



Customer Insight Policy and Procedures

April 2010

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Customer Insight Policy and Procedures

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1.1 Introduction

We recognise that in order to provide three star excellent services and care and support to our communities we need to understand who our customers are and what they want. We also need to know whether we are meeting the needs of our customers, and if we are not, what can be done to improve our services to do so. We believe that customer insight is key to meeting these needs.

What is customer insight?

Customer insight involves gathering information to build a demographic profile of our customers to understand who they are. It also involves collecting customer feedback about our services to enable us to understand what they think about our services.

Why collect customer insight?

If used effectively, customer insight will provide our customers with a voice to guide us on what they want from us and how they think we should deliver it; ultimately enabling us to ensure that our services are personalised and responsive to their needs.

This policy outlines how we collect and efficiently use customer insight to drive service improvement and policy development. This policy will also lead on ensuring that an understanding of the importance of customer insight and continual service improvement is embedded within the culture of the organisation and at the heart of everything we do.

1.2. Policy statement

As a landlord we recognise our responsibility in empowering our customers through consultation and involvement. We understand that the collation of quality feedback, through the use of effective and meaningful methods used regularly and systematically, will allow us to make customer led service improvements and policy developments. This will enable us to meet the present and future needs of all our customers. Therefore we are committed to ensuring that all customers have a meaningful role in consultation and involvement. We have developed aims and objectives to enable us to focus our work to ensure we fulfil our commitment.

Aims (what we will achieve):

- Ensure service improvement and policy development are informed by a user perspective rather than by the demands of the organisation;
- Ensure that understanding and using feedback becomes systematic and routine;
- Ensure that the way we analyse and report on customer feedback is consistent, so that information is comparable within YHN and externally for benchmarking purposes;
- Ensure consultation and involvement at all levels is seen to be worthwhile for both customers and staff;
- Ensure customers can see that even involvement at the most basic level, (returning a questionnaire or making a complaint) has a positive impact.

Objectives (how we will achieve our aims):

- Consult with our customers systematically and on a regular basis;
- Maximise opportunities to collect demographic information about our customers
- Review and improve our methods of consultation and data collection on a regular basis;
- Communicate the effectiveness of consultation and demographic information to our customers;
- Carry out an annual research programme;
- Continue to develop our methods of involvement and increase the number of customers getting involved;
- Involve all levels of employees in the collection and consultation process;
- Ensure we reach and use the views of more people particularly 'non-active' tenants.

1.3 Additional factors driving effective customer insight

The following factors have also contributed towards the development of our commitment to effectively collect and use customer insight.

1.3.1 Key lines of enquiry

The audit commission use 'key lines of enquiry' as a framework by which they assess the quality of service provided by housing organisations. Within the key lines of enquiry the importance of the collection and effective use of customer insight is highlighted. The framework also outlines the role of customer insight in ensuring value for money is achieved across all YHN services, by ensuring that all customers have the opportunity to be involved in and influence the procurement and service improvement process.

Therefore, ensuring that we address the issues that matter the most to our customers and targeting areas that our customers feel need improvement, is key to ensuring that we collect and use customer insight. It is paramount that we must have an effective and efficient customer feedback procedure in place, and that the information received is used as effectively as possible.

1.3.2 Customer Service Excellence

Key to achieving the Customer Service Excellence standard (CSE) is ensuring that our customers are at the heart of all our decisions. The standard requires us to understand who our customers are and what their needs are, enabling us to develop services to best suit their needs and preferences. Integral to achieving the CSE we must ensure that all our methods are continually reviewed and the results and outcomes are monitored. A number of YHN services have achieved the standard and it is projected that the organisation as a whole will achieve the standard by 31st March 2011.

1.3.3 Tenant Services Authority

The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) is the new regulator for affordable housing, representing 10 million affordable housing tenants. The authority was established as an outcome of the 2008 Housing and Regeneration Act, which increased the powers of the TSA in the regulation of social housing, and allocated the duty of raising the standards of services for tenants. The TSA will be fully operational by April 2010 as the champion for tenants of affordable housing in England, standing up for their interests and aspirations and putting their needs first. Ultimately, the authority will lead on increasing the emphasis placed on the needs of tenants at the heart of service provision.

