

## Survey design – some questions to ask

**What sort of survey do you want to do?** Surveys can be web-based, delivered via the telephone or face-to-face, or by post. Think about the particular needs and preferences of your target audience. You might want to adopt a mixture of approaches, for example, a web-based survey supplemented by telephone surveys with a sub-set of the sample, or ‘harder-to-reach’ individuals to boost responses.

**How will you select your sample?** You may want to invite a whole population to respond, e.g. everyone who has received an IP from your programme. You may wish to select a sample of service users, in which case, you will need to decide how participants will be selected, for example, will they be chosen at random, or do you need to make sure people with different characteristics are involved?

**How will your questionnaire be designed and piloted?** You may want to look at some of the examples of questionnaires used for IP in the pilot, as well as other examples of questionnaires from elsewhere. Typically, questionnaires are piloted to ensure, for example, that they are accessible, reliable and valid. How will you pilot your questionnaire?

How will you maximise your response rate? It may be worth considering:

- offering a telephone number for support if questionnaires are being self-completed by respondents. If you adopt a web-based approach, an email address could offer similar support;
- the length of your survey – respondents may find an overly long survey off-putting;
- using ‘routed’ questions to ensure that each respondent is asked to answer only those questions relevant to them;
- sending reminders/follow-up communication to prompt non-respondents;
- keeping open-ended questions at a manageable level – and structuring them in such a way as to generate specific and detailed answers.

**How will data be entered onto IT systems for analysis?** Web-based surveys typically minimise the amount of data entry that needs to be undertaken by those delivering the survey, as respondents complete their answers online. Postal surveys, however, can be time-consuming in the data entry. Surveys administered by telephone can be less time-consuming, if they are set up in a similar way to online surveys, e.g. such that the interviewer can enter the data as they do the interview.

**How will you analyse your data?** It is usually most helpful to identify research questions and/or hypotheses at the outset in order to inform the design of your survey instrument and the type of analysis you will undertake.

For example, if you wish to explore whether or not different sub-set of the sample provide statistically different responses, you will need to ensure you ask the questions that allow you to discern which respondents belong to which sub-set.

Open-ended questions are usually more time-consuming to analyse than closed questions, as the responses require 'coding' and sorting. They can, however, elicit a richer picture than closed questions so you may wish to consider the balance of question type. There is also software available that can support analysis of qualitative data, which you may want to consider if undertaking a survey of a very large sample.