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National Survey for Wales: cognitive testing of advance materials and housing survey consent question

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Title: National Survey for Wales cognitive testing of advance materials and housing survey consent question

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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1. Executive summary

- 1.1 To ensure that the National Survey for Wales National Survey provides a true picture of the views and experiences of the population of Wales, it is important that as many people as possible take part in the survey. Survey advance materials have a significant part to play in this process. The Welsh Government asked for advance materials (a survey letter, leaflet, and postcard) to be desk reviewed and cognitively tested to ensure they are as engaging as possible.
- 1.2 They also wanted a number of new income questions and a housing survey consent question to be reviewed and tested as part of this process. With the Welsh Housing Conditions Survey (WHCS) starting in mid-2017, the National Survey will be the sample frame with a ‘consent to contact’ question being asked. It is essential that as many National Survey participants as possible agree to be followed up to ensure that the sample of WHCS is as representative as possible. This is largely dependent on the wording of the consent question, which needs to be clear about what will be involved, while at the same time not putting people off from consenting. Because living conditions are strongly linked to income, more detailed income questions need to be added to the National Survey, primarily so that they can be used together with results from WHCS. Income is a notoriously difficult concept to measure accurately, so the desk review and cognitive testing were carried out to ensure that as many people as possible were content to divulge this potentially sensitive information and that the information that is collected covers all of the main income sources in an accurate manner.
- 1.3 In order to evaluate the advance materials and questions, NatCen Social Research was commissioned to carry out the desk review and two rounds of cognitive testing interviews. The desk review was carried out by researchers in NatCen’s Questionnaire Development and Testing Hub who are experts in questionnaire design and cognitive interviewing. NatCen’s campaigns and marketing manager, who has expertise in material design and respondent engagement, also contributed to the review and redesign of the advance materials.
- 1.4 For this review, a revised version of the Questionnaire Appraisal System (QAS-99) was used. The QAS-99 is a checklist which can be used in reviewing materials and survey questions systematically for potential problems with the wording or the structure of the questions.

- 1.5 Twenty face-to-face cognitive interviews were carried out across two rounds of hall testing in north and south Wales. The first round of testing was used to identify any major problems with the materials and new questions. The second round of testing was used to re-test changes made to materials and questions following round one. Respondents were recruited using specifically designed quotas, to ensure that a range of questions was asked. This report specifically focuses on the materials and consent question. The findings on the income questions are reported separately.
- 1.6 The cognitive testing findings showed that, overall, the materials and consent question worked well. Respondents were able to comprehend them and found the materials engaging.
- 1.7 In some cases, small wording and design revisions were suggested to make the materials and question clearer and more comprehensible; these changes were tested in the second round.
- 1.8 The findings for the second round of testing indicated that the revised consent question wording worked well and it is recommended that this wording is used in the pilot. It was found that the materials could benefit from further minor design tweaks, but the wording overall was easily understood and engaging to respondents.

2. Background and methodology

The National Survey for Wales offers people the opportunity to give their views on a wide range of topics including local area and safety, public services (e.g. health and education), personal health and wellbeing, and leisure activities. Starting in 2016-17, the National Survey replaces five pre-existing surveys in Wales and involves around 12,000 randomly selected people across Wales each year.

The Welsh Government asked for advance materials to be desk reviewed and cognitively tested to ensure they were as engaging as possible. They also wanted a number of new income questions and consent to follow up question to be reviewed and tested as part of this process. With the Welsh Housing Conditions Survey (WHCS) starting in mid-2017, the National Survey will be the sample frame with a ‘consent to contact’ question being asked.

This report outlines the findings from the desk review of the materials and consent question and two rounds of cognitive testing, as well as timing estimates for the consent question. A separate report contains the findings from the desk review and testing of the income questions.

2.1 Approach to desk review

A detailed desk review was carried out by two researchers within NatCen’s Questionnaire Development and Testing Hub and the head of Marketing and Communications, using a shortened version of the Questionnaire Appraisal System (QAS 99)¹. The QAS 99 is a guide used for systematically reviewing survey questions for problems which may occur either with the wording or structure of the question. The QAS 99 specifies eight steps which need to be followed in order to assess each question individually. Whilst this method is often used to assess questions, it was also adapted here to look at the advance materials. The first six categories of the QAS 99 were used to review the materials. We also identified three other categories which were looked at. These were font, branding, and overall design and layout. The aim was to identify potential problems with questions and identify them before questions were cognitively tested. The questions were reviewed looking at the instructions, wording, layout, routing and respondent burden

¹ Willis, G. B., & Lessler, J. T. (1999). Question appraisal system QAS-99. Rockville, MD: Research Triangle Institute

of question and the materials were reviewed looking also at the layout and usability. The review resulted in amendments to the materials and some questions prior to cognitive testing. More detail about the desk review is provided in Chapter 3.

2.2 What is cognitive interviewing?

Cognitive interviewing methods provide an insight into the mental processes of respondents when looking at advance materials and when answering survey questions, thus helping researchers to identify problems with materials, question wording and questionnaire design. These methods investigate four cognitive stages: (1) how respondents understand and interpret survey materials and questions, (2) how they recall information that applies to the question, (3) the judgements they make as to what information to use when formulating their answers, and (4) the response mapping process.

A combination of respondent-led ‘think aloud’, interviewer observations, and scripted probes were used to test the materials and survey questions. Probes were asked retrospectively after one set of materials or questions on a particular topic.

Using the ‘think aloud’ technique, respondents were asked to say aloud what they were thinking as they went about completing the task of reading materials and answering the questions.

Interviewers observed respondents opening the materials envelopes and noted whether they appeared to read the documents in full or skim read them. Interviewers also looked for any signs of hesitation or frustration.

