



# Research Methodology

November 2008

Technical Note 2

## **THE PLACE SURVEY (& OTHER NATIONAL INDICATOR PERCEPTION SURVEYS)**

The national indicator set (NIS) contains 25 citizen perspective indicators (CPI), 18 of which will be collected through the new Place Survey [5 of these are also Assessment of Policing and Community Safety (APACS) indicators]. The remaining 7 indicators are collected through other perception surveys. The first Place Survey is being carried out during Autumn 2008.

### **The Place Survey: Background**

On 14<sup>th</sup> December 2007 Communities and Local Government (CLG) published a consultation document setting out proposals for a new survey to be undertaken by all local authorities. The new survey; known as 'the place survey' replaces the triennial best value (BV) general, planning, benefits and library user satisfaction surveys. These surveys took place in 2006/7 for the last time as a statutory requirement.

The place survey differs from the previous BV surveys in that it solely focuses on perceptions of living within an area rather than satisfaction with specific local authority services. The place survey therefore intends to be;

- Relevant to anyone living in the area
- Not specific to any one agency or service
- Not specific to any particular client group

The Place Survey will take place every two years, with the first survey being carried out during Autumn 2008. The Black Country authorities have commissioned Ipsos MORI to carry out, analyse and report the 2008 survey on their behalf.



## Methodology

The methodology for the Place Survey is very similar to that used for the BV general survey (or Local Government User Satisfaction Survey as it is also known). The whole process is prescribed by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), and must be adhered to. This is to allow comparability of results across the country. Although the survey is about the area as a whole, it is still run by Councils.

The survey uses a postal methodology, with a requirement to send an initial mail-out followed by at least two reminders. Each mailing must include a copy of the questionnaire (rather than just a reminder letter). The Post Office small users address file (PAF) forms the sampling frame – a total of 6000 addresses within each area were randomly selected by the Audit Commission, before being made available for Local Authorities to use.

The requirement is for local authorities to achieve a minimum of 1100 responses to the Place Survey – Councils therefore had to decide how many questionnaires to mail out, dependent on past response rates and the level of analysis required. In Sandwell we decided to mail out 5000 questionnaires in total to ensure we achieve the required 1100, although past response rates suggest we may exceed this (the 1800 that past rates suggest, would mean that we could analyse data to the Town level).

Once data from the survey is entered and verified, it then needs to be passed to the Audit Commission, who 'weight' the data to reflect the overall population make-up of each area. Weighting is carried out because response rates from different groups of the population will vary, and so by applying a correction factor to a response, this ensures that the data is representative of an area's population in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and household size. Again this ensures comparability across the country.

### **In summary, DCLG requires that all Place Surveys meet eight common standards:**

1. Adhere to the timetable
2. Use the questionnaire template
3. Use the sampling method
4. Use the sampling frame
5. Use the designated method of data collection
6. Take all reasonable steps to maximise the response rate
7. Achieve the designated statistical reliability
8. Use each of the data submission templates and tools for submitting survey results and metadata and ensure they are submitted by the required date



## Questionnaire

The Place Survey questions collect data for 18 of the National Indicators (see Table 1). Topics covered include satisfaction with the area as a place to live, voluntary work, anti-social behaviour and health. Four of these indicators also form part of Sandwell's Local Area Agreement<sup>1</sup>. A copy of Sandwell's questionnaire is available to [download](#).

Additional classificatory questions will enable analysis for groups within the population (for example through questions such as age, gender and ethnicity), and postcodes derived from the original address sample will allow analysis for different areas of the Borough (analysis will be published for the 6 Sandwell Towns, and data will also be calculated at a ward level – although this will not be made generally available).

The original DCLG Guidance did provide scope to add our own locally derived questions, however in Sandwell we decided against this, as we felt this was unnecessary.

**Table 1. National Indicators collected as part of the Place Survey**

NI Number	Name	LAA Indicator
NI 1	% of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area	✓
NI 2	% of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood	
NI 3	Civic participation in the local area	
NI 4	% of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality	✓
NI 5	Overall/general satisfaction with the area	✓
NI 6	Participation in regular volunteering	
NI 17	Perceptions of anti-social behaviour	
NI 21	Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime by the local council and police	✓
NI 22	Perceptions of parents taking responsibility for the behaviour of their children in the area	
NI 23	Perceptions that people in the area treat one another with respect and consideration	
NI 27	Understanding of local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime by the local council and police	
NI 37	Awareness of civil protection arrangements in the local area	
NI 41	Perceptions of drunk or rowdy behaviour as a problem	
NI 42	Perception of drug use or drug dealing as a problem	
NI 119	Self-reported measure of people's overall health and well-being	
NI 138	Satisfaction of people over 65 with both home and neighbourhood	
NI 139	The extent to which older people receive the support they need to live independently at home	
NI 140	Fair treatment by local services	

Source: Research Sandwell.

<sup>1</sup> The LAA is an agreement drawn up between a local area and national government. Through the LAA, local partners, in consultation with the public, identify a range of priority issues for that area. The local partners then, in negotiation with their Regional Government Office, choose indicators and set targets for improvement against each of the priorities they have identified. Every local authority area in England must prepare an LAA in this way.



**Timetable**

The first mail-out began on 29th September 2008, and fieldwork will end on 19th December. Responses are entered throughout the process, and then the full data file will be submitted to the Audit Commission during January.

**Table 2. Place Survey Timetable**

	Date
<b>Sample available</b>	Late July 2008
<b>Initial mail out</b>	25-26 September 2008
<b>Fieldwork begins</b>	29 September 2008
<b>Reminders window opens</b>	15 October 2008
<b>Fieldwork ends<sup>2</sup></b>	19 December 2008
<b>Data submission begins</b>	1 January 2009
<b>Data submission deadline</b>	30 January 2009

*Source: DCLG Place Survey Guidance.*

The Audit Commission will return the weighted data file to the Council within a few days of receipt. Analysis of the data will then be carried out by Ipsos MORI, who specify that they will produce summary results and data tables within 3 weeks of the release of the weighted data. The detailed full report will then be available 2 weeks later – so in essence we expect Sandwell’s Place Survey results to be available during February/March 2009.

**Other National Indicator Perception Surveys**

**Active People Survey**

Carried out by Sport England, the Active People Survey provides the largest sample size ever established for a sport and recreation survey and allows a detailed level of analysis. It identifies how participation varies from place to place and between different groups in the population. The survey is run as a continuous annual survey, and collects data for NI 8, 9, 10 and 11 (as well as data specifically used by Sport England).

**Survey of ASB victims**

It is proposed that NI 24 & 25 will be collected via a Survey of ASB Victims. However, these indicators will not be collected until 2009/10. Guidance on the methodology for data collection has yet to be released.

**2011 Census**

It is currently proposed that NI 137 (healthy life expectancy at age 65) be collected through the next Census. If this is the case, the data is unlikely to be available for this indicator before 2012 at the earliest.

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<sup>2</sup> No more questionnaires can be sent out but any completed questionnaire which is received after this point may still be included in the dataset.