



Survey of Tenants and Leaseholders 2018

Dacorum Borough Council – Housing Service

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1.0 Executive summary

In 2018, Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) housing service conducted the fourth biennial survey of its tenants and leaseholders.

Once again, the overall results indicate a reduction in satisfaction compared with previous years, but the vast majority of tenants and leaseholders continue to be satisfied with most aspects of the service provided.

Overall satisfaction

84.5% of our general needs tenants, 88.4% of our supported housing tenants and 59.8% of leaseholders are satisfied with the overall service they receive from us as their housing landlord.

Quality of the home

80.4% of our general needs tenants, 90.8% of our supported housing tenants and 80.1% of leaseholders are satisfied with the quality of their home.

Neighbourhood

86.9% of our general needs tenants, 93.2% of our supported housing tenants and 79.4% of leaseholders are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live.

Value for Money

87.2% of our general needs tenants, 93.8% of our supported housing tenants and 53.4% of leaseholders are satisfied the service they receive is value for money.

Repairs and Maintenance

66.4% of our general needs tenants, 76.0% of our supported housing tenants and 47.0% of leaseholders are satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service.

Feedback and Influence

69.6% of our general needs tenants, 73.6% of our supported housing tenants and 47.5% of leaseholders are satisfied their views are listened to and we act upon them.

Priorities

Developing new homes to meet local housing need was our tenants' biggest priority, very closely followed by improvements to the planned maintenance programme.

N.B. Throughout the report, all references to percentage increases or decreases are the change in percentage points rather than overall percentage change.

2.0 Introduction

3.0 Methodology

4.0 Profile of respondents

2.0 Introduction

In January and February 2018 the Strategy, Improvement and Involvement team conducted the housing service's biennial satisfaction survey. For the first time, we did not follow Housemark's copyright 'STAR' format, because we wished to remove the 'Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' option for each question. Residents now express a definite opinion as to whether they feel 'satisfied' or 'dissatisfied', unless they prefer to state that they have 'No opinion'. We believe that this gives greater insight into those areas of the service most in need of additional targeted resources to bring forward improvements. We retained the seven 'core' questions as well as the questions around repairs, in order to make a robust comparison with previous years' results.

The purpose of the survey is to gain an understanding of the levels of satisfaction Dacorum Borough Council tenants and leaseholders have with their homes and associated services provided to them. It also gives us an insight into our tenants' priorities for the service.

This report outlines and analyses these results, making recommendations for improving services and highlighting areas of success.

3.0 Methodology

The method used to conduct the 2018 survey was a combination of a 'sample' telephone survey, face-to-face visits and internet responses available to all those with access to our website. We promoted the survey via housing publications, social media and email newsletters. We also telephoned a randomly generated selection of general needs, supported housing tenants and leaseholders to ask if they would like to take part. We prioritised those for whom we did not have an email address because all others would receive email notification. This process began on 15 January 2018 and finished on 28 February 2018.

Statistical reliability and analysis

This report will present results using the following headings:

- % satisfied = very satisfied + fairly satisfied
- % dissatisfied = fairly dissatisfied + very dissatisfied

All respondents were able to choose whether or not to answer each question. This means that some questions have fewer responses than others.

Percentages displayed in the report have been rounded, so may not always add up to 100%.

Our housing stock is approximately 10,000 tenanted properties, so a minimum of 940 responses would have given a statistically representative result to an accuracy of +/-3%. We undertook to obtain at least 1,000 tenants' surveys (approx. 10% of the total number) and at least 10% of all leaseholders (approximately 170).

The housing service will continue to use these results and conduct further trend analysis, as well as carrying out *transactional surveys**. This will support us in shaping the services we offer and make informed decisions on how best to target available resources, particularly when exploring preventative initiatives.

*Our biennial satisfaction survey is a 'perception survey', because we ask for a general overview of satisfaction. Transactional surveys are those carried out within a very short time of a customer using a particular aspect of our service, when we ask about that single experience only.

4.0 Profile of respondents

In total, 1280 surveys were completed, comprising 794 general needs tenants, 246 supported housing and 243 leaseholders.

The survey was actively promoted via the council's social media and e-newsletters. Staff also telephoned a randomly-generated selection of tenants and leaseholders and carried out face-to-face visits at sheltered schemes. Overall, a pleasing 41.5% of tenants' surveys and 48.8% of leaseholder surveys were completed online, showing the success of our drive for digital channel shift. (Our first survey in 2012 generated only an 8% online response.)

