

# Poole Allotment Holders Survey 2009.

Conducted by the Corporate Research Team, Borough of Poole, on behalf of Leisure Services.



## Purpose of the Report

This report summarises the findings of a postal self-completion survey of allotment holders in Poole, conducted in October 2009. As part of a wider review of allotment services across Poole, the survey aimed to learn more about the experiences of plot holders, to help measure satisfaction and guide future service development.

## Aims of the Survey

- To measure allotment holders' satisfaction with various aspects of their site
- To investigate how effectively allotment associations are being run
- To review standards of maintenance and management of allotments.
- To discover how allotment holders feel that their site can be improved.

## Customer Satisfaction Measurement Technique

Customer Satisfaction Measurement is a technique used to measure how well a service is being provided in relation to the needs and expectations of the service user. It is a process that enables the improvement of service being delivered, by prioritising the needs of the service user and 'getting right what matters most'.

## Key Findings

- The overall satisfaction score for allotment provision is 62.9 out of 100.
- The key priorities for improvement highlighted by plot holders are 'site security', 'green waste recycling', 'rubbish removal' and 'maintenance of roads and pathways'.
- Plot holders would also like overhanging vegetation, multiple plot ownership, uncultivated plots and drainage to be given additional attention.
- Over half the respondents at Tatnam Farm and almost a third of respondents at Bushell Mill have experienced theft or vandalism during the past 12 months.
- A notable majority of respondents from Tatnam Farm and Bushell Mill would like their sites to have additional toilets.

## Survey Respondents

Overall, 189 completed survey forms were received – a response rate of 59%.

The respondents held plots on the following sites:

| Allotment    | Number of Responses | Site Response Rate |
|--------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Blake Dene   | 14                  | 78%                |
| Broadstone   | 41                  | 63%                |
| Bushell Mill | 47                  | 53%                |
| Hamworthy    | 10                  | 56%                |
| Tatnam Farm  | 48                  | 55%                |
| Whitecliff   | 5                   | 71%                |
| Widdecombe.  | 21                  | 55%                |

## Plot Holders' Expectations of Allotment Provision

In order to identify the level of importance plot holders place on the various aspects of their allotment service provision, respondents were asked to score a list of service factors from 1 to 10 where 1 is least important and 10 is most important. The average score relating to each factor is provided in the table below:

| Aspects of Allotment Provision  | Average Level of Importance |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Green Waste Recycling           | 8.7                         |
| Site Security                   | 8.6                         |
| Time taken to Reallocate Plots  | 8.4                         |
| Rubbish Removal                 | 8.3                         |
| Site Management                 | 8.2                         |
| Maintenance of Roads / Pathways | 8.1                         |
| Car Parking                     | 7.6                         |
| Site facilities                 | 7.4                         |
| Information on Plot Cultivation | 6.6                         |

As seen in the table above, most elements of the allotment provision are considered to be of importance to plot holders, however the three most important factors identified are:

- Green Waste Recycling
- Site Security
- Time taken to reallocate plots.

## Plot Holders' Satisfaction with their Allotment.

To establish the satisfaction levels of members, respondents were asked to score a list of service factors, identical to those used for importance scoring.