As part of their role as regulator; the TSA are developing a framework of national standards which they will use to monitor the performance of social housing providers. One of the service areas that the standards will cover will be tenant empowerment. This will focus on ensuring that housing providers have effective arrangements in place to support and enable tenants to be involved and empowered.

1.3.4 Audit Commission report

The Audit Commission reported in June 2008 that as an organisation we do use customer feedback effectively to impact upon service improvement and policy development:

‘Residents and service users are at the heart of the business and their involvement is having a significant impact with a range of positive outcomes achieved. Commitment to customer care is strong and customer satisfaction is increasing. Meeting customers’ diverse needs is successfully embedded into day to day activities’ (Audit Commission Report 2008).

However, the report also stated that improvements can be made to the customer feedback process by reviewing the current arrangements to ensure survey activity is streamlined and co-ordinated. Additionally, the report highlighted the need to improve our demographic data collection methods in order to improve the levels and the quality of the data we hold.

1.3.5 Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG)

In 2001 the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG) was created to encourage local authorities to mainstream equality. This standard was then revised in 2007, through extensive consultation, to create the new Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG).

The EFLG highlights actions which, once complete, will enable local authorities to contribute towards creating an equal society which recognises people’s different needs, situations and goals, and remove barriers that limit what people can do and be. Within the standard there are three levels to achieve:

- ◆ Level 1: Emerging
- ◆ Level 2: Achieving
- ◆ Level 3: Excellent

We are currently aiming towards achieving level 2. To do so we will be measured against the following areas of performance:

- ◆ Knowing your communities and equality mapping
- ◆ Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- ◆ Community engagement and satisfaction
- ◆ Responsive services and customer care

- ◆ A modern and diverse workforce

Customer insight plays a significant role in enabling us to perform against these measures, ultimately assisting significantly towards achieving level 2 and effectively mainstreaming equality throughout YHN.

1.4. Local context

This policy is aligned with the aims and objectives of the following local documents:

Strategy:	Aims and objectives of document:
Business Strategy 2009-14	In conjunction with our finance strategy and medium term plan, this strategy gives a high level overview of the direction of our organisation over the next five years. It sets out what our organisational mission and strategic objectives are, how we will achieve them, and what this will mean for our customers over the next five years.
Corporate Equality Plan 2007-10	This policy will assist in developing our customer profile, enabling us to tailor our services to meet the diverse needs of those we serve and therefore contribute towards the objectives outlined within this plan.
Customer Service Strategy	Aligned closely with the Customer Service Excellence standard, this policy will contribute towards achieving the 'Every Customer Matters' vision which underpins the Customer Service Strategy. This policy will assist us to meet our commitment to provide excellent and consistent customer services by ensuring that we understand who our customers are, what they need and what they want.
Delivery Plan 2010/11	<p>This policy will contribute towards achieving the following corporate objectives set out in the 2010/11 Delivery Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and care to communities. • Three star excellent services. • A quality workforce • Refurbishing and building homes

	Specifically, this policy will contribute towards the business and financial planning process used within the Delivery plan.
Efficiency Strategy	This policy will assist the Efficiency Strategy by using customer feedback to ensure that service improvement and development always represents good value for money for the customer.
Getting to Know Our Customers	This policy will assist in developing our customer demographic information in order to achieve the objectives set out within Getting to Know Our Customers.
Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Strategy and Compact	This policy will assist in achieving the vision set out in the strategy and compact: 'To listen to our tenants and leaseholders, involve them in decision making and deliver improved housing services that are informed by the experiences of their lives, homes and environments'.