5.0 Survey Results

5.1 Core Questions

As in previous years, all tenants and leaseholders were firstly asked six 'core' questions. These covered:

- Overall satisfaction
- Quality of the home
- Their neighbourhood
- Value for money
- Repairs and maintenance
- Their feedback and influence on the service they receive

5.1.1 Overall satisfaction

When asked '*Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by Dacorum Borough Council as your housing landlord?*' results showed:

- 84.5% of our general needs tenants said they were satisfied with the overall service they received. This continues an overall downward trend, but represents only a 2% fall since 2012, when survey methods differed.
- 88.4% of our supported housing tenants said they were satisfied with the overall service they received. This represents a gradual 4% decrease over the same period.

- 59.8% of our leaseholders said they were satisfied with the overall service they received. This compares with 90% of those who responded to the 2016 survey.

5.1.2 Quality of the home

When asked '*How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall quality of your home?*' results showed:

- 80.4% of our general needs tenants said they were satisfied with the quality of their home. This is a 4.6% decrease when compared with the 2016 result.
- 90.8% of our supported housing tenants said they were satisfied with the quality of their home. This is a 3% decrease when compared with the 2016 result.
- 80.1% of our leaseholders said they were satisfied with the quality of their home. This compares with 96% of those who responded to the 2016 survey.

5.1.3 Neighbourhood

When asked '*How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your neighbourhood as a place to live?*' results showed:

- 86.9% of our general needs tenants said they were satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live.

- 93.2% of our supported housing tenants said they were satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live.
- 79.4% of our leaseholders said they were satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live. This compares with 90% of those who responded to the 2016 survey.

5.1.4 Value for Money

When asked '*How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your rent provides value for money?*' results showed:

- 87.2% of our general needs tenants said they were satisfied their rent provides value for money. This is a 5% decrease when compared with the 2016 results.
- 93.8% of our supported housing tenants said they were satisfied their rent provides value for money. This is a 5% decrease when compared with the 2016 results.
- 53.4% of our leaseholders said they were satisfied their service charges provide value for money. This compares with 79% of those who responded to the 2016 survey.

Tenants' satisfaction that their rent provides value for money has decreased despite the fact that rents have reduced by 1% over each of the last two years and will reduce by a further 1% over the following two years.

Survey Results (continued)

5.1.5 Repairs

When asked ‘How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way Dacorum Borough Council as your housing landlord deals with repairs and maintenance?’ results showed:

- 66.4% of our general needs tenants said they were satisfied with the service they received. This is a 10% decrease when compared with the 2016 results and represents a 9% fall since 2012.
- 76.0% of our supported housing tenants said they were satisfied with the service they received. This is a 12% decrease when compared with the 2016 results and represents a 12% fall since 2012.
- 47.0% of our leaseholders said they were satisfied with the service they received. This compares with 67% of those who responded to the 2016 survey.

More detailed repairs questions were asked later in the survey and the results are reported in section 5.11 of this report.

5.1.6 Feedback and Influence

When asked ‘How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way Dacorum Borough Council as your housing landlord listens to your views and acts upon them?’ results showed:

- 69.6% of our general needs tenants said they were satisfied the council listened to them and their views were acted upon. This is a significant decrease when compared with the 2016 results.
- 73.6% of our supported housing tenants said they were satisfied the council listened to them and their views were acted upon. This is a significant decrease when compared with the 2016 results.
- 47.5% of our leaseholders said they were satisfied the council listened to them and their views were acted upon. This compares with 82% of those who responded to the 2016 survey.

5.2 Priorities

The top three priorities for our tenants were as follows:

1. Develop new homes to meet local housing need
2. Increase the replacement programme (e.g. kitchens, bathroom and doors)
3. Improve the estates and neighbourhoods

(N.B. 1 and 2 were very closely split and each represent around a third of the overall responses to this question.)

5.3 Cleaning Service

68.5% of our general needs tenants who live in flats said they were satisfied with the cleaning of internal communal areas and 57.4% were satisfied with external areas. This represents a significant decrease since 2016.

85.2% of our supported housing tenants who live in flats said they were satisfied with the cleaning of internal communal areas and 72.0% were satisfied with external areas. Both were a significant decrease when compared with the 2016 results.