Using the ‘probing’ technique, the interviewer asked specific questions, to understand how respondents interpreted the materials and question wording, and what processes they went through when deciding how to answer the question. A topic guide was used to conduct the interviews, which was designed in consultation with the Welsh Government; the topic guides from both rounds of testing can be seen in Annex A.

2.3 What was tested?

Two versions of the advance materials for the National Survey, including the advance letter, the leaflet and the postcard, as well as a number of questions on income and a consent question to allow a follow up physical survey of the respondent’s property were cognitively tested. Cognitive testing was carried out across two rounds. The first round

was conducted on 10 January 2017 in Cardiff; the second round was conducted in Wrexham, North Wales, on 22 January 2017. Round 2 comprised of wording and formatting changes to the materials and questions, which had been made as a result of findings from round 1.

2.4 How the testing was undertaken

Cognitive testing protocols were developed in consultation with the Welsh Government (WG). These protocols incorporated think aloud and probing techniques.

2.5 Recruitment of respondents

Cognitive interviews are qualitative in nature, so the samples are purposive and designed to reflect the range and diversity of the population of interest, rather than to be statistically representative. The quotas set for this project reflected the types of adults needed to adequately test different routing options of the questions. The quotas were similar for each round of testing.

NatCen researchers, who have extensive experience in conducting cognitive interviews, carried out 20 interviews across the two rounds. Respondents were interviewed in a neutral venue in both locations, that is, the venue was a community venue, rather than the respondents' homes or the researchers' office. Interviews lasted about an hour and were audio recorded with the respondents' consent. Respondents were given a £20 cash incentive as a 'thank you' for their help and to cover any travel expenses in the first round of testing and £25 in the second round of testing to encourage those who were self-employed to take part.

Respondents for both rounds of cognitive testing were recruited in advance of testing via a recruitment agency. A screening questionnaires was used to recruit respondents in a variety of ways, including on the street and in shopping centres or other public places. Interviews for Round 1 of testing were carried out in Cardiff, and interviews for Round 2 were carried out in Wrexham in order to test the questions with a range of people from a large urban town and a smaller town in a different part of Wales. This was done because geographic location could have an impact on how respondents answer the survey questions. Ten interviews were carried out in each location. Two further respondents were recruited to answer a section on self-employed income on the telephone. This was due to cancellations on the day of fieldwork, for the self-employed quota in Rounds 1 and

2. Table 2.1 shows the composition of the cognitive interviewing sample for Round 1, and Table 2.2 shows the composition of the cognitive interviewing sample for Round 2.

Table 2.1. Characteristics of the sample for round 1

Cardiff Round 1		No. with characteristic
Gender	Male	4
	Female	6
Age	18-29	2
	30-49	3
	50-64	2
	65+	3
Highest qualification	AS/A levels or above	4
	GCSE's or below	6
Employment status	Employee	6
	Self-employed	0
	Unemployed	4
More than one job	Yes	1
	No	9
Claims a benefit	Yes	6
	No	4

Table 2.2. Characteristics of the sample for round 2

Wrexham Round 2		No. with characteristic
Gender	Male	4
	Female	5
Age	18-29	2
	30-49	4
	50-64	2
	65+	2
Highest qualification	AS/A levels or above	4
	GCSE's or below	6
Employment status	Employee	5
	Self-employed	1
	Unemployed	4
More than one job	Yes	1
	No	9
Claims a benefit	Yes	4
	No	6

2.6 Analysis

Interviews were summarised and charted by researchers, who reviewed the audio recording of each interview, the survey answers and any notes recorded on the probe sheets. Charting involves all interview summaries being written up into a structured Excel pro-forma. Responses to each material and test question were entered in the matrix, along with observations made by interviewers, any think aloud notes and responses to each of the scripted probes. Data could thus be read horizontally as a complete case record for an individual, or vertically by question, looking across all cases. Once the matrix was completed, the data in the matrix were reviewed thematically.

Recommendations in this report are based on the debriefing discussion, which took place between the researchers and the Welsh Government representatives, as well as a full analysis of the data.

2.7 Timings

In tables 8.1 and 8.2 we have provided timing estimates for the consent question which was cognitively tested. Two timings are provided; the first comes from a coding process whereby an estimated time is given to a question based on the question type (more details of this coding process can be seen in Chapter 8). The question was also timed being asked and answered twice; an average time for the question was then recorded.

3. Desk review

The materials and question were reviewed in light of the objectives which relate to this part of the project.

Advance materials testing:

- **Objective one:** Explore how good the advance materials are in persuading respondents to participate and engage in the National Survey, and to explore reactions to incentives (or lack of incentives);
- **Objective two:** Identify if respondents find the materials clear and easy to understand.

Question testing:

- **Objective one:** Check that survey questions and answer options are clear and easy to understand, that an adequate range of answer options are provided, and identify any particularly problematic questions;
- **Objective three:** Find out whether particular subgroups of the population are likely to have difficulties in answering any questions;
- **Objective four:** Explore whether the WHCS consent question will maximise consent rates and understand what could be done to ensure this;

3.1 Advance materials

In this section we review the proposed survey materials, in the context of previous changes to survey materials and other contextual factors.

In 2016-17 the response rates for the survey have been lower than expected. One factor contributing to this is the higher than expected level of office and doorstep refusal.

Refusal rates, particularly office refusals, are potentially affected by advance materials.

The review and testing of advance materials carried out here is designed to help reduce these refusal rates.

In 2016-17, two sets of advance letters have been sent. We identify two key issues with this approach:

- **Confusion over the sender.** The two advance letters use a different design and different language to describe the survey. This could lead to confusion among participants, who may not immediately associate the two letters. Similarly, the two senders could lead to a reduction in presumed legitimacy of the survey.
- **Additional communications generate more response.** It is typical in survey research, and sending any mail item, that by sending an additional communication, you increase response, both positive and negative. So, the increase in office refusals may be simply a product of sending two advance letters instead of one.