1.5. Our current methods of collecting customer insight

1.5.1 Demographic data collection

A significant part of customer insight is ensuring that we understand who our customers are, which will allow us to understand their individual needs and target our resources towards meeting them. To build an understanding of our customer profile, we collect information on gender, disability status, age, sexual orientation, ethnic origin and religion through a variety of methods. This information is then analysed to enable us to understand our customers and ensure we are providing the right services to the right people.

Progress on the collection of demographic data is reported to Board on a quarterly basis.

For further information please see [Getting to Know Our Customers](#).

1.5.2 Annual research programme

The Business Strategy Team (BST) conduct an annual research programme in order to survey satisfaction levels for our services. This allows us to understand whether the services we provide are being appropriately directed and whether they are meeting the needs of those who access them. The programme uses postal and telephone surveys which are designed in consultation with the service managers. It incorporates ongoing surveys, which allow us to gain a continuous insight to the satisfaction of specific services, and one off surveys, which allow us to understand the effects of any service improvements or changes. Our [current research schedule](#) is available on the YHN internet site.

The programme also incorporates the annual STATUS survey, which measures the overall satisfaction of the services we provide and our properties. It is a statutory requirement by the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) that all council housing providers carry out a STATUS survey every three years, however it is an objective of YHN to carry out the survey on an annual basis to increase levels of consultation. The survey allows us to consistently compare tenants satisfaction with the service they receive and it also enables us to produce the performance indicators required by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) and the CLG.

The Business Strategy Team is responsible for collating returns from the research programme, all of which are logged within a week of receipt. In order to ensure that the feedback is demonstrating value for money and being used to effectively improve service delivery it is fed back to the appropriate sections for consideration and response. For further information on the research programme feedback procedure please see section 2.1.

1.5.3 Compliments, complaints and comments

YHN has a [compliments, complaints and comments procedure](#) in place to ensure that feedback about our services can be given at anytime appropriate to the customer. We aim to ensure that the process is accessible to all and deals with the feedback in the most effective way possible.

All compliments and complaints received are acknowledged within two days and reviewed. All formal complaints are responded to by the relevant officer within ten days. The relevant officer is responsible for ensuring that service improvement issues or policy gaps are identified and addressed where feasible. Wider learning from compliments and complaints is considered by the Complaints Champions Group every quarter. The outcome of such feedback is reported within the Homes and People newsletter and Talk To Us flyers and all feedback is held on record and considered during service reviews.

For further information on this process please view our [compliments, complaints and comments procedure](#).

1.5.4 Customer journey mapping

Customer journey mapping is a tool which enables us to track the experiences of our customers as they use a specific service. It allows us to understand the customers' experience, enabling us to discover which areas of our services deliver a positive experience and which areas deliver a negative experience. Journey mapping is also instrumental in bringing about culture change, ensuring that all staff within the organisation understands the important role of customer feedback.

Due to the requirements of the CSE standard a number of services within YHN have completed the journey mapping process; others are currently carrying out the process as part of their application. We have developed a standard method for all services within YHN to follow; we do acknowledge that that the method will vary due to the complexities of each service. However, we aim for the process to become business as usual and to be a process that is carried out as routine across all services.

1.5.5 Customer involvement

Customer involvement is to give our customers the opportunity to influence service improvement and development. Through tenant and leaseholder involvement we want to make sure that the views of our customers are used to improve the services we deliver. YHN offers a range of involvement methods for tenants and leaseholders to get involved which can be accessed via the [YHN getting involved website](#).

There is a formal process to ensure that involvement activity leads to service improvement for customers. The process may vary depending on the type of involvement activity; however the majority of activities will follow the key steps outlined in the regular/occasional activities flow chart (section 2.2).

1.5.6 Involvement activity delivered by other services

Many of our services are involved in customer consultation on both a regular and ad hoc basis without the assistance of the Customer Involvement Team. We understand the importance of recording and monitoring this involvement to ensure consultation is worthwhile and demonstrating value for money. Therefore all services are contacted by the Customer Involvement Team on a four monthly basis to report on any consultation carried out, the issues raised, the outcomes and how this has been fed back to customers. The returned information is collated by the Customer Involvement Team and presented to the Customer Service and Delivery Committee three times a year. For more information on the customer consultation monitoring procedure please see section 2.3.

