

Your Voice

What is Your Voice?

Your Voice is Shetland's citizen's panel. It consists of 600 people who have agreed to answer two questionnaires a year on public services in Shetland. It gives us a good feel for what Shetland people as a whole think about local issues as it's been designed to be as representative of the Shetland population as a whole, reflecting both the make up of the population and geographic spread. The response rate has never fallen below 50%.

How does Your Voice operate?

Your Voice is administered by AB Associates, coordinated within the Council by the Policy Unit. There are two questionnaires a year, in April and October.

The cost for using the panel is £240 per page.

The panel can also be used to set up focus groups. Contact Louise Gall at the Policy Unit for more details.

When to use Your Voice

As the Panel comprises a representative sample of Shetland residents, the best questions are those that have an interest for the general public, rather than for specific service users, and are likely to achieve better results. This does not mean, however, that you can only use the Panel for the services used by everyone.

A service may, for example, find it relatively easy to consult existing users through regular and recorded contact with them. But finding out why people do not use a service can often be more difficult. Your Voice can be a useful tool for this purpose.

Your Voice can also be used to gauge levels of awareness about specific council services or initiatives. It can be particularly useful to track public interest or satisfaction with a particular issue over time.

Previous surveys can be found at:

<http://www.shetland.gov.uk/policy/CommunityConsultationInvolvement.asp>

Preparing Questions

Some suggestions on how to prepare questions for Your Voice:

- **Keep it simple** – write simple, clear questions keeping them as short as possible.
- **Ambiguity** – avoid ambiguous or vague statements.
- **Double Negatives** – avoid double negatives, as they are confusing and difficult to understand.

- **Avoid Jargon** – try to avoid technical terms and jargon that respondents may not understand.
- **Be logical** – if you want to ask a range of questions, organise them logically. Group the items on the same content or those that have the same response options.
- **Mostly avoid several words!** – avoid words like several, most and usually which have no precise meaning.
- **Make responding easy** – make the questions as easy as possible for respondents to read, understand and complete.
- **Closed or Open Questions?** –
 - Closed questions, which offer respondents a limited set of response alternatives, are the best.
 - Open questions, which could elicit as many different responses as there are respondents, will be more difficult to analyse. However this does not mean that open questions cannot be used, but other consultation techniques may be more useful if you want to explore a range of open ended issues, e.g. focus groups.
- **Piloting Questions** – to test out the clarity of the questions you have designed, it may be helpful to pilot them with colleagues or a small number of service users before you try them out on a wider audience.

Feedback

Feedback from the results of the consultation are used in several ways:

To inform service development

To update the panelists with relevant information, usually by newsletter

To produce reports and statistics (raw data is also available for further analysis)

Please note that panelists are less likely to return questionnaires in the future if they do not feel that the Council is listening to and acting upon their concerns or services are not improving as a result.

Next Steps

If you would like to submit questions for Your Voice please contact Louise Gall on 743728 or email louise.gall@shetland.gov.uk.

Please note that the dates for receiving questions are in March and September.