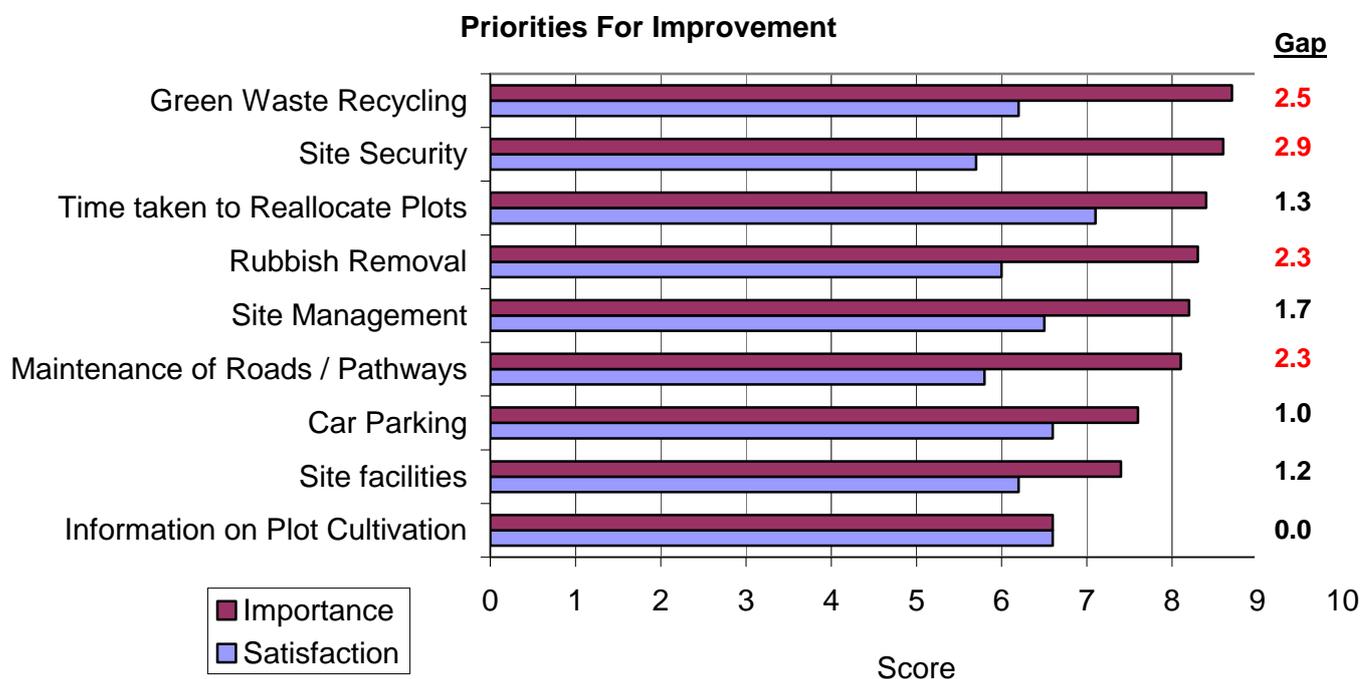
To determine whether plot holders' expectations are being met and what, if any improvements are required in the service being provided, their importance and satisfaction levels were then compared and analysed.

The table below provides a detailed comparison between the importance score and the service user satisfaction scores for each aspect of the allotment service provision. Overall, the allotment satisfaction rating is 62.9 out of 100.

| Aspect of Allotment Provision   | Satisfaction Level | Importance Weighting | Weighted Score |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| Green Waste Recycling           | 6.2                | 0.121                | 0.75           |
| Site Security                   | 5.7                | 0.120                | 0.68           |
| Time taken to Reallocate Plots  | 7.1                | 0.117                | 0.83           |
| Rubbish Removal                 | 6.0                | 0.115                | 0.69           |
| Site Management                 | 6.5                | 0.114                | 0.74           |
| Maintenance of Roads / Pathways | 5.8                | 0.113                | 0.65           |
| Car Parking                     | 6.6                | 0.106                | 0.70           |
| Site facilities                 | 6.2                | 0.103                | 0.64           |
| Information on Plot Cultivation | 6.6                | 0.092                | 0.61           |
| <b>Satisfaction Index</b>       |                    |                      | <b>62.9</b>    |

## Priorities for Improvement

Priorities for improvement are defined where the gap between satisfaction and importance is the greatest. The chart below provides a pictorial representation of this.



As the chart suggests, plot holders would like to see improvements in most aspects of their allotment provision. However, the key priorities for improvement highlighted by plot holders are:

- 1) Site security
- 2) Green Waste Recycling
- 3) Rubbish Removal
- 4) Maintenance of Roads and Pathways.

These are aspects where improvements in provision are likely to have the biggest impact on satisfaction amongst plot holders.

The respondents made a number of suggestions as to how these aspects could be improved.