1.6 Examples of the effective use of customer insight

We have been committed to collecting and using customer insight for sometime now. Please see the following examples of how customer insight has been used to inform policy development or service improvement in the past:

Document/service impacted upon	Type of customer insight	Impact upon policy development/service improvement
Skills to Work Strategy	STATUS survey/occasional customer involvement.	The 2007 STATUS survey informed us of the employment status of our tenants which told us that the vast majority of our tenants were not in work, on below average household income and economically inactive. This information helped us to identify the need for further interventions to help support more of our residents into work, indicating a need to develop a worklessness strategy. We also consulted with customers through focus groups and surveys as to what support they believed we should provide to help customers access education, training and employment.
Customer Service Strategy	STATUS survey/satisfaction survey/occasional and regular customer involvement.	The 2007 STATUS survey indicated that although overall 78% of our customers were satisfied with our services, further improvements could be made to increase satisfaction levels. Therefore we utilised feedback from the STATUS survey, focus groups, the 2008 satisfaction survey and the Access and Customer Care mystery shopping exercise to inform the Customer Service Strategy.

Financial Inclusion Strategy	Demographic profile	Through analysing our customers demographic profile we considered the age of our tenants, the number of tenants in receipt of benefits and the number of tenants who have a disability or long term illness. We found that the majority of our customers fall into at least one group considered being at a higher risk of financial exclusion. Therefore this strategy was developed in order to assist those highlighted by the analysis and promote financial inclusion.
New tenant sign up process	New tenants survey	Feedback from the survey indicated that 24.1% of customers were not offered the support of an Advice and Support Worker during the sign up process. This has resulted in a review of the sign up process being scheduled for 2010/11.
Business Strategy	Readers Panel	A tenant friendly summary of the Business Strategy was consulted on by the YHN Readers Panel. The panel provided in-depth feedback which was then incorporated into the document, making it more relevant and accessible to our customers.
New build older persons' bungalows	Older persons' working group	A group of older people influenced the specification for older persons' bungalows by telling us what they would need in their home. They helped to decide the contractor that built the scheme
Service Standards	Discussion groups	We held lots of discussion groups with customers about a range of YHN services. The feedback from these discussion

		groups has influenced a review of service standards. The new service standards will be published in April 2010.
Delivery Plan	'How we spend your rent' annual discussion group	Each year we hold a discussion group with tenants about their priorities for the services provided by YHN. The feedback from the customers is used to set priorities in the YHN delivery and service plans.

1.7 Feeding back to our customers

We understand the importance of ensuring our customers are informed of the positive impact their involvement has upon our services. Therefore, we are committed to feeding back the results of involvement activities to all customers involved. We aim to ensure that all customers have equal access to the feedback process, enabling us to continually improve our services by removing any barriers which may affect the service our customers receive.

Feedback is usually provided in writing within 6 months; however this is dependant upon the type of involvement and may vary. For example, groups which meet on a regular basis may receive feedback verbally. This process enables us to inform customers how services have changed or improved in response to their feedback. If we haven't been able to change the service we explain why.

We understand the importance of informing all customers, regardless of their involvement, about how we use customer insight to develop and improve our services. This is done in the following ways:

- 'You Said We did' section in Homes and People
- 'You said we did' internet page
- Customer Involvement annual report
- Service newsletters
- Service internet pages

1.8 Identifying feedback gaps

Crucial to the customer insight process is the identification of feedback gaps by service managers. For example, if changes have been made to a service, independent of customer insight, consultation must be carried out to obtain feedback about the changes to identify any positive or negative impacts.