55.6% of our leaseholders said they were satisfied with the cleaning of internal communal areas and 40.6% were satisfied with external areas. Both were a significant decrease when compared with the 2016 results.

Satisfaction with our cleaning service had previously improved gradually since 2012

5.3 Internet use

88.8% of our general needs tenants, 51.7% of our supported housing tenants and 86.8% of our leaseholders use the internet, with most of these using it daily. This shows a growing trend, particularly amongst our supported housing tenants. In 2016 only 30.9% of supported housing tenants who responded to the survey had internet access.

Of those who used our website, 91.7% of general needs tenants, 91.5% of supported housing tenants and 82.3% of leaseholders were satisfied that it is a source of useful information.

Survey Results (continued)

5.4 Transparency of charging

For the first time, we asked our tenants whether they were satisfied that their service charges provide value for money. We separated basic rent from 'extra' services such as cleaning, communal lighting and lift maintenance in April 2017.

71.4% of general needs tenants and 87.5% of supported housing tenants felt that their service charges provide value for money.

5.6 Communication and Contact

Whilst 45.9% of general needs tenants stated that our website was one of their three preferred methods of finding out about council services and events, nearly a third (32.1%) preferred our magazine News and Views and more than a quarter (27.0%) 'sending or receiving a letter'.

Amongst supported housing tenants, News and Views was the most popular (42.7%), closely followed by 'face to face with a council officer' (41.9%) and 'sending or receiving a letter' (35.7%).

5.7 Specialised services

5.7.1 Supported Housing

Dacorum Borough Council's supported housing service achieves excellent standards, having recently once again achieved the CHS Three Star accreditation. The service is currently undergoing review, so it is important to understand our tenants' perceptions around the extra support they receive.

Our supported housing service-specific questions asked tenants' opinions on the following:

Having choice and control over the support I receive: 91.6% satisfied

The frequency of contact with my supported housing officer: 89.9% satisfied

The overall performance of my supported housing officer: 91.8% satisfied

Knowing where to obtain help and information: 93.3% satisfied

Being able to manage and live more independently in my own home: 99.1% satisfied

These levels of satisfaction are consistently higher than those expressed about the housing service overall.

5.7.2 Leaseholders

Dacorum Borough Council owns approximately 1,700 leasehold flats, around 60% of which are occupied by the leaseholder and the remainder let to private tenants. Nearly nine out of ten of those responding to the survey (87.9%) live in their own flat.

In an effort to encourage leaseholders to become more engaged with the housing service, we asked questions around involvement as well as their perception of the service they receive from our Service Charges Officers.

Our leaseholders tend to prefer our website or sending/receiving an email as a way of obtaining information about council services and events. 88.8% of those responding to the survey use the internet, mostly every day. Three in ten state that News and Views or sending/receiving a letter is one of their preferred methods.

Only around four in ten of our leaseholders had contacted the Leasehold Services Team in the last 12 months. These respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the following:

The ease of contacting the Leasehold Services Team: 61.7% satisfied

The usefulness of the information received: 55.4% satisfied

The helpfulness of staff when dealing with the query: 62.6% satisfied

The overall performance of the Leasehold Services Team: 59.1% satisfied

Survey Results (continued)

5.7.2 Leaseholders (continued)

Leaseholders were also asked about their understanding of the various charges resulting from their lease. 72% of those responding to the survey stated that they already knew what was included in their Ground Rent and Service Charges.

When asked whether they would have any interest in Leaseholder information events, the responses were as follows:

Leaseholder Forum – regular information-sharing meetings: 38.9%

Group meeting including Q&A session with a representative from the Leaseholder Advisory Service: 43.1%

Regular Leaseholder email newsletters: 67.0%

Regular Leaseholder satisfaction surveys: 64.7%

These results show that approximately two thirds of leaseholders would have some interest in dedicated email newsletters and satisfaction surveys for leaseholders.

5.8 Repairs and Maintenance

69.7% of general needs tenants, 69.3% of supported housing tenants and 43.4% of leaseholders said that we had carried out a repair within the past year.

These respondents were asked a series of questions around their satisfaction with the most recent repair carried out at their home.