At Blake Dene, respondents prioritised:

- Repairs to the perimeter fence to aid security – particularly to help prevent foxes entering the site.
- More regular removal of rubbish from the site.
- Facilities to enable them to recycle green waste more effectively.
- Repair of potholes in the slope from the main road to the plots.

At Broadstone, respondents felt strongly that:

- Their rubbish skip should be emptied more regularly.
- Green waste recycling facilities should be available to them.
- The paths and surrounding grass should be cut more often.
- The access road should be resurfaced.

*'For most allotment holders, the need to dispose of green waste appears paramount'*

At Bushell Mill, respondents would like to see the following improvements:

- The instalment of more effective security fencing.
- Increased opportunity for green recycling.
- More frequent emptying of the skip.
- Levelling of the potholes on the main entrance road.

*'Perimeter fencing in many places needs replacing'*

At Hamworthy, respondents highlighted a need for:

- Green waste recycling facilities.
- The re-siting of the site skip to allow better access.
- A notice on the gate to remind plot holders to secure it.

*'Rubbish removed more often - skip always overfilled, excess rubbish around it'*

At Tatnam Farm respondent prioritised:

- More regular emptying of the site skip.
- A facility for green waste recycling
- Increased site security.

At Whitecliff, respondents felt that:

- Access to the site was made difficult by all day car parking in Whitecliff Road.
- Security at the site could be improved.

At Widdecombe, respondents would like to see:

- Repairs made to the fence bordering the site.
- Roads and paths being maintained – this is currently undertaken by plot holders.
- Repairs to the hedgerows to improve security.
- Increased collection/emptying of bins on the site.

### Allotment Community.

The survey results suggest that there is a good sense of community on the allotments surveyed. 97% of those who responded to the survey felt that their allotment was a place where people get on well together.

### Site Security

As the section above highlights, site security is a key priority for allotment holders. 28% of respondents have suffered directly from vandalism or theft on their plot during the past 12 months.

| Site         | Percentage Experiencing Theft / Vandalism. |
|--------------|--|
| Blake Dene   | 21%  |
| Broadstone   | 10%  |
| Bushell Mill | 30%  |
| Hamworthy    | 11%  |
| Tatnam Farm  | 52%  |
| Whitecliff   | 20%  |
| Widdecombe   | 15%  |

*'people climbing the fences and stealing'*

*'better security should be a priority'*

However, as the chart above shows, this figure varied significantly by allotment site, with Tatnam Farm and Bushell Mill experiencing the most theft/vandalism.

## Additional Facilities

In terms of additional facilities, 56% of the responding plot holders would like their site to have toilets, and 33% would like their site to have washing facilities.

| Site         | % wanting toilets | % wanting washing facilities |
|--------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| Blake Dene   | 21%               | 14%                          |
| Broadstone   | 46%               | 17%                          |
| Bushell Mill | 81%               | 49%                          |
| Hamworthy    | 70%               | 60%                          |
| Tatnam Farm  | 67%               | 46%                          |
| Whitecliff   | 20%               | 0%                           |
| Widdecombe   | 27%               | 14%                          |

Again, this varied significantly by site, as the table above shows. Bushell Mill and Tatnam Farm respondents were most likely to want these additional facilities on their sites. Tatnam Farm respondents in particular also raised the need for toilets when commenting on improvements they would like made to their site. Of the smaller sites, Hamworthy was the only one that showed a particular interest in having toilets and washing areas. (It was also the only site where more than half of the respondents were in favour of having washing facilities.)

However, some respondents also expressed concern about the impact that the installation of these facilities may have on their rent. They also noted the additional requirements for maintaining these facilities, which might become a target of vandalism.