The present project is designed to reduce the effect of these issues.

3.2 Detailed review of materials

This section gives a more detailed review of the individual materials, using an approach that combines elements of the QAS 99 with considerations around design and common areas of confusion for survey participants.

Review methodology

The proposed advance letter and postcard were reviewed using an adaptation of the QAS99. We used the first six categories and applied them to the letter as a whole:

- Reading
- Instructions
- Clarity
- Assumptions
- Knowledge
- Sensitivity

We also included three additional categories to deal with the visual aspects of the letter and postcard:

- Font
- Branding and overall design
- Layout

In this review, we have taken into account the best practice guidelines for design of advance letters at NatCen. These include: use of font size 12pt or larger; use of icons and sub-headers to break up content; header or sidebar to summarise benefits; use of one brand, considered the most authoritative; appropriate logos in order to make things clear, but not confusing; and balance of text and white space.

Potential areas of confusion

Our qualitative research with participants, carried out while developing materials for major national surveys, has identified three key areas of confusion that often arise which can negatively affect response rates:

- Participants do not understand what is required, i.e. an interview.
- Participants do not understand who is making the request, or believe its authenticity.
- Participants do not understand the purpose of the research, or its potential impact.

These are all considered in this review.

3.3 Advance letter desk review findings

Table	Advance letter review	
	Comments	Recommendations
Reading	The advance letter is easy to read. Standard readability tests consider this text suitable for people aged 14-15. ² According to the 2010 National Survey of Adults Skills in Wales around 12% of the population has literacy skills below Level 1. ³ Therefore, reducing the reading age of letters is essential for ensuring as broad potential readership as possible.	Alterations to text, shown in Annex B .
Instructions	The instructions are reasonably clear. There are a number of possible areas of confusion: (i) it is not immediately clear, without reading most of the letter, what is required i.e. an interview; and (ii) there is some reason for confusion around the household selection.	Include a reference to the interview itself earlier in the letter. See text changes proposed in attached Annex B.
Clarity	Sentences are all simple with good grammar. No technical terms are used.	None.
Assumptions	No inappropriate assumptions are made.	None.
Knowledge	No knowledge is assumed.	None.
Sensitivity	The letter does not contain references to sensitive information, except for the mention of confidential data.	None.
Font	The letter is printed in font size 11.5.	Use minimum font size 12 in accordance with standard accessibility guidelines.
Branding and design	The letter uses the same branding as other current Welsh Government communications, and their website. The letter does not include an ONS logo, so in order to understand ONS involvement in the study it is necessary to read the body of the letter.	In order to identify the WG as the organisation running the survey we suggest just the WG logo is included on the letter and the ONS logo is included (as well as the WG logo) on the postcard.
Layout	The letter uses sub-headings to break-up up content. However, there are sections summarising the benefits to the recipient, enabling them to skim read. The letter uses wide margins and there is adequate white space.	Creation of a summary of benefits, using either a sidebar or header. See attached Annex B for proposed headers.

² Using an average of scores from the following readability scales: Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level, Gunning-Fog Score, Coleman-Liau Index, SMOG Index and Automated Readability Index.

³ <http://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/111208NatSurvAdultSkillsWales2010en.pdf>

3.4 Postcard desk review findings

Table 3:3 Postcard review

	Comments	Recommendations
Reading	The postcard is easy to read; it has short sentences, uses simple vocabulary and minimal use of the passive voice. Standard readability tests consider this suitable for people aged 11-12 years old.	None.
Instructions	The explanation of what happens next is clear.	None.
Clarity	Sentences are all simple with good grammar. No technical terms are used.	None.
Assumptions	No inappropriate assumptions are made.	None.
Knowledge	No knowledge is assumed.	None.
Sensitivity	The postcard does not contain references to sensitive information or topics.	None.
Font	The postcard is printed in font size 11.5.	Use minimum font size 12 in accordance with standard accessibility guidelines.
<i>Branding and design</i>	The postcard matches the branding of the advance letter. The Welsh Government logo is only used on one side of the postcard. The postcard does not include the ONS logo. As the postcard is sent in an envelope, recipients may discard it as generic mail without opening it.	If the postcard continues to be sent in an envelope, use a Welsh Government branded envelope. Include the ONS logo on the postcard. Use logos on both sides of the postcard, to ensure the legitimacy and origin of the communication is clear.
Layout	The layout is clear and easy to follow for the reader.	None.

3.5 Recommendations from the materials desk review

This section provides a summary of our recommendations for changes to the original materials ready for the first round of cognitive testing.

Suggested approach to advance materials

- Consider one advance communication only. Using one advance letter only could help reduce office refusals. We suggest ONS interviewers send a single letter soon before they start calling at addresses.
- Two organisations. Communications should be Welsh Government branded, but should also include the ONS logo. This will help make the role of ONS clearer.

Advance letter recommendations

- **Font.** Increase font size to 12pt to conform with accessibility guidelines.
- **Amendments to text.** We suggest some small text changes to the letter in order to simplify and make as clear as possible.
- **Header.** Inclusion of a header to summarise the letter, so participants do not have to read the entire letter. This would also be a suitable place to test the mention of the incentive in the cognitive testing phase.

Postcard recommendations

- **Font.** Increase font size to 12pt to conform with accessibility guidelines.
- **Branded envelope.** If this item continues to be sent in an envelope, use a Welsh Government branded envelope.
- **Logos on both sides.** Include the Welsh Government and ONS logos on both sides of the postcard, to ensure that it is identified as a Welsh Government and ONS communication whichever side someone looks at.

Proposal for advance materials testing

We proposed two versions of the advance letter and postcard which were to be used in cognitive testing; the documents which were tested in the first round can be seen in annex B.