- All requests for research must be made to the Performance Management and Policy (PMP) Officer responsible for the research programme. The

research manager and the relevant service manager will discuss the most appropriate form of research/consultation, considering the desired outcomes, the budget, the timescales and role responsibility. Once the research is complete, the PMP officer responsible for the research will analyse the data and feed the results back to the service manager. The service manager then becomes responsible for ensuring that improvements are carried out in response to the feedback as outlined in section 2.1.

- All requests for assistance with customer consultation must be made to the Customer Involvement Team. The Customer Involvement Team will discuss with the relevant service manager the most appropriate form of consultation considering the desired outcomes, the budget and timescales. It will then be decided as to who will be responsible for carrying out the consultation.

1.9 Potential customers

At present the majority of our customer insight is collected from existing customers. However, we recognise the importance of expanding the demographic data we hold and consulting with potential customers. This will not only enable us to target our services towards underrepresented groups, but also allow us to make plans for the future to enhance our services and make them accessible to all across the city. Within the next 12 months we will focus on investigating the options of methods to effectively and efficiently consult with potential customers.

1.10 Roles and responsibilities

The following roles and responsibilities apply:

- The Head of Customer Service and Improvement has overall ownership of this policy and is accountable for ensuring that all procedures and responsibilities outlined within it are carried out.
- The Business Strategy Team are responsible for the implementing the research programme feedback procedure and collating the data returned via the customer feedback response form.
- The Customer Involvement Team are responsible for implementing the customer consultation monitoring procedure, collating the data returned via the customer consultation monitoring forms and presenting the information to the Customer Service and Delivery Committee.
- All service managers/designated officers are responsible for ensuring that all consultation monitoring forms and customer feedback response forms are completed and returned to the agreed timescales outlined in part 2.

1.11 Review and monitoring of the policy

As this is a new document the procedures outlined within it are to be piloted until November 2010. The effectiveness and feasibility of the new procedures will then be reviewed with view to implement if successful, or amend if unsuccessful. Once the pilot is complete and procedures agreed, this document will be reviewed on an annual basis and revised when necessary.

To ensure the compliments, complaints and comments process is transparent, quarterly complaints reports are produced for Performance Committee. Additionally, a customer scrutiny panel review all step three complaints on a quarterly basis and, if required, will make recommendations for the improvement of this process.

Progress on the collection of demographic data is reported to Board on a quarterly basis.

All other customer involvement is monitored via the Customer Service and Delivery Committee. The committee are responsible for ensuring that all customer feedback is acknowledged and acted upon, holding any services that do not respond accountable. The committee receive three customer insight reports a year which outline the details and outcomes of all involvement and research activities.

1.12 Equalities and diversity

We are committed to delivering our services to people who need them, without harassment, victimisation or discriminating against any customer, client or service user. We aim to treat all customers in a professional manner, with courtesy and respect. This policy will therefore be applied equally to all customers regardless of race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief.

In order to ensure that no customer is disadvantaged by our customer insight process and all customers have equal access to our involvement activities we must ensure those involved in consultation are representative of our customer base. In order to ensure this we:

- Provide support to ensure that our involvement activities are accessible to all
- Ensure all consultation/involvement communication is written in the corporate style and available in all languages
- Monitor who is involved and target underrepresented groups
- Utilise non discriminatory sampling methods

We are also committed to ensuring that the policy does not negatively impact upon the work carried out by any staff member due to their race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age. Special requirements will

be provided to enable all members of staff to carry out the procedures efficiently and effectively.

An Equality Impact Needs Assessment (EINA) has been carried out on this policy to enable us to evaluate the impact of its practices and ensure they do not negatively impact upon any individual.

1.13 Legal framework

1.13.1 Data Protection Act 1998

The purpose of the Data Protection Act 1998 is to regulate the processing of information relating to an individual, ensuring that all collected data is obtained, held, used and disclosed in a lawful and fair way.

