

Background

User satisfaction surveys have been conducted by all police forces in England and Wales since 1993. Over their history, the surveys have been the source of information for Best Value Performance Indicators, Statutory Performance Indicators and they subsequently formed part of the Police Performance Assessment Framework. Data derived from these surveys continue to be reported to the Home Office on a quarterly basis as part of the Annual Data Return (ADR).

The ADR obliges police forces to conduct or commission telephone-based surveys with a sample of service users who have either been the victim of a domestic burglary; the victim of a violent crime; the victim of a vehicle crime (theft of or theft from) or the victim of a hate crime. Nationally developed and agreed guidance sets out how these surveys should be conducted and how the level of service user satisfaction is calculated. There are mandatory questions about satisfaction with initial contact, actions, treatment, follow up and whole experience and these may be supplemented by questions chosen by the force. The guidance allows certain victims to be excluded from the surveys – most notably those who are vulnerable and young people under 16 years.

The majority of forces out-source surveying to commercial companies who conduct telephone surveys with victims under a national procurement framework that is managed by Thames Valley Police. Those forces that do not use the TVP framework either conduct their surveys in-house or source them from another police force.

Current Uses of the Data

On several occasions, the Performance Management Coordinating Committee (previously PMBA) has run events with practitioners and stakeholders to discuss the state and status of these surveys.

Generally, the ADR-surveys are seen as a means of generating standardised satisfaction indicators for use in comparing and ranking police forces and monitoring changes over time, leading to judgements about performance and inviting questions about service delivery. The satisfaction indicators were seen as bringing some balance to performance frameworks perceived to be dominated by “counts of crimes”.

The guidance has improved the practice of conducting and using surveys but the emphasis on comparing and ranking the satisfaction indicators has also meant that the full potential of the surveys has not been realised. Conversations prompted by

the surveys tended to concentrate on the headline numbers and comparison with other forces, rather than insights about victims and their needs. This focus on comparisons has also created perverse incentives in both surveying and service provision.

Whilst the importance of seeking and using insights from service users is universally recognised, over several years, the continuing relevance and reliability of the ADR-surveys has been called into question. There has been a divergence in how forces interpret the guidance and in the representativeness of the narrow sample of service users that are required by the ADR. This variation in the interpretation and adherence to the guidance means that considerable caution should be exercised in comparing the satisfaction indicators from different forces

The relationship between the ADR-surveys and quality of service has always been implicit but has been made tenuous by the emphasis on the level of satisfaction made by the ADR. In many forces the ADR-surveys have little purpose other than to service the data collection and the return - this was recognised in the 2015 Curtis Review.

The fact that most forces supplement the ADR-surveys is testament to their increasingly limited relevance and a commitment to seeking insights into service use in order to inform the development of practice, policy and performance.

HMIC is now the only national body that makes use of the user satisfaction surveys and, in truth, that use is limited because of firstly how little information is collected by the ADR and secondly concerns about the consistency and comparability of the surveys that are run by or on behalf of police forces.

The future

In order to inform this year's ADR process, police forces in England and Wales were asked to consider the following options for developing the surveys.

- 1) Continue to require forces to make the same returns of user satisfaction
- 2) Continue to require forces to make the same returns of user satisfaction but with refreshed guidance
- 3) Continue to require forces to return the level of satisfaction for a revised sample of service users (with revised guidance).
- 4) Discontinue the requirement for forces to make a specific return of user satisfaction.
- 5) Discontinue the requirement for forces to make a specific return of user satisfaction and replace it with a requirement that they will to seek insights from service users.
- 6) Discontinue the requirement for forces to make a specific return of user satisfaction and replace it with a requirement that they will to seek insights from service users and an expectation that they will be able to demonstrate how the insights are used to improve policy, practice or performance.

The overwhelming majority of forces chose option 5 or option 6.

Option 6 or 5: 29 forces

(23 forces for option 6 + 6 forces for option 5 or 6) plus HMIC, CoP, and some PCCs

Option 3 and 6: 5 forces

Option 3 or 6: 3 forces plus HMIC and some PCCs

Option 3: 1 force

Option 4: 0 force

Option 2: 0 forces

Option 1: 0 forces

It was telling that none of the respondents selected the status quo or amendment to the current guidance nor did any respondent choose to discontinue the return completely.

In light of the current state and status of the ADR-survey and these responses it has been proposed that the current collection is discontinued and replaced with option 6. The details of how this will be achieved will need to be developed.