3.6 Welsh Housing Conditions Survey consent question – desk review

The proposed consent question was reviewed using an adaptation of the QAS99. We have used the first six categories and applied them to the question. When a problem is present a yes is indicated and a summary of the problem is given:

- Reading
- Instructions
- Clarity
- Assumptions
- Knowledge
- Sensitivity

ASK IF RESPONDENT IS HRP OR SPOUSE/PARTNER

HcsPerm

As an important follow up to this survey the Welsh Government is carrying out a Housing Conditions Survey to find out information about the homes occupied in Wales. This includes collecting information on issues such as energy efficiency and state of repair and will provide the Welsh Government with vital information to be used in setting policies, allocating resources connected with housing and assessing and tackling the level of fuel poverty in Wales. In order to do this, we would like to arrange for a surveyor to visit to take a look at your house at a time convenient to you.

The surveyor will look in all main rooms and outside your home. They will not move or disturb anything. Everyone who takes part will be provided with a report outlining the surveyor's findings.

Would you be willing to take part in the Housing Conditions Survey?

SINGLE CODE

Yes

No

Reading- No issues

Instructions- Issues were found- a leaflet is needed to accompany this question with more information on what taking part involves. The English Housing Survey has a similar question and a follow up leaflet is provided. The questions should also include the length of time the inspection is expected to take. If someone is renting it could be useful to say they do not have to consult the landlord or freeholder if they want to take part. Another useful piece of information is what will the surveyor look at specifically, and what will be included in the report that they will be provided with. Also, a short sentence to tell them what the findings might be useful for could be added – usually it costs a few hundred pounds for a surveyor to write a report on a house so this could be a useful incentive.

Clarity- Issues were found - people may not know what fuel poverty is. Suggest a short sentence is included to explain this.

Assumptions- No issues

Knowledge/memory- No issues

Sensitivity/bias- No issues

Response categories- No issues

Other- No other issues

4. Advance materials findings and recommendations from cognitive testing - Round 1

4.1 Advance letter and leaflet

A letter and leaflet about the survey (see Annex B) were placed in an envelope and handed to respondents. Respondents were asked to imagine they had received the envelope in the post and what they would do with it. Once interviewers had gauged their natural reactions to the materials, participants were asked follow-up probes to determine what they thought of the materials. Half of the respondents received materials which mentioned a £10 incentive and the other half received materials with no mention of an incentive. It should be noted that respondents were given £20 to take part in the cognitive interviews so their views on a £10 incentive may be skewed.

4.1.1 Key findings – group with mention of incentive

Overall look and feel

- All of the respondents in this group said they would open the envelope, due to the presence of the WG logo.
- They would prefer to receive the materials in a brown envelope because this was seen as more official. Respondents commented that 'junk' mail never arrived in brown envelopes.
- Most people liked the red colour for headers and the black text as this made it clear where there was a break in text. One respondent however said it looked "like a gas bill".
- People liked the logos at the bottom of the letter and were matching them to topics they thought might come up during the interviews.
- All of the respondents noticed the heading on the letter and said it made them more likely to read the full letter.
- It was mentioned that it could be made clearer that one side of the leaflet was in Welsh because it looked like there was a lot of information given which could be off-putting.
- One respondent felt that the leaflet looked like an advertisement because of the picture of the castle on the front.

Clarity of information

- All respondents found the information in the letter clear and easy to understand.
- Everyone focused on the fact that the study was about helping to improve local services and imagined they would be asked about the environment, transport, education and the NHS.
- Most people understood that someone would come to their home and select a household member to take part in a face-to-face interview. They believed the interview would consist of someone asking them questions about their opinion of local services. However, one respondent who skim read the letter questioned if the interview would take place face-to-face or over the telephone.
- Respondents understood the phrases 'for research purposes only' and 'used for statistical purposes only' to mean their data would remain confidential, their name would not be with the data, just numbers would be used and that it would build up a picture with numbers, so the government could determine which services need improving.
- One respondent questioned why her house was chosen, but did not find this off-putting.
- Some respondents believed the leaflet repeated some of the information from the letter.

Incentive and participation

- All of the respondents in this group said they would take part in an interview.
- Some said they would take part without an incentive because improving services was important; others would be persuaded by the incentive. The mention of the NHS and education services was a particular draw for some respondents who said these were 'hot' topics at the moment.
- £10 was not necessarily seen as enough of an incentive depending on the burden the interview causes them e.g. how long it was, they would have to tidy their home and get their children out of the way. However, respondents who believed this, said that they would still take part in an interview.
- One respondent said she would prefer a cash incentive because she did not know where the voucher could be used and it might be for a shop she did not like.

- When asked what they would do if they were happy to take part in an interview, none of the respondents said mentioned calling the number given on the letter to make an appointment.
- One respondent raised the concern of an interviewer turning up to households where vulnerable people lived, and making the correct selection of who to speak to.
- One respondent said if he did not want to take part in an interview he would call the number provided in the letter; the others said they would just throw the letter away.

4.1.2 Key findings – group without mention of incentive

Overall look and feel

- Most respondents in this group preferred a white envelope because they associated brown envelopes with bills. One respondent also suggested that the WG logo should be more prominent against a white background. They were all clear that the materials were being sent to them by WG which would make them open the envelope.
- One respondent commented that he did not know what the logos at the bottom of the letter represented but others associated them with topics that would be covered in the interview.
- Some respondents did not read the heading of the letter and started reading from the main body of the text.
- Overall the colour red was associated with Wales, however some respondents thought of blood donations and demands for payment letters.
- A few respondents asked which castle was shown on the front of the leaflet and questioned whether the statistics used in the leaflet were correct. They believed the leaflet contained a good level of information i.e. just the right amount to tell them about the study but not too much to easily read.

