

TITLE OF REPORT: Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2023/2024

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide the Housing, Environment and Healthy Communities OSC with the results of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2023.24.

Background

2. Registered providers of social housing are required by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) to carry out an annual perception survey against 12 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM's). In addition to the 12 survey questions there are a further 10 management information indicators measured directly by the landlord. Gateshead Council must collect and report on performance on all 22 TSM's from 2023.24.
3. The TSMs are designed to see how well landlords are doing at keeping properties in good repair, maintaining building safety, respectful and helpful engagement, effective handling of complaints and responsible neighbourhood management. The TSMs are grouped around these five themes.
4. In 2022.23 a survey was sent to all tenants who we hold an e-mail address for and completed via the Council's online consultation portal. The survey questions reflected the final set of TSM's published in September 2022 by the RSH. This provided an early understanding of how we are performing ahead of formal reporting to the RSH of the 2023.24 results. An additional question: satisfaction with how easy as a landlord we are to deal with, was retained from the 2021 survey as this has been identified as a key driver of overall satisfaction.

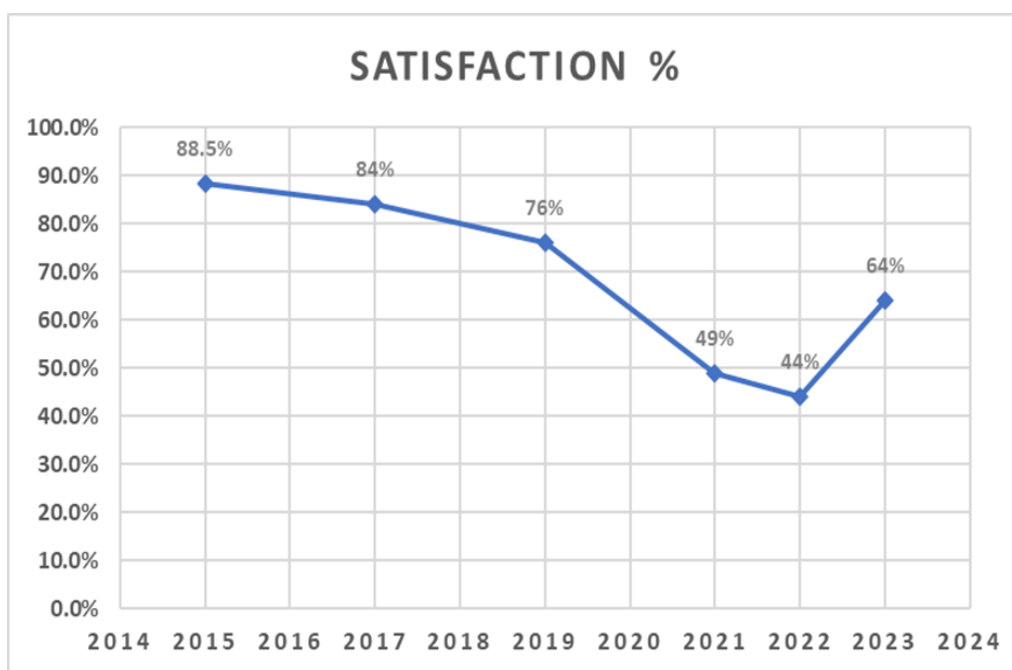
2023.2024 Satisfaction Survey

5. In 2023.24 the survey was carried out entirely by telephone and Kwest Research Ltd were appointed to undertake this on the Council's behalf. A telephone survey is a cost effective and efficient means of contacting households and allows the representativeness of the achieved sample to be easily monitored. The RSH requires that the sample of tenants surveyed is broadly representative of the landlord's tenant profile.
6. To provide a statistically valid sample Gateshead is required to collect a minimum of 1,050 responses each year and in total 1,150 were surveyed. The participants were selected at random by Kwest to reflect our tenant profile and the question wording and response scales set out in line with the TSM requirements.

7. The survey was conducted in two phases. The first phase was carried out in October/November 2023 and the second phase in February/March 2024. The aim of conducting the survey biannually was that we could use the insight from the first phase to help inform our communications which will focus on the steps we are taking to address areas of low satisfaction. The results of the two surveys have been collated to provide the final satisfaction results which will be submitted to the RSH.

Main Highlights

8. Compared to the 2022.23 results, performance has improved across all 12 TSM questions and the additional question, with increases between 5% and 35%.
9. In terms of overall satisfaction with housing services, the graph below shows how this has declined between 2015 and 2022 at Gateshead. Declining satisfaction has been a housing wide trend for some time and across many other service sectors. However, in 2023.24 overall satisfaction has improved significantly increasing by 20% from 44% in 2022.23 to 64%.



10. The two questions directly relating to repairs and maintenance were answerable by only those tenants who had reported a repair in the last 12 months.
- Overall satisfaction with repairs increased from 52% in 2022.23 to 69%.
 - Satisfaction with time taken to complete the most recent repair increased from 42% to 63%.
11. A question measuring satisfaction that home is well maintained was asked of all respondents and shows an increase from 36% to 66%.
12. Results of other key indicators include:

- Satisfaction with landlord's approach to handling ASB increased from 31% to 60%
- Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to the neighbourhood increased from 34% to 65%
- Satisfaction that the landlord listens to views and acts on them increased from 29% to 64%
- Satisfaction with landlord's approach to handling complaints remains the TSM with the lowest level of satisfaction, improving marginally from 21% to 26%

13. The full results for all questions are included in the Appendix to this report.

Comparison With Other Housing Providers

14. In October 2023, Housemark invited English registered providers to take part in a project to compare their TSM results to date. 189 landlords took part, enabling Housemark to compile bespoke reports for participating organisations, based on results up to the mid-point in the year (April-Sept 2023), including the sector-wide results and those for a peer group of similar organisations based on stock size, landlord type and location.

