



Complaints Survey Toolkit: Sampling Compilation Guide

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About this handbook

This handbook provides instructions on how to compile a sample of complainants to include in the survey. This handbook is aimed at those carrying out the sampling for, but not directly coordinating or managing, the Complaints survey.

The survey is intended to be implemented as a rolling survey with a new sample of complainants being drawn once every two weeks. The complainants included in the sample should be those complainants who have received their outcome 4-5 weeks prior to sampling.

All complainants in your sample will be contacted by post or email. There will be 2 mailings - an initial mailing followed by one reminder to non-responders (with a gap of 2 weeks between the mailings). See the implementation guide for more information.

Compiling a list of complainants

Overview

This section explains how to draw your sample of complainants. Before mailing out the questionnaire, the organisation **must** do a check to ensure that no deceased complainants are included in the sample. This can be done through checking your own records. It is essential that you check that your organisation has no record of a complainant, selected for the survey, having died.

You can also use the Demographics Batch Service (DBS). The DBS enables users to submit and receive a file containing relevant complainant records electronically using dedicated client software. The complainant's records in the file are matched against the NHS Spine Personal Demographics Service (PDS).

Please follow the instructions below carefully. **We strongly advise that you read all of this section BEFORE you start to compile your complainants list.** After compiling the sample, another person involved in this survey should check the file for errors.

Selecting your sample

This section describes how to create a sample. Please use the '**Excel Sample Compilation Template**' provided in this Toolkit to compile your sample, where each row will represent one record.

Check your list for the following exclusions

The list should **exclude**:

- **Deceased complainants**

- **Unreasonably persistent complainants.** These are those complainants who, because of the nature or frequency of their contacts with an organisation, hinder the organisation's consideration of their, or other people's, complaints
- Complex cases where organisations have been asked not to follow up complainants for **clinical reasons**.
- **Opt outs.** If a complainant has indicated that they do not want their records used for secondary purposes (e.g. they have asked to be excluded from all surveys or they do not want their address details being used for any reason other than responding to their complaint).
- Those individuals where being sent a questionnaire will **cause undue distress**. This is based on the judgement of the staff involved in managing the complaint. Where possible these judgements should be made jointly by more than one person in a complaints team.
- Complainants **without a UK postal address** (but do not exclude if addresses are incomplete but useable, e.g. no postcode – you can look the missing details up e.g. on Royal Mail Postcode Finder).
- **Incomplete information.** Check for any records with incomplete information on key fields (such as surname and address) and remove those complainants. However, do not exclude anyone simply because you do not have a postcode for them. Only remove a complainant if there is insufficient name or address information for the questionnaire to have a reasonable chance of being delivered. The more cases that are removed at this stage, the poorer the sample coverage and the greater the danger of bias.

Please therefore delete any records that fall into the above categories.

Please keep a log of all complainants that opt out or are excluded. This can be done in the data entry spreadsheet included in the toolkit.

Create the sample file ready for checking

The toolkit includes a spreadsheet template for you to compile your sample in (file name: Complaints Survey_Sample Compilation Template). Please put your list of complainants into this spreadsheet.

NB: not all organisations will have a CCG code. If this is the case, please leave this column blank.

Blue headings are optional. But please include anything here that you might want to break your survey results down by – for example whether a complaint has been upheld, site or information.

Table 1 – Sample Excel file of complainants’ details

Your Organisation Name	Unique Reference Number (URN)	Title	First Name	Surname	Address Fields ¹	Postcode	Email address (for online surveys)	Paper or Online Survey	Date complaint made	Date of outcome	Date of Birth	Gender	Ethnic Category	CCG Code	EXTRA 1	EXTRA 2	EXTRA 3
Swindon Borough Council	SW11001	Miss	Zoe	Ahmed	6, Street One, Swindon	AB1 1YZ		P	0/08/2015	10/08/2015	10/08/1985	2	A		1	Team 1	
Swindon Borough Council	SW11002	Master	Fred	Yoo	Flat 2, Street Two, Swindon	AB2 6XZ		P	0/08/2015	01/06/2012	01/06/1976	1	D		1	Team 4	
Swindon Borough Council	SW11589	Miss	Daisy	Abbot	7, Street Three, Swindon	AB4 7MX		O	0/08/2015	26/05/2014	26/05/1990	2	F		1	Team 2	

The following information is compiled using provider site records:

- **Complainant’s first name** (or initial)
- **Complainant’s surname**
- **Complainant’s Address²**
- **Complainant’s Postcode**
- **Complainant’s email address** (for those receiving an online survey)
- **Paper or Online survey** should be ‘P’ if the complainant was contact via paper and ‘O’ if they received the survey online.
- **Date complaint made** should be included in the form of dd/mm/yyyy
- **Date of outcome** should be included in the form of dd/mm/yyyy
- The **Complainant’s date of birth** should be included in the form of dd/mm/yyyy
- **Complainant’s gender** should be coded as 1 = male and 2 = female.

¹ Please note that we have combined the address fields, these will be separated fields in the Excel template.

² The address should be held as separate fields (e.g. street, area, town, county and postcode).

