

Fact sheet 16: How do I design a simple service user satisfaction questionnaire?

This fact sheet aims to give you information to help you to understand:

- Why we need to find out how satisfied our service users are;
- When we would use a service user satisfaction questionnaire;
- What to consider when designing a questionnaire;
- What to do with the responses; and
- Links to examples and further reading.

1. Why do we want to know about service user satisfaction?

When we design, deliver or commission a service or programme it is sometimes easy to presume we know what is best about how things will work. However, the best experts on the effectiveness and accessibility of a service are often those who use and engage with it. Investigating service user satisfaction is one way that we can check the service is working and find out if it is meeting the needs of the users/customers. Service users are often in the best position to suggest how systems can be changed and amended to improve them. A simple service user satisfaction questionnaire allows us to get a general overview of the experience of as many service users as possible. Service user satisfaction questionnaires are often used as part of an evaluation of a service to establish service user perspectives. See [Fact sheet 5. Why do I need to evaluate my project/service?](#)

2. What kinds of questions should I include in my questionnaire?

A service user satisfaction questionnaire should investigate some specific outcomes that allow us to understand and improve the service or service experience for users. It is useful to find out what is working well, as well as areas that could be improved.

When designing the questions, think about what you intend to do with the answers:

- Do you want to measure proportions of users with a particular opinion about a specific part of the service? If so, you will need to use a closed question or Likert Scale.
- Do you want to capture a wider range of more detailed individual views? It may be better to use an opened ended question (see below).

Think about the service from start to finish (i.e. from 'referral' to 'discharge') and ask about user experience/satisfaction at each key point. It is often the practical aspects of the services (i.e. how easy it is to get an appointment) that cause the most concern for users. Their experience of the service is often strongly influenced by things like the helpfulness and friendliness of staff, so don't forget to ask about these as well as about the clinical aspects of the service.

3. How do I write the questions?

Questions can come in three main types; closed questions, Likert scale and open ended questions.

Closed questions are those with suggested answers that enable the respondent to choose from specific options given. This allows consistent collection of large amounts of data. These questions can be used to quantify opinion and are useful if you want to present responses as percentages or in graph form. Always consider including an 'unsure' or 'don't know' option as not everyone will have a definite opinion.

e.g. *“Did you get an appointment within 2 weeks?”* Yes No Unsure”

Likert Scales are used to gather opinions and answers where there is not necessarily a true or false answer, but a range of possible feelings. Likert Scales can be used to gauge how much someone agrees with a series of statements. Do not forget to explain which end of the scale is agree and which is disagree. Ideally you should have a combination of positive and negative statements for them to agree/disagree with, e.g.

	<i>Strongly agree</i>					<i>Strongly disagree</i>
	1	2	3	4	5	
<i>It was easy to get an appointment</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
<i>The staff were helpful</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
<i>Parking was difficult</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Likert scales can also be used for single questions with options of answers that effectively make a scale that can then be numbered 1 to 5.

e.g. *How friendly did you find the reception staff?*

- Very friendly*
- Friendly*
- Neither friendly nor unfriendly*
- Unfriendly*
- Very unfriendly*

Open ended questions (also called ‘free text questions’) are used if you want to gather much more detailed and rich information about user experience or suggested improvements. This type of question allows respondents to provide information or suggestions that may not have occurred to you as the provider or commissioner. When analysing, it is difficult to use responses to open ended questions to quantify opinions because you cannot easily put responses into categories and compare them. However, you will often find that the same or similar ideas or issues are suggested in responses to these questions and these can then be categorised in your analysis.

e.g. *How could we improve our appointment booking service?*

4. What else should I think about when designing the questionnaire?

It is good practice to include some information at the start about who is collecting the information (i.e. Wirral Council), why this questionnaire is being carried out and what you intend to do with the results.

Do not underestimate the importance of laying out your questionnaire so that it is clear and easy to complete. Do not make it too long (you do not want people to give up half way through), too squashed (visually cluttered forms can be off-putting) or too technical (try to pilot the form with a non-specialist to check the language you use). Before including questions, ask yourself what you will do with the information from each question. If the results won't be useful, don't ask the question!

Always allow enough room for the user to record their answer to open ended or free text questions.

Also be careful about how you phrase your questions. Don't ask about two aspects of service in one question as you will not be sure which the respondent is referring to in the answer and make sure you don't ask leading questions. An example of an ambiguous question might be:

Has continuing the course exercises at home helped you lose weight and feel more energetic?

If the answer is 'No', does this mean that the individual has not continued the exercises, that they have not helped with anything or that they have helped with energy but not losing weight? This question needs to be split for clarity.

If there is any confusion about what a question means, or there are several answers, but no facility to record them on the questionnaire, people will tend to leave the answer blank and this must then be counted as missing data and a wasted opportunity.

You will usually want to ask some questions about the demographics of your respondents, i.e. gender, age, ethnicity. You can then compare responses and satisfaction for different groups. These will help you to understand if you are failing to meet the needs of a particular group – for example you might find that younger people are very satisfied with the service whereas older people are not. If you can find out why then you can use this information to improve specific parts of the service.

5. How do I analyse the responses?

The best way to analyse the responses to your closed questions and Likert Scale is to enter them into a spreadsheet or statistical package and produce graphs and tables to show the results for each question. See [Factsheet 17 – How to I analyse and interpret my data?](#)

For the open-ended questions it is best to go through all the answers and try to pick out the recurring opinions, suggestions and comments. The usual way to present these free text answers in your report is to sum them up in your own words then include an example quote that illustrates the point. Sometimes a comment or opinion may only have been made once but you may think it is so important that you will decide to include it in the report. It is important not to let your own biases and expectations affect your interpretation so be careful to analyse and present this section objectively.



More on this topic and further reading

For more guidance on designing satisfaction questionnaires see:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/customer-satisfaction-survey-questions/>

For examples of customer satisfaction surveys see:

- The GP Patient Survey <http://www.gp-patient.co.uk/download/Questionnaires/Y5Q4%20GP%20Patient%20Survey%20questionnaire.pdf>
- Patient survey from The London Clinic http://www.thelondonclinic.co.uk/pdf/London_Clinic_Daycare2.pdf
- Patient Satisfaction Questionnaire for GU Clinics http://www.bashh.org/groups/patient_and_public_involvement