Drawing conclusions

Who took part in the research?

Ensure interpretations take account of whether feedback was obtained from all demographic groups, and from a similar sample to the full range of service users. Underrepresentation of specific groups can lead to their views being neglected. Failing to include all groups could mean that the service becomes catered to the needs of majority groups.

What are the validity of findings?

Are prominent findings from interviews supported by survey data? Are findings from surveys replicated over time? It is important to understand the validity of findings before making decisions that impact upon service delivery. By ensuring that views are widely endorsed rather than that of a vocal individual it will enable informed decisions to be made about future service directions.

What are the limitations of the research?

Interviews and focus groups provide insight into client experiences but are not generalizable data. To draw conclusions it is worth using a mix of methods to increase the strength of evidence available. Also note that methods used are cross-sectional and only reflect opinions and views at the time of research, and cannot be used to justify a conclusion of cause and effect.

Client satisfaction: a best practice checklist

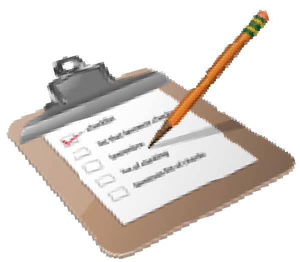
Define the purpose of the research. Do you want to gain an insight into experiences or do you require objective data?

Choose methods appropriate to your aims and objectives.

Consider the tools used to collect data (e.g. interview schedules, questionnaires). Make sure that these are adequate. The conclusions you draw are only as good as the data you collect.

Design a data collection protocol. Consider how clients will be approached and how bias will be minimised.

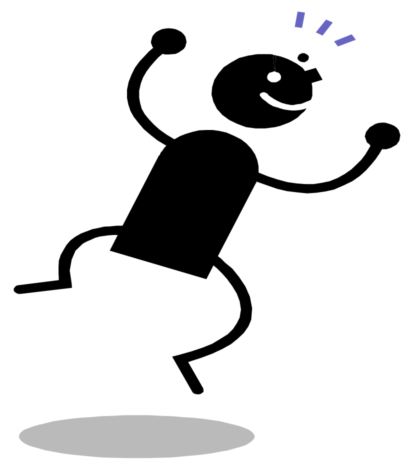
Compare your final sample with the full client group to reflect on how representative your findings are.



Bath & North East Somerset Council
UNIVERSITY OF BATH

Client Satisfaction

A best practice short-guide to exploring client satisfaction



March 2014

Bath & North East Somerset

- ***The*** place to live, work and visit

Why is it important to monitor client satisfaction?

Feedback from a representative sample of clients can help to identify ways that a service can be improved to meet clients' needs and improve experiences. Satisfied clients are more likely to make full use of the service and recommend the service to others.

The most useful methods of gaining insight into client satisfaction are:

i) Questionnaires/surveys
ii) Interviews/focus groups

How can client satisfaction be monitored?
The choice of method will depend on the question you want to answer.

⇒ Interviews and focus groups are useful if you want to understand client experiences, e.g. if you want to explore why uptake is low.
⇒ Questionnaires and surveys are useful if you want to get an overview of client satisfaction levels.

Eliminating bias

With research and evaluation; bias can occur at the planning stage, when data are collected or when data are interpreted. These questions may help to ensure that your findings are as balanced as possible.

Planning

1.What marker of customer satisfaction could you use?
Make sure you have identified your primary marker of client satisfaction before you start. Different outcomes are useful for different purposes; e.g. self-reported '*satisfaction*' may be sufficient for standard monitoring purposes, but '*willingness to recommend the service to others'* may be more useful if lobbying commissioners/providers for change.

2. What questions will you ask?
The questions we ask limit the data collected. It is important not to bias findings by asking misleading or narrow questions.

3. How will you capture responses?
Free text allows people to propose responses that are meaningful to them. However, free text can be time consuming to analyse in large samples. Forced responses may be more appropriate to answer specific questions (e.g. gauging the support for changes to services).

4. Who is being asked to take part in the research?
Include clients who have disengaged from the service in addition to those who used it to the full, Groups who are typically less likely to respond to surveys may need to be 'oversampled' in order to ensure you have representation from the full range of clients.

Data collection

1. **How are data collected?**
Do data collection methods promote honesty? Are clients informed that their views will be anonymous? Clients may be less honest if they have to provide feedback to the member of staff they dealt with. More open responses are obtained when feedback is anonymous and submitted away from staff members (e.g. posted to a central site or entered online).

Ideally interviews and focus groups should be conducted by someone neutral and clients reassured that their conversations and contributions will remain anonymous. Be prepared that some feedback might be uncomfortable to hear; but your role is to understand clients not challenge them. understand them.

This short best practice guide is bought to you by the University of Bath in collaboration with Bath & North East Somerset Council.

For more information contact the Active Lifestyles and Healthy Improvement Team on 01225 396429