

pteg* response to consultation on *The New Place Survey

Introduction

pteg represents the six English Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) in England which between them serve more than ten million people in Tyne and Wear ('Nexus'), West Yorkshire ('Metro'), South Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside ('Merseytravel') and the West Midlands ('Centro'). Transport for London (TfL) and Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) are associate members of ***pteg***, though this response does not represent their views. The PTEs plan, procure, provide and promote public transport in some of Britain's city regions, with the aim of providing integrated public transport networks accessible to all. The PTEs (including SPT) have a combined budget of more than a billion pounds a year of which about £300million is capital expenditure, and are funded by a combination of local council tax and grants from national government. They are responsible to Passenger Transport Authorities (PTAs) made up of representatives of local councils in the areas they serve.

pteg is always happy to contribute to further discussion with the Government, and would be pleased to clarify our views or to develop them further. Please use Louisa Moore on louisa.moore@pteg.net a first point of contact.

General comments

The Consultation document states that the survey is intended to be 'not specific to any one agency or service, or to any particular client group'. This is a clear change in focus from previous best value performance surveys, and would seem to be focussed on perceptions and outcomes rather than specific institutions and/or processes. This reflects a belief that the public are not interested in who may be delivering the service - simply that it is provided well. It also is the reflection of the changing emphasis of Government towards multi-agency, or partnership, working and the existence of a shared responsibility to deliver the best possible services to the public.

pteg generally welcomes this approach, although we do query how results from this will be applied to the individual organisations (such as councils and PTA/Es) where the responsibility for a good or poor result cannot be specifically attributed to any one organisation.

pteg seeks clarification as to whether the local authority would be required to ensure the respondent demographic profile matches the demographic profile for their area, once the New Place Survey is implemented.

pteg believes that although postal surveys are a option, they may disadvantage some people - for example some people with disabilities and those whose first language is not English. Alternative arrangements should be made available for these groups.

Area Brand

This is supported, although it may cause some concerns about data protection. With survey data being passed to different bodies (for example, a PTA/E) it will be necessary that the respondent is well informed about who is collecting and/or using the data.

Definition of area

If the intention is to change the definition of area throughout the survey, this should be made clear. People may answer very differently about their immediate local area – say within a 15 minute walk of their house – compared to the district or county that they live in. If the intention is to use a larger area definition (district or county), it may be prudent to include a question about access to employment, education, health and leisure facilities.

Are these the right questions to get the information for the indicators?

Question 6

We welcome this question as valuable in assessing the independence of older people.

Question 7

This is not specific enough. 'Local area' must be defined and there is a possibility that respondents may not have an art gallery or museum in that area. There should be a supplementary question asking why they have not visited these types of institutions (reasons for which may include an inability to access the facility by public transport; prohibitive entry costs; a lack of interests; or a belief the facility has nothing to offer them);

Question 15

We would welcome the inclusion of damage and/or vandalism to public transport vehicles and infrastructure within this question as these should be considered as part of the public realm.

Question 22

We support the inclusion of Question 22A plus additional disability related questions. As Question 22A is used for the Census, comparisons would be easier to make.

The Census question used to define disability should be used (rather than separate questions ascertaining a disability and whether it limits activity). This would also allow for benchmarking against Census data in 2001 and 2011.

If Question22Bi-v) were used, it would require more definitions and options. We suggest that the definition of 'walking about' needs clarification (as there are disability standards for mobility). More options are needed (for example: 'I sometimes have problems walking about' to include people with conditions such as multiple sclerosis who may be able to walk some days but not others; and 'I use a wheelchair'). The time period should also be clarified, for example, is answer based on the previous day, the previous two weeks, year, etc, as they may affect how respondents answer the question.

Similarly, the definition of anxiety/depression in Question22b.v needs clarification (the King's Fund has useful ways of measuring mental health and wellbeing). Given the sensitivity surrounding mental illness and depression, the New Place Survey might illicit a better response by asking about positive health and wellbeing, rather than anxiety and depression.

Question 24

We welcome questions about treatment while using public transport, as this is a frequent source of complaints to all PTEs. There is a need for clarity, however, as to whether this question is gauging respondents being treated with respect by other passengers, or by drivers and/or conductors.

Is there anything missing?

We believe the inclusion of a question about access to employment, education, health and leisure facilities would be useful. A respondent's immediate vicinity may be clean and crime-free, but remote from employment, education, leisure and health facilities. Answers could then be used to contribute to measuring NI-175 (access to services and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling).

In the classificatory questions, CLG might consider asking if the respondent is an informal carer for either a family member or a neighbour, as this affects ability to access facilities and employment. This differs from formal volunteering and caring responsibilities can be a barrier to social participation. If this were based on the existing 2001 Census question about caring, it would allow comparison with Census data.

A question about the nature of disability would be useful. We suggest using the classification in the DDA Equality Scheme (as most public bodies are already using this) and breaking it down into more detailed options for each category (for example, splitting out sight, hearing, speech into individual categories within a communication or sensory sub-category).

Respondents are asked to indicate whether they think certain issues cause a problem in their area. Another question could be added asking whether bullying or harassment causes a problem, including behaviour which upsets, threatens or intimidates.

Are these the right classificatory questions?

The question 'Does this illness or disability limit your activities in any way?' is based on a medical model of disability rather than a social model. CLG might consider rewording the question to ask whether their locality is equipped to support people with a disability or provides barriers to being able to participate fully in local life. 'The Disability Equality Duty guidance on gathering and analysing evidence to inform action' provides a template for questions on the barriers disabled people may face to fully participating in public life.

The question of religion should be clearly agreed and consistent at a national level. There are two different versions, one on STATUS and one in the New Place Survey. The STATUS version of the question is preferable.

We believe it is not necessary to add 'even if you are not currently practicing' to the question on religion. This is likely to distort the survey by including people who are not practicing in the religious categories. An option: 'prefer not to say' should be included.

The classification of race should be adjusted to match the proposals for the 2011 census. The intention in the census seems to be to shift Chinese to being under the Asian or Asian British, leaving only 'Other' in the final category, rather than it being 'Chinese or other ethnic group', which is appropriate.

Age on last birthday is preferable over asking for a respondent's date of birth. This is a highly personal piece of information, and other than the 'standardisation' reason of minimum data requirements given in the consultation, it is unclear why it is needed in pure survey data.

A consistent and nationally agreed question for sexual orientation should be used. The national STATUS survey uses a different question, which is preferable to the proposed question.

We are pleased to see that all six equality strands are planned to be included as questions on the survey. Using them in a high profile national survey will accustom people to seeing the questions, and understanding why they need to be asked. It may be useful to include some text explaining why the classification questions need to be asked, to encourage people to complete that information.

Development of a standard set of voluntary questions to enable benchmarking

As the survey is about an area, rather than the local authority, we suggest that a working group (to establish national indicators and benchmarking) should reflect the stakeholders included in a local Strategic Partnership.