## Site Management and Maintenance

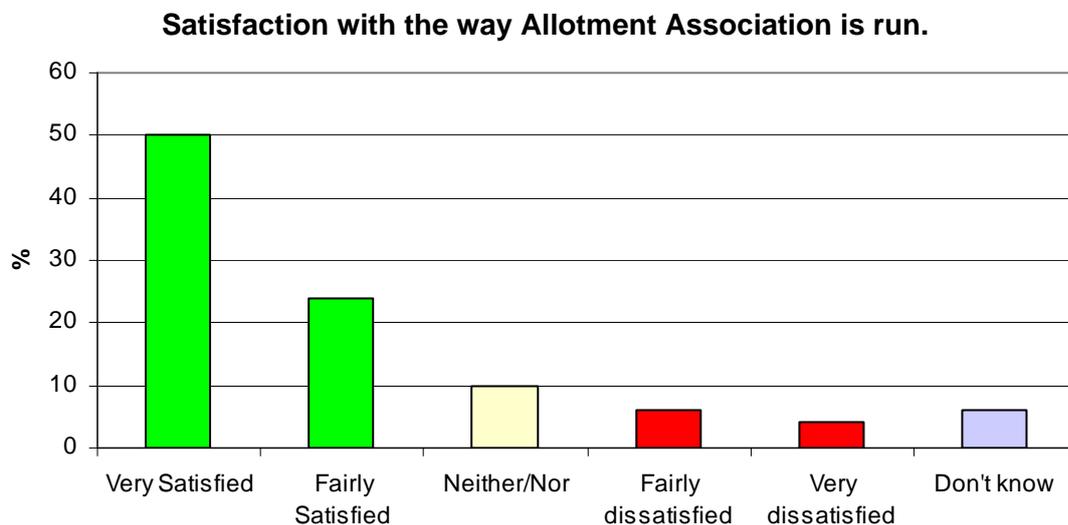
In addition to the points put forward by the Council, the respondents also identified (through their comments) a number of aspects of the site management and maintenance provision that they felt should be prioritised for improvement. In particular, these concerned:

- a) The removal of overhanging vegetation around the allotment sites. Tall, overhanging trees block sunlight from the plots and therefore are detrimental to their productivity. This was particularly reported at Blake Dene, Broadstone and Whitecliff.
- b) Uncultivated plots. These were seen as impacting visually and environmentally on the rest of the site, and unfair on the people on the allotment plot waiting list. The respondents felt that there should be better enforcement to quickly address the issue of uncultivated plots, especially at Bushell Mill and Widdecombe sites.
- c) Fairer allocation of allotment plots. Respondents at Bushell Mill and Blake Dene had observed that some plot holders had been allocated two, or even three plots, despite the long waiting lists throughout the Borough.
- d) Poor drainage. This was particularly a problem reported by plot holders at Broadstone and Tatnam Farm. In the former site, plots become waterlogged and unworkable in winter and after heavy rain. In the latter, the issue was the stream adjacent to the site, which had not been cleared for a considerable time – the blockage causing flooding to the plots nearby.

## Allotment Associations

Of the seven sites surveyed, four [*Broadstone, Bushell Mill, Tatnam and Widdecombe*] had an Allotment Association. Within these sites, 80% of respondents confirmed that they were members of their Association, whilst 20% stated that they were not members.

Where an Allotment Association was active, respondents were also asked how satisfied they were with how their Association is run. The chart below shows their responses.



74% of respondents were satisfied, with their Association, commenting that individual members were friendly and helpful. They particularly liked the central focus that the association could provide, and the opportunity to purchase seeds at reduced rates was very much appreciated.

*'Very friendly, helpful and ability to purchase at substantial discounts'*

10% of respondents were dissatisfied with the way that their Association was run. Many commented that they found their Association to be 'cliquey' and/or an 'old boys club'. Others felt that more could be done to raise awareness of the Association – that the onus tended to be on plot holders to contact the Association, rather than being welcomed to the site and informed of its activities.

*'Not enough information provided, seems like a private club for the chosen few.'*

Of the 59 plot holders who were not currently a member of an Allotment Association, 55% would consider joining an Association in the future, and 45% would not.

The Allotment Holders Survey was conducted by the Corporate Research Team, Borough of Poole, on behalf of Leisure Services. For further information please contact Corporate Research on (01202) 633367 or visit our website at [www.boroughofpoole.com/research](http://www.boroughofpoole.com/research)