

## **5. METHODOLOGICAL CHANGES**

TfL may require changes to be made to the questionnaires / reports either before or during the contract period. This may involve insertion of new measures or deletion of existing measures to reflect changes, such as customer service standards. There may also be a requirement for minor changes to the design of existing questions / reports as needs change.

The most suitable process for implementing changes to the survey methodology or questionnaire will depend on the scale and significance of the changes involved.

In view of the importance of the CMSS data to TfL, piloting any changes to methodology or collecting pilot data on new or revised questions is always highly desirable. However, all pilot work involves additional expense and lengthens the time it takes to introduce any change / improvement in methodology to the CMSS survey. Hence the need for the scale and timelines of pilot work to be carefully assessed and agreed between TfL and the agency on a case by case basis.

The TfL CMSS team will need to consult with stakeholders regarding any proposed changes to the CMSS survey due to the contractual nature of the data and its application. The need for continuity is often an overriding consideration. These factors tend to limit the scope of any changes to the questionnaire motivated simply by 'improving the quality of research'.

In practical terms, even small changes to survey process or question wording which do not require piloting need to be confirmed in sufficient time to allow programming and testing on PDA and effective communication to assessors via manual updates and briefings.

## **6. ASSESSOR TRAINING AND SUPERVISION**

It is very important that all data is collected accurately by assessors. Training and supervision is therefore a central part of the CMSS.

### **6.1 Assessor Panel**

A panel of 50-60 agency-trained assessors undertake each wave of CMSS fieldwork. Within the Assessor panel, there are a number of senior roles:

- Field Quality Assessors (FQA).

- This is a team of six highly experience assessors that, aside from carrying out fieldwork, also support the Field Quality Manager with training, briefings, quality assurance and piloting changes to the survey.
- Field Quality Manager (FQM)
  - This is the line manager for the team of FQAs and is responsible for their training and performance appraisal. The FQM is required to discuss the range of issues on CMSS and provide a point of contact for all aspects of field management.
- LU Field Ambassador
  - This is an experienced assessor on the CMSS survey. Their role involves supporting the agency account team by representing the views of the assessor team. They would also take an active role in assessor briefing sessions and lead client accompanied assessments.

## 6.2 Recruitment

Recruitment is undertaken on a continuous basis to maintain the overall size and representation of the CMSS panel and to respond to levels of turnover at any particular time. It is targeted to meet specific requirements, such as geographic coverage of different parts of the network.

The agency must ensure that all new members of staff have a good command of the English language and ascertain whether they have links to TfL, other public transport authorities or Train Operating Companies – either employed themselves in the past or presently or have current close relations / partners who are employed.

Assessors working on other TfL surveys, such as Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS) and Time in Queue Survey (TIQS), are not eligible to work on the CMSS. This is because they are required to sign in at stations to conduct assessments and some assessors are recognisable to station staff. This compromises their anonymity and makes it a risk to allow them to conduct anonymous mystery shopping for TfL.

TfL is happy for assessors to work on TfL studies for other modes of transport.

## 6.3 Training

All training of assessors will be designed by the successful agencies, working closely with the TfL project team.

Agencies' training and quality control standards must meet the standards and guidelines set out by the relevant industry bodies such as the MRS (Market Research Society) and the IQCS (Interviewer Quality Control Scheme) in relation to mystery shopping research.

The format and content of the training of new assessors must be reviewed and signed off by the TfL project team.

It is important that the successful agencies work in partnership with TfL in developing comprehensive training programmes that fully cover all aspects of the surveys and will ensure the continuity and accuracy of the data.

### 6.3.1 New assessors

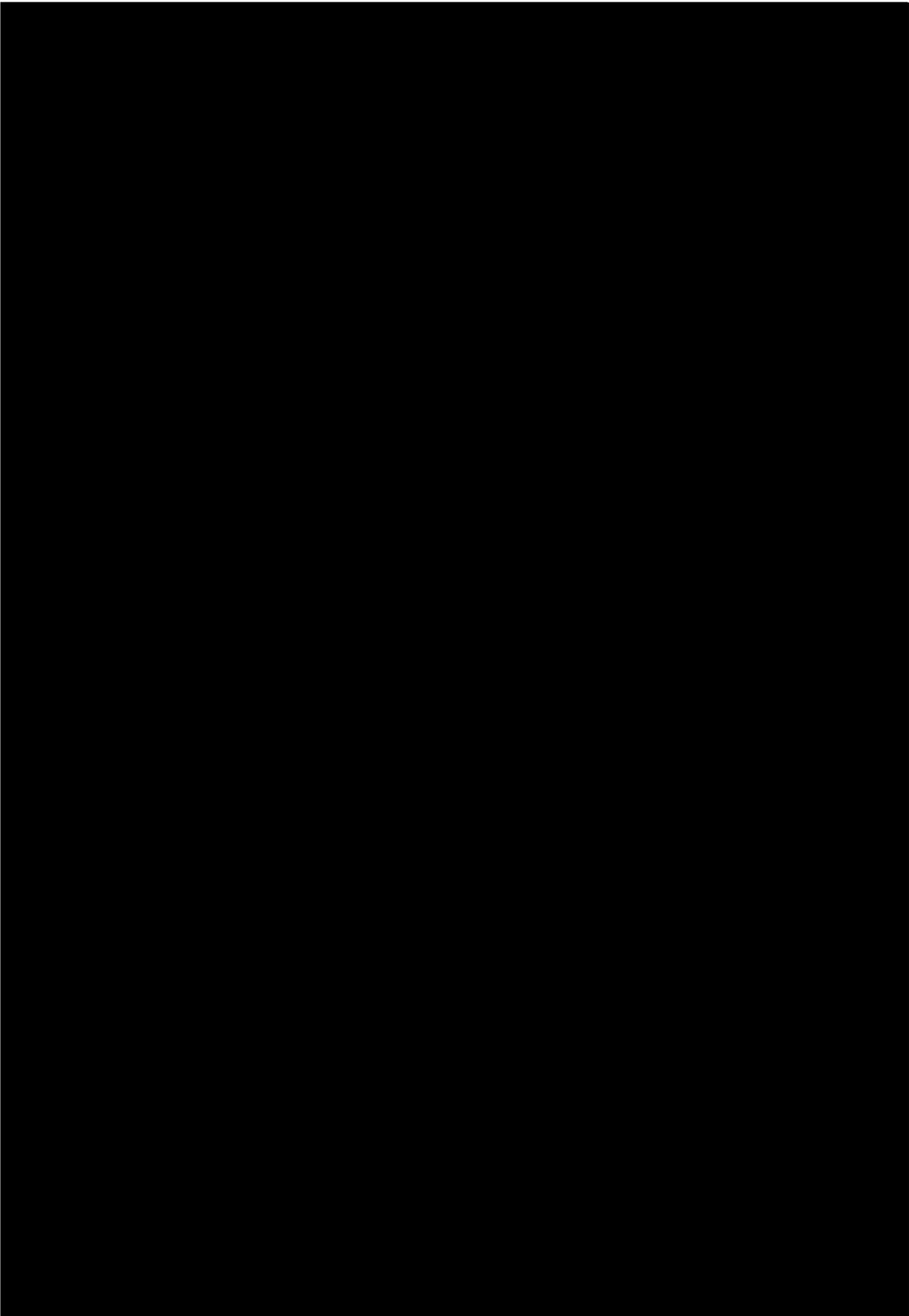
To ensure that changes in results are due to changes in service delivery and not the quality of research, training of new assessors is extremely important.