Clarity of information

- Respondents found the information in the letter and leaflet easy to understand and were pleased the leaflet was also written in Welsh.
- People believed the study was about collecting people's views on local services and finding out what they thought.
- One respondent wanted to know how long the interview would take.
- Respondents understood the phrases 'for research purposes only' and 'used for statistical purposes only' to mean: data would be used to create statistics that would allow the government to make decisions about which services would need improvements and to see if there was a general consensus about things. One respondent mentioned the Census explaining that all of the results are reported in a group rather than individually which could identify you.

Incentive and participation

- Whilst some respondents would take part without an incentive (they believed that improving services was important) those who said they would not take part said they would reconsider if a £10 incentive was offered. One respondent who would only take part if an incentive was offered believed that the research would only benefit WG and not him.
- One respondent was pleased to see that the interview could take place in Welsh.
- If respondents did not want to take part in an interview they would throw the materials away.
- Some respondents would be hesitant about letting an interviewer into their home however they did not explain why. One respondent commented that if he were to receive £20 he would let someone interview him in his home. Another said she would prefer a telephone interview.

4.1.3 Recommendations and suggestions for advance letter

- A short sentence to explain that the voucher could be used in a variety of shops could be added to the letter. If felt appropriate some popular shops could be named, for example Boots or M&S.
- Depending on costs and time associated with a change, a brown envelope could be used to send the recruitment materials to the potential participants. Most thought it was more official even if that was seen as a negative. However, the WG branding on the envelope was very important to respondents and this may not stand out as well on a brown envelope. Perhaps consider having it in red if a brown envelope is used.
- We recommend an incentive is offered because whilst some respondents would be happy to take part without one, they would be more likely to take part if an incentive was available.
- Include the mention of the incentive in the letter heading, this seemed to make the title more eye-catching and people were more likely to want to read the letter in full.

4.2 Advance postcard

Once respondents finished looking at the leaflet and letter, they were given an A5 envelope which contained an A5 postcard (please see annex B). They were told to imagine they received this in the post a couple of weeks after the letter and leaflet. Half of respondents (the ones who received a letter referring to a £10 incentive) were given a postcard which referenced the £10 incentive; the other half were given a postcard which did not mention the incentive.

4.2.1 Key findings (postcard with mention of incentive)

- Respondents said they would have remembered the letter and leaflet they received and would realise the postcard was related to the letter/leaflet, due to the use of the WG logo.
- A couple of respondents understood that the logos on the back of the postcard related to the topics which would be covered in the survey; however, others believed it was too plain or garish with just the logos on the back. They suggested the back of the postcard contain some reference to the letter.

- Respondents believed the information given on the postcard was precise and to the point, however it was suggested the text was too small and could be made larger.
- To some, at first glance it seemed there was a larger amount of information on the postcard. One respondent suggested it should be made clearer that one side was written in English and the other side was Welsh.
- One respondent said she would want to know exactly when someone would call. Another felt receiving the postcard if she had not made an appointment for an interview was ‘pushy’.
- One respondent said she thought the A5 envelope stood out more than the envelope used for the letter and leaflet as it is not something she usually receives. All respondents would prefer to receive the postcard in an envelope and would probably recycle the postcard thinking it was ‘junk’ if it did not arrive in an envelope.
- Two respondents would prefer the information given in the postcard in the form of a letter. They believed letters were more formal and people are more likely to read formal documents such as tax letters which they receive in the post.

4.2.2 Key findings (postcard without mention of incentive)

- Again people would associate the postcard with the letter and leaflet due to the use of the WG logo.
- They would prefer the postcard in an envelope so that it did not get mixed up with junk mail. Only one respondent said he would look at it without an envelope, this was due to the use of the WG logo.
- Whilst respondents understood the purpose of the postcard, they did not necessarily like its appearance. One suggested it looked like a blood donation card due to the use of red, another said it made him think he owed money. Others did not associate the symbols on the back of the postcard with those used in the letter.
- Respondents in this group also mentioned the size of the text and that it could take up more space, to make it more readable.

- Some respondents believed it would be pestering if they had not agreed to take part and an interviewer called round. One assumed the postcard would only be given to those who agreed to take part otherwise he saw it as a waste of money.
- One respondent suggested ‘in the next week’ could be confusing and it would be clearer when the interviewer would be coming if they wrote in the start date of the week.

4.2.3 Recommendations and suggestions for postcard

- We suggest the postcard is sent in an envelope. This would make respondents more likely to read it due to high volumes of ‘junk’ leaflets that arrive. The envelope colour should be consistent with that used for the letter and leaflet.
- We recommend adding some form of reference to the letter onto the back of the postcard as respondents felt that it did not have enough of a connection to the materials already received. This could be the title of the survey or the header from the letter depending on what would fit. In order to fit this information onto the postcard the logos on the back could be moved down and the amount of red reduced. Some respondents found the postcard ‘garish’ and commented on the amount of red used, so reducing the large block of red could also address these concerns.
- An alternative would be to have one side of the postcard written in Welsh including the header from the letter and one side written in English. This would also mean the text size could be increased.
- We recommend seeing if the text can be made slightly larger to address concerns that the writing is too small.
- We suggest it is made clearer that one half of the postcard is in Welsh and the other is in English, so that respondents do not think there is too much information to read if they remain on one side. By adding in a simple line between the two this should make the difference more obvious for readers.
- We do not suggest changing the reference to ‘in the next week’ as this would create further work for the interviewer in order to write on each postcard.

5. Advance materials cognitive testing findings and recommendations - Round 2

5.1 Advance letter and leaflet

Changes to the letter were made based on the recommendations from the first round of testing. The materials tested in the second round can be found in Annex C. Once interviewers had gauged the respondents' natural reactions to the materials, they were asked follow up probes to determine what they thought of the materials. Half of the respondents received materials which mentioned a £10 incentive and the other half received materials with no mention of an incentive. It should be noted that respondents were given £25 to take part in the cognitive interviews so their views on a £10 incentive may be skewed.