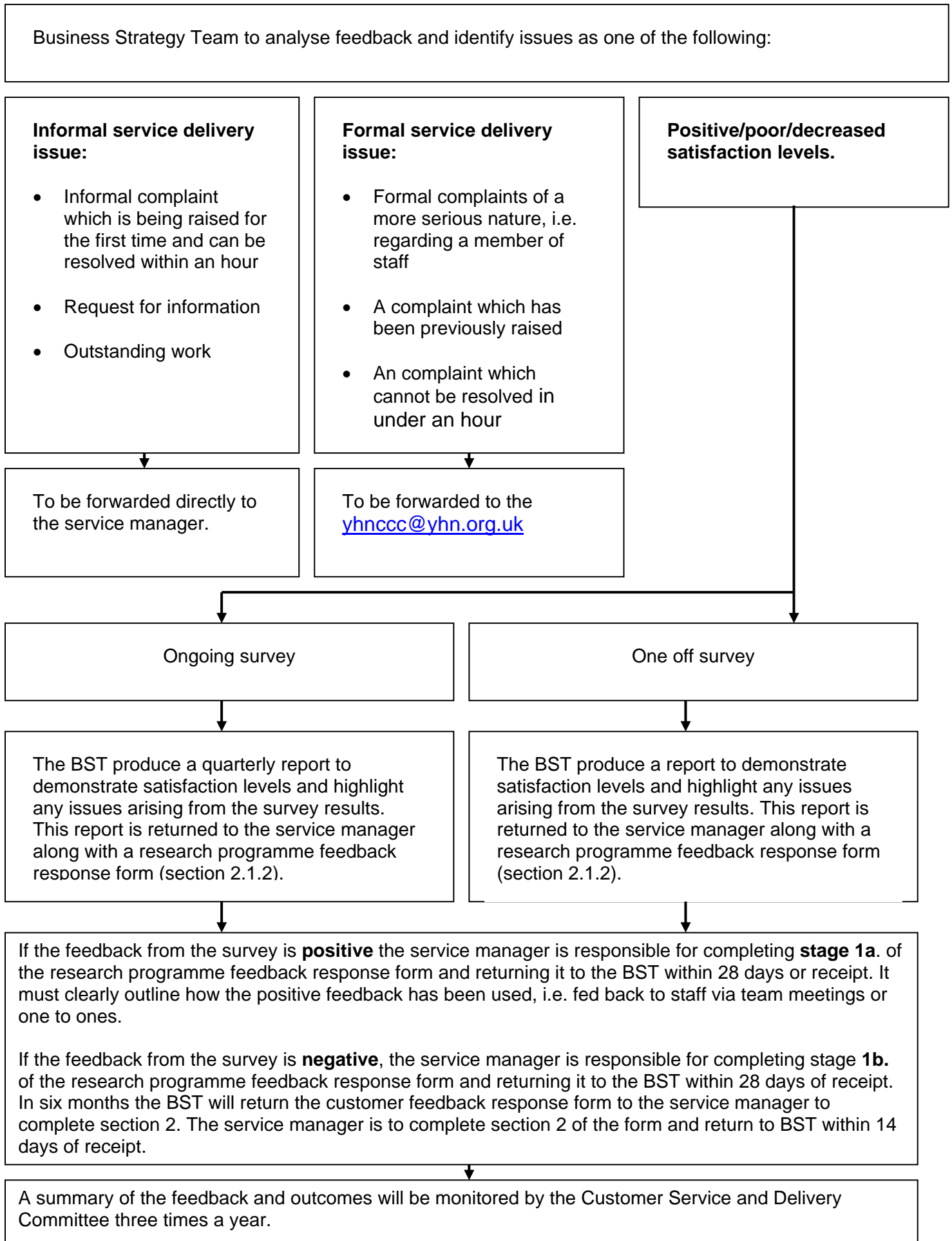
We are committed to ensuring that all consultation activities adhere to the act, that all collection is carried out lawfully, all information collected is accurate and kept up to date where possible, and that appropriate action is taken to prevent unauthorised or unlawful use of any personal information given.