Covering the following elements constitutes the minimum training for all new assessors:

- A full introduction to the survey, including relevant survey documentation
- The importance of collecting and delivering accurate data
- The importance of good time keeping and accurate recording of information
- Training and operation of handheld PDA devices
- Practical sessions conducting dummy assessments
- Written assessment
- An accompanied visit with an FQA.

Assessors can only be admitted to the panel if progress through the training outlined above and data from their first assessments is satisfactory.

Proposals must state how new assessors will be trained in general mystery shopping procedures and how the quality of work for each individual is going to be monitored (and with what frequency) and maintained throughout the life of the contract.



The Assessor Manual is revised and re-issued to assessors to reflect agreed changes in procedures or survey content. The manual is maintained and revised by the incumbent agency with any changes agreed and signed off by TfL.

The agency should ensure that all manuals, briefing materials and any other documentation provided to assessors are maintained up to date and amended as required prior to the start of each wave of fieldwork. This process should be completed in time to issue up to date materials to assessors in the month prior to the start of fieldwork.

## 6.6 Assessor briefings

Currently, face to face assessor briefings for existing panel members are run and each assessor must attend. Any assessors who cannot attend the main briefing session must attend a face to face briefing conducted by an FQA, using the briefing materials from the main session, prior to conducting any fieldwork.

These briefings ensure consistency across assessors and give assessors a regular forum where they can discuss survey related matters. The aims of the briefings are as follows:

- To reiterate the fundamental processes to all assessors;
- To discuss / explain changes, e.g. new measures;
- To clarify / raise issues of concern – from both sides;
- To get feedback on the questionnaire / fieldwork.

The agenda and format for each briefing is flexible and will be determined between the agency and TfL according to the circumstances of the survey at the time.

Proposals must outline the scope and planned format of these sessions. Where new measures or other changes occur during the survey year, briefings must be conducted for all assessors.

Agencies can propose alternative options to face to face briefings as long as it still meets the above requirements.

## 6.7 Itineraries

At the individual route level, the assessor carrying out the route is provided with an itinerary which describes step by step which stations to assess (specific line

and platform), which trains to travel on (line and direction), how to get from each point to the next on the route and what to look for in terms of specific station assets such as lifts, toilets, ATMs or the presence of subways.

Complementing the itinerary is a “coversheet”, which summarises the details of the route (route number, visit details (i.e. stations, questionnaire type and time band), pay claim section.

After a route, or number of routes, have been allocated to an assessor, the relevant itineraries / coversheets are posted out. The majority of routes are allocated and these documents despatched prior to the start of the quarterly wave. Materials can be emailed where an assessor has printing facilities.

## 6.8 Field Quality Control Procedures

There are a number of procedures in place to ensure CMSS field quality. All training and field quality monitoring activities are designed to ensure that assessors carry out the CMSS assessment and apply the scoring criteria as consistently as possible to all areas of measurement.

### Central Field Quality Database

Each assessor’s training records, Total Skill Monitor reports, any assessor variability analysis data pertaining to that assessor, etc. are held on a Central Field Quality Database that can be used to manage field quality over time.

### Total Skills Monitors (TSM)

This is a means of checking how assessors are scoring specific measures and whether they are consistent with the judgement of the FQA. Assessors are targeted based on various sources of feedback on performance (although all assessors must receive at least one TSM a year). They are then accompanied by an FQA on a sample of normal fieldwork routes for the quarter concerned and, if there are concerns about the quality of assessments, data will be withheld from the normal reporting process.

### Spot checks

Unannounced, covert spot-checks have been introduced onto the survey as a further field quality check. The spot check involves an FQA identifying an assessor and observing them covertly whilst they conduct their assessment. They will then discuss any issues they observed with the assessor afterwards. These are initially conducted with assessors on the basis of performance feedback but,