5.2 Key findings – group with mention of incentive

Overall look and feel

- All respondents said they would open the envelope if they received it. Some said they would read the letter and leaflet in detail and others said they would skim read them.
- On the whole, respondents liked the red writing and the fact that the main points in the letter were in bold. They felt that this focused their attention on the important information. One person said the red writing reminded him of demand letters and thought that some people might find this off-putting.
- It was felt that the WG logo made it clear who the letter was from.
- Some people said they would be more likely to open a brown envelope as it was seen as official, and materials from agencies such as the DVLA arrived in brown envelopes and white envelopes are associated with junk mail. One respondent said the colour of the envelope would not make a difference to them and another said she wouldn't want to open a brown envelope as it would make her feel she owed money.
- One respondent did not notice the header at the top of the letter and said he wanted to start reading straight away to find out what it was about. Others noticed the header and said it made them more likely to read the full text.

- One respondent thought some people would not take part in the survey but it would not be because of the letter. She said these people would not want to give up their time for a study and would not want someone coming into their home.
- One respondent commented that the bottom banner on the letter could be made slightly larger so it was easier to read.
- Respondents liked the leaflet describing it as friendly. One person particularly liked the findings boxes which drew her eye to them.
- One respondent made an overall comment about it being important to include people who were visually impaired and people who did not have English or Welsh as their first language in the study. He suggested a telephone number could be included in the leaflet to request materials in another language.

Clarity of information

- Respondents found the information in the letter and leaflet clear and easy to understand.
- They understood that the survey would be about improving local services. One respondent who did not read the materials fully said he would want to know which specific services WG was interested in.
- They thought that the term 'interview' meant someone coming for a formal chat and speaking to them about their views of local services.
- 'For research purposes only' meant to respondents that the information would only be used for the survey and not passed on to marketing companies.

'They wouldn't use any private information about myself or my household and it's only a basic across the board about what people in Wales think' (Serial: SP02, Female, Aged: 65+, retired)

- Based on the reference to information only being used for statistical purposes, respondents felt that WG would not look at individuals' data in relation to their address but look at data in terms of age ranges or genders instead.

- One respondent felt that some of the wording in the letter was off-putting:

"We need to interview someone in your household" was off-putting as it makes it seem compulsory. It should be we would like to. It makes it seem like if you don't ring them up and make an appointment you will get in trouble.'

(Serial: SP04, Male, Aged: 50-64, Employee)

Incentive and participation

- All respondents in this group said they would take part in an interview. They felt it was important to improve local services, would help others and it was nice that they would get something in return.
- One respondent said she would call up to make an appointment for someone to interview her, another said he should probably do that, but might not find the time. Others assumed an interviewer would get in contact with them.
- Most respondents said if they did not want to take part in the survey they would just put the letter and leaflet to one side or throw it away. One would call up, so they were not wasting the interviewer's time.
- Whilst all respondents said it was nice to be offered the £10 incentive, they said they would still take part if it was not offered.
- Two respondents mentioned that the letter header made the incentive seem as if it was cash when in fact it was a voucher. They felt that this could be off-putting to people who were expecting cash.

5.1.2 Key findings – group without mention of incentive

Overall look and feel

- Some respondents in this group said they would open and read the letter and leaflet. Others said they might not do so, depending on time, as the letter looked a little like junk mail because of the red writing. Another factor would be the addressee on the letter. One respondent who lived in rented accommodation said that anything addressed to the household as a whole would be put in a drawer and not read, however she did mention that the WG logo might make them more likely to read it.

- One respondent believed the letter could benefit from a wider range of colours being added. Another liked the red text saying she was more likely to read the full letter. Others did not have a preference about the colours used.
- Respondents liked the use of the WG logo and saw it as a symbol of Wales and national pride.
- Once again, respondents were divided as to whether they were more or less likely to read the materials if they came in a brown or white envelope. Some said a brown envelope was seen as more official which would make them more likely to pay attention to what was inside. One respondent thought a bright-coloured envelope should be used, one said it would not make a difference to her and one would prefer a white envelope. The respondent who would prefer a white envelope could not say why.
- Most respondents noticed the red header on the letter. One respondent started reading from the 'Dear resident' section of the letter. Some said the header made them more likely to read the rest of the letter and more interested in taking part whilst others said it did not make a difference to their interest in the study.
- Respondents reacted well to the leaflet. They liked the way it looked, particularly the picture of the castle.

Clarity of information

- Respondents found the materials easy to read and understand. They thought they were concise and to the point.
- One respondent mentioned that she would want to see other results mentioned in the leaflet, not just percentage of people who used the internet which she did not see as very interesting.
- Respondents in this group thought the term 'interview' meant coming to their home and asking questions. They understood that this was not a questionnaire one would fill out, but an interviewer asking the questions in person.
- They thought that 'the results only being used for research and statistical purposes' meant that the information would be kept confidential, not used for marketing purposes and that the results would only be presented as statistics in a similar way to the Census.

- One respondent said she would like to know more information about what the interview would be like, for example how long it would last. Another said that 'your address has been selected' sounded a bit 'iffy'- she would want to know why her house had been selected.
- One respondent who had a disabled son said a CD disk, which has someone reading the documents out, could be included for those who cannot read such as her disabled son.

Incentive and participation

- Most people in this group said they would be happy to take part in an interview. They were pleased WG was interested in their opinions, they wanted to help improve their local area, and they understood that they could not be replaced. Other respondents said it would depend how community-minded they felt that day; some mentioned they would prefer to do the interview online or would prefer to go to a different location for the interview rather than someone coming to their house. However, one of the respondents said if someone turned up at her door she would probably say yes to the interview.
- Some respondents said they would take part in an interview even if they were not offered an incentive because improving local services was important. These people believed however that for others who did not want to take part, a £10 incentive could make a difference. Other respondents said they would be more likely to take part if an incentive was offered because 'time is money' and it would feel like community service otherwise.
- Some respondents said they would get in touch to make an appointment to be interviewed. Others said they would wait for the interviewer to call. When asked what they would do if they did not want to take part, everyone said they would throw the letter and leaflet away.