15. It should be noted that some housing providers are conducting their TSM data collection as a rolling survey and others did not begin data collection until the second half of the financial year. Therefore, although the Housemark report represents the most up to date and accurate comparison available, the quartile boundaries are likely to change by the time the end of year results are compiled. This is particularly true for the peer group comparisons, which are, by nature, smaller groups and so more susceptible to change as additional organisations are included.

16. Compared to our peer group of large urban local authorities and ALMOs, outside of London, with 15,000+ stock overall, we are in quartile 1 for five questions, quartile 2 for one question, quartile 3 for five and quartile 4 for one.

17. The question where we are lowest ranked compared to our peers is satisfaction with the time taken to complete the most recent repair. Our performance ranked us in quartile 4.

18. Housemark have indicated that they will produce an early report for those landlords who submit their data by 10th May 2024. It is our intention to meet this deadline so that we gain an update into how we are performing against our peers.

19. The Appendix at the end of the report provides further details for each question.

Key Trends

20. An analysis of satisfaction against the profile of respondents shows that across most questions younger tenants are less satisfied than older tenants. When asked overall satisfaction, those aged 16-44 were only 57% satisfied compared with 72% for those aged 65+. This is a trend that continues to be reported widely across the housing sector.

21. Those living in houses are also less satisfied than those living in bungalows and flats, possibly reflecting the age profile of those living in different types of accommodation.
22. Tenants living in bungalows also return a higher level of satisfaction in terms of feeling safe and that their views are listened to and acted on.
23. In terms of location, when the results are analysed by neighborhoods there are some notable variations between the highest and lowest satisfaction scores.
 - Tenants in the East neighbourhood are significantly more satisfied (71%) with the time taken to complete their most recent repair than those living in the West (57%)
 - Tenants in the east are also more satisfied (78%) than those living in the Central neighbourhood (69%) that their home is safe.
 - In contrast those living in Central are more likely (27%) than those in East (17%) to have made a complaint in the last 12 months.
 - Tenants living in the east who have made a complaint in the last 12 months are more satisfied (44%) about the way their complaint has been handled compared to those in the West (16%).

Drivers of Satisfaction

24. Feedback and insight from previous satisfaction surveys and customer engagement has consistently highlighted that repairs and maintenance, tackling anti-social behaviour, environmental factors and customer communication are key drivers of satisfaction.
25. In this survey customers were asked to provide comments in response to the overall satisfaction question. Consistent with previous years repairs and maintenance featured in a high percentage of comments.
26. The top reasons respondents gave for dissatisfaction are listed below:
 - Waiting for repairs to be completed
 - Speed of response when issues raised.
 - Damp and mould in the home.
 - Communication and being kept informed.
 - Quality of repairs
 - Other repair related issues.

Summary

27. The results of the 2023.24 survey show a marked improvement on the results from 2022.23. Key drivers of satisfaction including repairs and maintenance, and handling of anti-social behaviour have improved significantly. Whilst available comparative data is still limited, comparison with our peers show that in some areas we are performing well. Repairs and Maintenance and more specifically the time it takes to complete a repair is the key driver of satisfaction and an area to focus on. Linked to this is communication with the customer and more generally customer service.
28. It should be noted however that social housing does not exist in a bubble and the expectations of tenants will be informed by their interaction with organisations and

businesses outside of the housing sector. As those organisations change the way they deliver services the expectations of tenants will also change, ultimately impacting on satisfaction. This will also be true when tenants engage with different Gateshead Council services and receive different levels of customer service. It is important that we continue to engage with tenants to understand their needs and continually adapt and improve service delivery. We understand that digital is here to stay and we must improve our offer but also respond to expectations around forming stronger, empathetic relationships with customers.

Next Steps

29. The survey highlights some key areas where further improvement to the customer experience is required, and work is currently ongoing. For example, repairs and maintenance have an improvement plan in place and are implementing a range of changes that will further improve performance. An in-depth review of Complaint handling is currently underway and will include recommendations aimed addressing poor performance and low satisfaction. A customer contact project will commence during 2024.25 aimed at addressing issues raised by customers. The aim will be to create a more efficient and effective “front door” to housing services. Also, key is improving our digital offer including the website and reviewing “back office” functions that support delivery. Updates on progress with the above and all service improvement work streams will be brought periodically to Portfolio and the Strategic Housing Board.

30. In terms of reporting the results, we are required to submit the results of all 22 TSM’s to the RSH by 30th June 2024. This includes both the results and methodology used to collect the data. The RSH will then publish the results for all landlords by autumn 2024.

31. The results will be shared internally including:

- HEHC Portfolio
- HEHC Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Strategic Housing Board
- All elected members briefing.

32. Employee engagement with the results and insight provided by the survey is also vital. Research shows that high levels of employee engagement does have a positive impact on service delivery and ultimately satisfaction. A team briefing will be issued to all employees outlining the results and the steps we are taking to improve satisfaction. Workshops for managers are also planned which will provide an opportunity to discuss in more detail the results and our service improvement plans.

33. It is a requirement of the RSH that we also share the results with customers, and we will do this through a variety of communication channels including the Council website and a Tenant newsletter. The results will also be shared and discussed with the Resident Influence Panel including how we should use the feedback and insight provided to improve services.

Recommendations

34. The views of HEHC OSC are sought on the results of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2023.24

Contact: Martin Poulter ext5380