- **Complainant's Ethnic Category** should be coded using the 17 item alphabetical coding specified by NHS Connecting for Health. The codes are as follows:

National Codes:

White

- A British
- B Irish
- C Any other White background

Mixed

- D White and Black Caribbean
- E White and Black African
- F White and Asian
- G Any other mixed background

Asian or Asian British

- H Indian
- J Pakistani
- K Bangladeshi
- L Any other Asian background

Black or Black British

- M Caribbean
- N African
- P Any other Black background

Other Ethnic Groups

- R Chinese
- S Any other ethnic group
- Z Not stated

The following additional information should also be entered on this spreadsheet:

- **CCG Code** - please provide the 3 character CCG code. This should be the CCG which will be billed for the care of the patient. Please see: <http://systems.hscic.gov.uk/data/ods/datadownloads/othernhs>
- **Organisation Name** – full name of your organisation
- **Unique Record Number- e.g. COM-1001**. This field should contain a 7-character code that is unique to each record, and will be a combination of
 - a 3-character code that is identical for every record (you can use a survey code such as 'COM' or if you are an NHS Trust you can use your three-character Department of Health code)
 - ...followed by a series of 4-digit numbers ascending from **1001** assigned by you. These final 4-characters should be unique for each record in the file. If

you would like to keep your own provider site record numbers on the file, please use one of the 'Extra' columns.

- **Extra 1, 2, 3,4** – please use these columns for any additional information such locality OR site information.
 - **Extra 4:** this field asks for the content of the complaint, as per the categories used in the KO41 return for your service outlined at <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/datacollections/ko41a> or <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/datacollections/ko41b>.

Final sampling inspection

The sample data should be checked for errors by following the quality control checklist (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Sampling quality control checklist

Area	What to check	Completed?
Name of Organisation	Check that the name of the organisation is present and correct.	
Unique Record Number	Combination of characters, the first three characters should be the same for all records, the final four characters should be unique for each record and consist of a 4-digit number ascending from 1001. e.g. SWI1078	
Title, Initials/First Name, Surname	Is complainant's name present for each record? 'Title' field can be left blank. <i>Check that the following are not used for first name for any records: null, unknown.</i>	
Address 1 -5 and Postcode	Fields should have an address within the UK and contain sufficient data for the questionnaire to have a reasonable chance of being delivered: do not exclude a complainant simply because they do not have a postcode. <i>Search for 'NFA', 'no fixed abode', 'unknown' and ZZ (in postcode)</i>	
Email address	Check that the email address is valid e.g contains at @	
Date complaint made	<u>Day</u> – 1 or 2 figures; <u>Month</u> : 1 or 2 figures (1-12). <u>Year</u>	
Date of outcome	<u>Day</u> – 1 or 2 figures; <u>Month</u> : 1 or 2 figures (1-12). <u>Year</u>	
Date of birth	<u>Day</u> – 1 or 2 figures; <u>Month</u> : 1 or 2 figures (1-12). <u>Year</u> : born (age at time of complaint should be 16 years or over)	
Gender	Should be 1=male, 2=female. <i>Check that gender corresponds with 'title' and 'first name'</i>	
Ethnic category	Coded A-Z. Expect to contain 'Z's and blanks	

Keeping complainants' mailing data and sample data separate

For confidentiality reasons, survey responses must never be matched to the personal details (e.g. name and address information). The best way to ensure this is to store name and address details separately from other personal details (e.g. gender, ethnicity) and from survey response data. For this reason, once the sample has been checked for deceased complainants and the list is finalised, names, postal addresses, email addresses must be removed from the sample file to a 'mailing file'³. But before this information is removed, it is **essential each complainant is provided with a unique number (URN) and that this**

3 The mailing file is included in this Toolkit.

number is available and correctly matched on the ‘mailing file’, the sample information file and the data entry file. Then you must transfer the names and address information for each complainant from the sample to your ‘mailing file’ – alongside the URN.

Save this new mailing file as ‘Complainant_mailing data’. It should look similar to table 3 below.

This file should be used for mailing purposes: it will be used to check for deceased complainants prior to reminder mailings and will be cross-referenced with the data entry file to identify those who will need to be sent reminders.⁴ This process is explained in more detail in the **Survey Implementation Guide** of this Toolkit.

As this mailing file will only be used several times during the survey, we recommend you keep this file encrypted. **The mailing file should be destroyed when the survey is complete.**

Table 3 – Example of ‘Complainant_mailing data’ file

URN	Outcome	Title	First Name	Surname	Address 1	Address 2	Address 3	Address 4	Address 5	Postcode	Email address
SWI1001		Miss	Zoe	Abbot	6, Street One,	Swindon				AB1 1YZ	Zoe.abbot@swindon.com
SWI1002		Master	Fred	Ahmed	Flat 2,	Street Two, Swindon	Swindon			AB2 6XZ	

When the survey goes into field, you should ensure that checks for deceased records are conducted prior to each of the three mailing dates.

⁴ The data entry file is used to record which questionnaires are returned completed, or are returned undelivered, or which complainants opt out etc.