5.1.3 Recommendations and suggestions for advance letter

- We recommend that the wording of the letter and leaflet remain the same. Respondents found both easy to understand, and it was clear what the study was about and what would happen next.
- We suggest that the red headings in the letter could be changed to another colour; however it would be important to keep them bold. Some respondents reacted well to the use of red for the headers, but others found it off-putting.
- We also suggest that if there is space in the header of the letter, it is made clear that the £10 is in fact a voucher and not cash. A few respondents picked up on the fact that it made it seem as if cash would be given when, as is mentioned in the text of the letter, this is not the case.
- Respondents were divided as to whether the materials would be better sent in a white or brown envelope. We suggest that if possible, the first materials are sent in a brown envelope as the letter and the leaflet are more ‘official’ and this is often associated with brown envelopes. The more informal postcard can be sent in a white envelope. This would ensure that if people do have a preference as to envelope colour, they would open at least one form of communication about the survey.

5.2 Advance postcard

Again, changes were made to the advance postcard following recommendations made after round 1. Once respondents had finished looking at the leaflet and letter, they were given an A5 envelope which contained an A5 postcard (please see Annex C). They were told to imagine they had received this in the post a couple of weeks after the letter and leaflet. Half of respondents were given a postcard which referenced the £10 incentive and half were given a postcard which did not reference the incentive.

5.2.1 Key findings with mention of incentive

- All respondents said they would read the postcard if they received it in the post and that the information on the postcard was clear.
- They all believed they would remember the letter and would make an association between the two materials because of the WG logo and banner along the bottom, which matched up.

- Some respondents said they would read the postcard without an envelope because they look at everything that came through the door and one could see the information straight away. Others said they would think it was junk mail and not read it if it did not arrive in an envelope.
- Respondents said they would not have any other concerns about receiving the postcard without an envelope.
- Two respondents believed the text on the postcard was too small and suggested the font size be increased.
- Respondents liked that the postcard was bilingual. Generally, nothing was felt to be off-putting; however, one mentioned that it did not say a specific date that the interviewer would call round on and he would worry that he would not be in because he worked shifts.
- Most respondents said if they did not want to take part in an interview they would just throw the card away. Two mentioned that they would call the interviewer so that they did not waste their time.

5.2.2 Key findings without mention of incentive

- Again, all respondents said they would read the postcard if they received it in the post. Most respondents in this group believed they would make the connection between the letter and postcard even after two weeks. One mentioned that a week might be a better timeframe for receiving the postcard because after two weeks she might not remember the letter. However, she believed the WG logo would jog her memory.
- Respondents had mixed reactions to the idea of receiving the postcard without or with an envelope. Some said they would not read it if it was not in an envelope and others said they were more likely to read it if it was not in an envelope. One respondent believed it should be addressed to an individual rather than the resident.
- All respondents believed the information on the postcard was very clear, however a few believed it was a little plain and suggested the logos could be made bigger. One respondent said she had not noticed the ONS logo on the letter and thought it should be included on both the letter and postcard.

- One respondent believed the reference to the National Survey should be more prominent.
- Respondents did not find anything off-putting, but some wondered when exactly someone would call round. They suggested they might call the interviewer's number to find out.
- If people did not want to take part, some would ring the interviewer to let them know and others would throw the postcard in the bin. One respondent mentioned she would want to text to say she could or could not take part, so hopes the number provided would be a mobile number.

5.2.3 Recommendations and suggestions

- We recommend that the postcard is sent in an envelope. All respondents said they would read it if it arrived in an envelope, whilst some said they would not look at it if it did not arrive in an envelope. As mentioned above, as this is the less formal of the materials, we suggest a white envelope is used.
- We suggest that the title of the survey is added to the front of the postcard to further strengthen the connection between the postcard and letter, and to make that side of the postcard less plain.
- We suggest the font size of the postcard is increased as much as is possible.
- We also suggest that the interviewer's mobile number is provided on the postcard to allow respondents to text them if this is preferred.

6. Welsh Housing Conditions Survey Consent question - Round 1

As noted earlier, participants for the Welsh Housing Conditions Survey (WHCS) will be selected from respondents to the National Survey who agree to take part in the WHCS. The question seeking consent to participate in the WHCS was tested as part of this project.

HcsPerm

As an important follow up to this survey the Welsh Government is carrying out a Housing Conditions Survey. This includes collecting information on issues such as energy efficiency and will help the Welsh Government decide how to tackle housing issues across Wales. In order to do this, we would like to arrange for a surveyor to visit to take a look at your house at a time convenient to you.

The surveyor will look in all main rooms and outside your home. They will not move or disturb anything. Everyone who takes part will be provided with a report outlining the surveyor's findings. All your personal details will be kept confidential and the results will only be used for research purposes. It will not be possible to identify you from any of the results that are published.

Would you be willing to take part?

SINGLE CODE

Yes

No

6.1 Key findings

- Respondents had mixed reactions to the consent question.
- Some respondents consented and the following reasons for doing so were given:
 - Had a child, so wants to know if their rented accommodation was safe.
 - The survey could help improve the housing stock overall.
 - Interested in seeing the report and if any improvements were needed to their house.
 - Had poor living conditions and would like something to be done about it.
- Those who said no to this question gave the following reasons:
 - Could not see the benefit to them personally.
 - It was something they would not have the time for.

- Would not feel comfortable with someone looking around their home.
- Would want to know how it could help more widely because they did not feel looking at their owned house would have an overall impact.
- Was not the household reference person (HRP) or their partner, so would not feel comfortable to consenting.