5.8.1 General Needs

- 81.8% were satisfied with being told when workers would call (no change)
- 83.9% were satisfied with being able to make an appointment (-2%)
- 71.8% were satisfied with the time taken before work started (-8%)
- 81.4% were satisfied with the speed of completion of work (-0.5%)
- 93.5% were satisfied with the attitude of the workers (+0.5%)
- 83.5% were satisfied with the overall quality of work (+1.5%)
- 91.9% were satisfied that workers kept dirt and mess to a minimum (no change)
- 73.6% were satisfied their repair had been done right first time (+0.6%)
- 81.1% were satisfied with the contractors doing the job they expected (-2.9%)
- 81.0% were satisfied with the repair service they received on this occasion (no change)

The time taken before work starts and doing the repair 'right first time' are areas where tenants tend to be less satisfied than with the service overall.

5.8.2 Supported Housing

- 88.4% were satisfied with being told when workers would call (-10%)
- 84.8% were satisfied their ability to make an appointment (-10%)
- 75.2% were satisfied with the time taken before work started (-10.8%)
- 88.4% were satisfied with the speed of completion of work (-3.6%)
- 94.5% were satisfied with the attitude of the workers (+2.5%)
- 87.7% were satisfied with the overall quality of work (+1.7%)
- 90.9% were satisfied that workers kept dirt and mess to a minimum (-5%)
- 82.8% were satisfied their repair had been done right first time (-1.24%)
- 88.3% were satisfied with the contractors doing the job they expected (-1.7%)
- 86.5% were satisfied with the repair service received on this occasion (-0.5%)

These levels of satisfaction exceed those recorded in the earlier 'core' question asked of all tenants. This seems to indicate that those tenants who have used the repairs service in the past year are more satisfied with the service delivered than the overall perception would suggest. Nevertheless, satisfaction has decreased in almost every category apart from a small improvement in 'attitude of workers' and 'quality of work'.

The time taken before work starts is an area where supported housing tenants tend to be less satisfied than with the service overall.

Survey Results (continued)

6.0 Analysis and Recommendations

5.8.3 Leaseholders

- 64% were satisfied with being told when workers would call (N/A)
- 49% were satisfied their ability to make an appointment (N/A)
- 51% were satisfied with the time taken before work started (-22%)
- 60% were satisfied with the speed of completion (-17%)
- 57% were satisfied with the attitude of the workers (-35%)
- 60% were satisfied with the overall quality of work (-13%)
- 79% were satisfied that workers kept dirt and mess to a minimum (-3%)
- 56% were satisfied their repair had been done right first time (-14%)
- 60% were satisfied with the contractors carrying out the expected job (-19%)
- 63% were satisfied with the repair service received (-14%)

Whilst these figures show lower satisfaction than in previous years, only 105 leaseholders reported that they had had a repair on their block. Changes to survey methodology may mean that results could have been adversely affected by dissatisfied

leaseholders at a small number of blocks where major works are being carried out. Further analysis could be undertaken to see whether this is the case, but would be likely to incur disproportionate cost for little benefit.

6.0 Analysis

Overall the results of the biennial satisfaction survey show the housing service is delivering a good service to our tenants and leaseholders. There has been a drop in perceived satisfaction since 2016, but this may be accounted for by the fact that the survey was publicised extensively on our social media channels.

Results show that the development of new homes and home improvements are once again the main priorities for tenants.

Overall there has been a significant increase in the number of supported housing tenants using the internet. There is also a very significant shift towards respondents completing the survey online.

6.1 Recommendations

- Investigate continuing fall in satisfaction figures for the repairs service
- Continue to take steps to improve internet access, particularly amongst our older tenants
- Take steps to understand the reasons for a significant fall in satisfaction with the cleaning service and allocate resources for improvement
- Communicate to tenants around how we listen to their views and act upon them.
- Continue to develop the website as a source of useful information for tenants and leaseholders.
- Review our service to leaseholders.

6.2 Areas of success

- ✓ Overall satisfaction remains very high, with more than eight out of ten tenants (85.4%) expressing satisfaction with our service as their housing landlord.
- ✓ Almost every supported housing tenant responding to the survey (99.1%) was satisfied with 'Being able to manage and live more independently in their own home'.
- ✓ Significant numbers of tenants and leaseholders responded to our request to complete the survey online, showing the success of our drive for digital channel shift.
- ✓ Ability to access the internet has increased very significantly, particularly amongst supported housing tenants, showing the success of our free tablet courses.