers drawn from 12 different groups:

#### Adults Services

- Older people;
- Adults aged between 18 and 64 with a:
  - Physical disability or sensory impairment;
  - People with a learning disability;
  - Mental health service users;
  - Other (e.g. /substance misuse/asylum seekers/ HIV); this *should be agreed with the lead reviewer and it will depend upon numbers in the authority, the existence of specialist teams, etc.*
- Carers of adults who use the service. These are also split into the 5 groups as above.

#### Children's Services users age 12 and over:

- Children on the Child Protection Register
- Looked After Children (including care leavers);
- Children in need
- Disabled children;
- Youth Offenders;
- Parents and carers of children who use the services. These are also split into the 5 groups as above.

The overall size of the Adult Services survey sample is determined by the total number of service users in the local authority. For the Children's survey sample, we sample all children per group aged 12 and over, and 100 carers from each of the groups, totaling 500 carers. The table in Appendix 1 should be used as a guide but some

adjustments may be needed to accommodate actual numbers of service users in the different categories.

## **The sampling process**

### Stage 1: (Week 3 of the review)

During the review planning meeting, the lead reviewer and the information officer will discuss the nature of the authority's client index with the person responsible for creating the survey sample and the feasibility of producing a sample frame as per Stage 2.

### Stage 2:

A survey sample framework will be sent from the Information Analyst to the Link Officer. When entering the total number of adult service users the spreadsheet will automatically calculate the number of names and addresses that we require in order to sample the authority effectively.

The form also asks for the total number of children aged 12 and over that are presently using the service and also asks for the total of those in each of the 5 groups.

For each of the groups, you are asked to produce an accurate list in alphabetical order of all cases that are open at the time of sampling or were closed within the previous 4 months.

### Stage 3:

The authority then sends an Excel spreadsheet to SSIW which contains the number of names and addresses as requested in the *survey sample framework*. This must be a random sample of cases from each group. The method for doing this is to tick every *n*th name

on the list, depending on the total size of the client group. The Information Analyst will then select 1 in 2 of the names from the sample in order to survey thus providing a randomised selection. Please ensure that the list reflects the demographic and geographic distribution of service users and carers.

It is important that, wherever possible, the list of carers to be surveyed in their own right does not overlap significantly with the lists for service users. Also, the names of carers should be drawn from across all service categories in both adult and children services.

**Stage 4:**

The sample frame for each client group is emailed to the joint review team in an Excel document containing the following information within clearly labelled groups:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Address line 1</b>	<b>Address line 2</b>	<b>Address line 3</b>	<b>Postcode</b>
Mrs E J Jones	1 Somewhere Road	Somewhere Town	A Local Authority	LA12 3ST

Please ensure that the list of names and addresses (the sample frame) is shown to the case management teams before being sent on to SSIW and that they check the accuracy of the data. If the relevant data is invalid, you may choose to remove a name and replace it randomly with another one, recording the reason for doing so and making this information available to the lead reviewer. Records of each stage of the sampling process should be kept, for audit purposes.

Stage 5: (Week 5 of the review)

Once the required number of cases from each of the lists are selected by the Information Analyst, the review support co-ordinator will send to each name on the list a pack containing:

- a leaflet describing joint reviews;
- the relevant questionnaire for that group;
- a prepaid addressed envelope, for returning the completed questionnaire to the joint review team;
- any letter that the authority wishes to include reassuring service users and carers and encouraging completion of the questionnaire.

All names and addresses will be treated as confidential and erased after being used for this purpose only. Each individual questionnaire will have a label with a code that helps us to identify to which group the service user belongs but not individual names.

Stage 7:

People are asked to complete and return the survey on or before the date specified on the front page. The results are analysed in time for the interim assessment that examines all the evidence from the broad review phase (Week 14 of the review). Results are routinely shared with the local authority in the introductory meetings that brings this phase to an end. Please note that the relatively small sample size and the way in which it is created make it difficult to attach statistical significance to the data with absolute confidence. This means that the information should not be used in isolation from evidence obtained from other parts of the overall methodology.

## **Frequently asked questions**

The survey is an important source of evidence. Both the local authority and the joint review team will be concerned to ensure a high rate of completed questionnaires. Please encourage service users and carers to express their views by this method while making clear that it is a voluntary matter entirely. This can be achieved by raising awareness in the community of the joint review and the process of surveying the users and carers of the Social Services. You may also wish to send out reminders nearer the closing dates of the survey.

Some service users may want or need help in completing the questionnaire. Assistance from other family members, carers, advocates and service providers is welcome. It may be necessary to cover any reasonable costs incurred and this should be discussed between the lead reviewer or the joint review business support staff and the local authority link officer.

The survey is only produced in large print format, so that it is easier for people to read. For information about Braille, other languages and formats, please contact the joint review team.

Some service users or carers who are not included in the survey may wish to complete a questionnaire as their preferred means of communicating views and experiences to the joint review team. They are welcome to do so.

## APPENDIX 1

<b>No. of service users names required from Authority</b>						
	<b>10,000 or less</b>		<b>10,001– 19,999</b>		<b>20,000 +</b>	
<b>Service user group</b>	Users	Carers	Users	Carers	Users	Carers
Older people aged 65+	600	250	6%	2.5%	1,200	500
<b>Adults aged 18 – 64:</b>						
Physical or sensory impairment	300	75	3%	0.75%	600	150
Learning disability	300	100	3%	1.0%	600	200
Mental health	225	50	2.25%	0.5%	450	100
Other	75	25	0.75%	0.25%	150	50
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>3,000</b>	<b>1,000</b>

<b>No. of service users receiving a questionnaire</b>						
	<b>10,000 or less</b>		<b>10,001– 19,999</b>		<b>20,000 +</b>	
<b>Service user group</b>	Users	Carers	Users	Carers	Users	Carers
Older people aged 65+	300	125	3%	1.25%	600	250
<b>Adults aged 18 – 64:</b>						
Physical or sensory impairment	150	38	1.5%	0.38%	300	75
Learning disability	150	50	1.5%	0.5%	300	100
Mental health	112	25	1.12%	0.25%	225	50
Other	38	12	0.38%	0.12%	75	25
<b>Total:</b>	<b>750</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>7.5%</b>	<b>2.5%</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>500</b>

## **APPENDIX 1**

*\*Carers will include those who have received a formal assessment but also other family carers, next of kin or significant others.*

It is not possible to make the process entirely dependent upon mathematical progression because of the need to obtain a sufficient return from some groups that are numerically quite small but for whom the local authority has extensive statutory responsibilities.