'A person walking about your house, even though they're not going to touch anything, I still find that uncomfortable' (Serial: HL05, Female, Aged: 30-49, Homeowner)

- For some respondents the mention of a report was enough to persuade them to take part. Other respondents felt they could be persuaded with an incentive, however the amounts of £50 and £100 were mentioned and it was said the hassle would not be worth anything less.
- Respondents thought the report would include information on energy efficiency, health and safety, whether there was damp, asbestos or woodworm, the condition of windows and fire alarms, house value and structure.
- One respondent who rented questioned whether she would need consent from the landlord to take part. She was happy to do so but was concerned that a report could cause friction between her and her landlord who she currently had a good relationship with.

6.2 Recommendations and suggestions for consent question

- We suggest a sentence is added in for those renting their home, which assures them they can give permission for the surveyor visit and that the information will not be shared with landlords. The wording used in the English Housing Survey consent question is:
- You do not need to consult your freeholder or landlord.
- A form of words could be added to this to reassure people that the report will not be shared with their freeholder or landlord.
- This question would not be asked of anyone who is not the HRP or their partner, and will only be tested with HRPs or partners in the second round of testing.
- We recommend that the leaflet that accompanies this question covers in more detail what would be included in the report and more detail on how looking at their home could help others.

7. Welsh Housing Conditions Survey Consent question -Round 2

The question wording was amended based on the findings from the first round of testing and was retested in the second round of cognitive interviews.

HcsPerm

As an important follow up to this survey the Welsh Government is carrying out a Housing Conditions Survey. This includes collecting information on issues such as energy efficiency and will help the Welsh Government decide how to tackle housing issues across Wales. In order to do this, we would like to arrange for a surveyor to visit to take a look at your house at a time convenient to you.

The surveyor will look in all main rooms and outside your home. They will not move or disturb anything. [IF RENTING You do not need to consult your landlord.] Everyone who takes part will be provided with a report outlining the surveyor's findings. All your personal details will be kept confidential and the results will only be used for research purposes. It will not be possible to identify you from any of the results that are published.

RESPONDENTS DO NOT NEED TO CONSULT FLAT MANAGEMENT COMPANIES OR ANY OTHER TYPES OF FREEHOLDER

Would you be willing to take part?

SINGLE CODE

Yes

No

7.1 Key findings

- Most respondents who were asked this question said they would be happy for a surveyor to visit their house.
- One respondent would not be willing to consent because her husband did not like people going to the house and no amount of incentive would convince him otherwise.
- People gave a number of reasons for wishing to take part: to receive a copy of the report, because they lived in a damp property and would like more information on it and because they lived in a 'rough' area and hoped the survey overall could help with local problems.
- It was hoped that the report they received would contain information on the value of the property and if any improvements to energy efficiency could be made.

- One respondent believed a report is more valuable than cash or voucher incentives and the mention of the report made people more likely to say yes to this question. If an incentive was offered, people believed £10 would be appropriate. One respondent who had already said she would take part said she would be more likely to say yes if a voucher incentive was offered.
- One respondent said he would want to know that the surveyor would have an ID badge on them; another wanted to read the question wording themselves to make sure they were clear what would happen. One respondent said whilst the question mentioned the surveyor would not disturb anything, her boiler was in the loft, so she thought they might have to access it. This made her no less likely to say yes to the question.
- Renters in this sample did not question if they would need to check with their landlord before giving consent.

7.2 Recommendations and suggestions for consent question

- Based on the findings from the second round of cognitive interviews, we recommend that the question wording is kept as above. Most respondents would be happy to consent and did not have concerns about a surveyor visit.
- We suggest a short report is given to respondents as an incentive to take part. What information is practical to be included in this report needs to be well thought out and respondents expectations should be managed by explaining in the accompanying leaflet what would be included.

8. Consent question timings and suggested wording

Table 8.2 provides estimated timings for the consent question which was cognitively tested. The question which was asked in the second round was used to create timing estimates. The average time was calculated by the question being asked and answered by two researchers and an average time being reached.

A code was also assigned to the question using a coding frame which has previously been used in assessing the National Survey question lengths. The question was given a number dependent on its type, for example open question or simple single coded question. From the number assigned, a predicted timing for the question is provided. The codes used in this process can be seen in table 8.1.

Table 8.1 Timing estimate code-frame question format

	Type no:	Predicted contribution to mean interview length (mins)
Simple (e.g. short yes/ no or other simple codes)	1	0.25
Complex single code (e.g. long question stem or list of answer codes)	2	0.37
Complex multi-code code (as above but multi-code)	3	0.75
Open question (verbatim or interviewer multi-code response)	4	0.66
Repeated attitude statements/ repeated answer categories	5	0.17

Table 8.2 Timing estimate for consent question

Timings for consent question tested in Round 2			
VarName	Avg. time in seconds	Predicted code	Predicted time based on coding
HcsPerm	48	2	0.37

Suggested final question wording**ASK IF RESPONDENT IS HRP OR SPOUSE/PARTNER****HcsPerm**

As an important follow up to this survey the Welsh Government is carrying out a Housing Conditions Survey. This includes collecting information on issues such as energy efficiency and will help the Welsh Government decide how to tackle housing issues across Wales. In order to do this, we would like to arrange for a surveyor to visit to take a look at your house at a time convenient to you.

The surveyor will look in all main rooms and outside your home. They will not move or disturb anything. [IF 2,3 OR 4 AT TENURE You do not need to consult your landlord and the report will not be shared with them] Everyone who takes part will be provided with a report outlining the surveyor's findings. All your personal details will be kept confidential and the results will only be used for research purposes. It will not be possible to identify you from any of the results that are published.

RESPONDENTS DO NOT NEED TO CONSULT FLAT MANAGEMENT COMPANIES OR ANY OTHER TYPES OF FREEHOLDER

Would you be willing to take part?

SINGLE CODE**Yes****No**