1.14 Useful contacts

Contact	Telephone	Website	Email
Communications Team	0191 2788719		daniel.mcguinness@yhn.org.uk
Customer Involvement Team	0191 278 8720	Customer Involvement Team	louise.dixon@yhn.org.uk
Customer Services Team	0191 2788672		yhnccc@yhn.org.uk
Head of Customer Service and Improvement	0191 2116619		Wilf.Keilty@yhn.org.uk
PMP Team	0191 2788734		yolanda.marshall@yhn.org.uk

Section 2. Customer insight procedures

2.1 Research programme feedback procedure



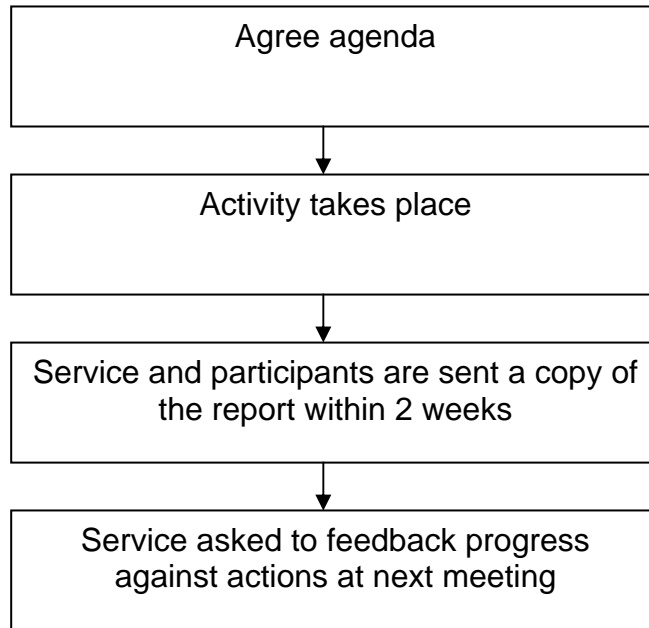
2.1.1 Research programme feedback response form

Your Homes Newcastle				
Research programme feedback response form				
Service area:				
Service manager:				
Date forwarded to service:				
Stage 1 to be completed and returned by:				
Stage 2 to be completed and returned by:				
Feedback (to be completed by BST)	Comparatively positive or negative (to be completed by BST)	Stage 1		Stage 2
		1a. Feedback positive: action taken	1b. Feedback negative: action plan (including implementation date)	

2.2 Customer Involvement Team activity procedure

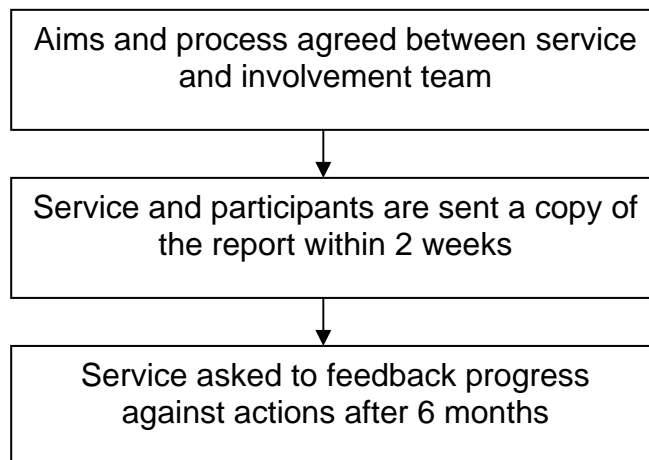
2.2.1 Regular activities

We offer a range of activities which enable customers to give their views on a regular basis. Regular activities follow the process outlined below:



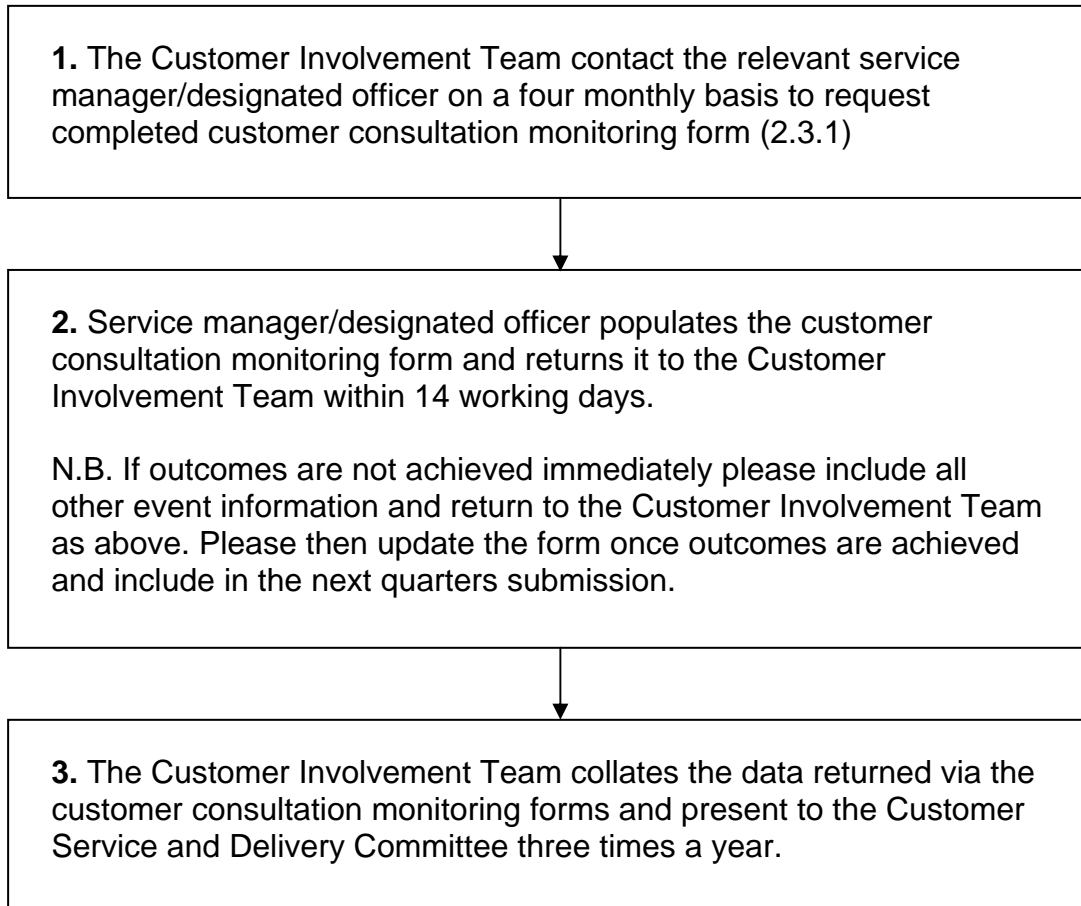
2.2.2 Occasional activities

Occasional activities enable customers to feedback about a specific issue. Occasional activities follow the process outlined below:



2.3 Customer consultation monitoring procedure

This procedure is to be followed in response to consultation activities carried out across the organisation (excluding those carried out as part of the research programme and in conjunction with the Customer Involvement Team).



2.3.1 Customer consultation monitoring form

Your Homes Newcastle						
Customer consultation monitoring form						
Service:						
To be completed by (service manager/designated officer):						
Reporting period:						
Date forwarded to service:						
Date response due:						
Date response received:						
Consultation activity	Officers involved	Resources involved (including cost)	Issues raised	Action plan	Outcomes (to be completed within 6 months of consultation being carried out)	How have outcomes been fed back to attendees?
Activity 1: (please enter name of activity)						
Type of activity:						
Purpose of activity:						
Location:						
Number of attendees:						
Activity 2: (please enter name of activity)						
Type of activity:						
Purpose of activity:						
Location:						
Number of attendees:						
Activity 3: (please enter name of activity)						
Type of activity:						
Purpose of activity:						
Location:						
Number of attendees:						