



<b>Review Topic:</b>	Service Delivery Framework Review, what matters most to customers?
<b>Start / End Date:</b>	April – June 2021
<b>Board:</b>	29 <sup>th</sup> July 2021
<b>Judgement:</b>	None

## 1. Introduction

This scrutiny report details the outcomes of our review of the Service Delivery Framework (SDF) commissioned by Great Places to help influence a revised framework for the whole business, which is part of the COSMOS integration programme. Insight felt this was a crucial area, therefore welcomed the opportunity to contribute on behalf of Great Places customers. We believe our review captured areas of focus that matter to customers and drivers for dissatisfaction, highlighting where resources and efforts can be directed in the future.

Overall, we felt that the SDF model has had a positive effect within communities; assisted by agile and partnership working and digital devices to allow frontline roles to deliver a more responsive service, that has greater capacity to manage customer demand.

## 2. Aim & Scope of Review

We agreed our aim would be to investigate ‘what matters most to customers’ with a focus on specific services, delivery of services and customer service to compare to the SDF principles, learning if priorities have changed, particularly in light of their experiences since the pandemic. We set a clear scope to gather data to help achieve our aim as follows;

- to research ‘what matters most to customers’ to identify current service priorities,
- to gauge how the SDF principles have landed in relation to customer experience, and
- to identify any strengths and weaknesses related to the SDF from the view of colleagues

## 3. Our Approach

The following information was sought from Great Places customers and colleagues;

- Overview – the Director of Neighbourhoods explained the background to the framework, which we learnt aimed to set a vision for services and customer relationships, in-turn establishing Great Places’ service offer, based on research findings. We were given copies of the SDF booklets, designed and published for neighbourhood and Independence & Wellbeing services.
- Summary from SDF Project Team – to obtain greater clarity of the SDF and new ways of working, from which we could attempt to assess the reality of service delivery, we met with members of the original project team. We heard Great Places approach and

rationale upon, which the service offer would be delivered to customers. We were informed of areas where performance data could be requested to support an assessment of implementation of the SDF.

- Scoping / Planning – we found it challenging initially to define a way to test the principles to capture a customer perspective, since the current SDF does not include clear measures or service standards, nonetheless, we did agree objectives and a review scope after meeting with members of the SDF project team. We agreed our approach would focus on ‘what matters most to customers’ as a starting point to gather feedback, which could be compared to the SDF. We aimed to identify if customers’ priorities had changed since the launch of the SDF, particularly in-light of the pandemic.
- Customer Insight – we reviewed feedback collected from recent customer engagement exercises. Using this data, we were able to identify other areas for enquiry that matter to customers, for example; safety in the home and neighbourhoods, where customers live.
- Subject Access Requests – Great Places’ data protection coordinator shared information of experiences with customers, who make an application for a SAR. We learnt customers tend to be seeking accountability for what they feel is a failed or poor level service, which didn’t meet their expectations.
- Neighbourhood teams – we spoke with colleagues from neighbourhood teams, whose daily interactions with customers would provide insight, relating to their experiences following the introduction of the service delivery framework. We intended to assess the service offer by enquiring of issues’ customers experience and areas of strength. We also wanted to hear teams’ view of improvements, any gaps or barriers, which currently may hinder service delivery.
- House to Home pilot project – we heard about a pilot project, launched earlier in 2021, which supports the principle ‘we start with the home’. We were told of rising numbers of applicants for rehousing, identified as not having prior tenure history or basic belongings. The intention is to support customers, whose tenancy sustainability was viewed as vulnerable without intervention.
- Desktop Review - we reviewed customer feedback collected by business intelligence and customer involvement teams, stats given by community investment, our online survey and looked at best practice on websites of other SH landlords. We were able to identify areas for recommendation, along with intelligence we’d gathered from other reviews.

#### **4. Good Practice Findings**

As part of our review of the Service Delivery Framework, we identified a number of areas of good practice that we would like to highlight to the Board:

- The Service Delivery Framework booklets set a vision for service and customer relationships, and define the 2-way responsibilities and expectations required to form the foundations of sustainable tenancies, as outlined below:

Our promise to customers	Our expectations of customers
We will provide a clean, well-maintained home as a foundation for customers to get on with life, with the peace of mind that comes from knowing it will remain their home for as long as required	We ask customers to take responsibility with support if needed, for looking after their home and to respect neighbours, communities and Great Places colleagues

- The SDF model has enable team’s greater opportunity to build relationships with customers, to understand issues faced to capture a more holistic view of individuals and experiences. From a customer perspective a benefit is there is only one person to deal with, which makes for a better experience enabling capacity to grow meaningful relationships, that are supportive helping customers be more independent.
- NSMs have more autonomy for decision making, enabling timely action to be taken, if required, which contributes to a better experience for the customer
- An increased presence in communities allows issues to be identified and action taken, or arrangements agreed with relevant partners, maximising potential and working to create more successful communities where people wish to live.
- The customer service portal allows more independence for customers to self-serve, carrying out transactions at their convenience opposed to being restricted by set office hours
- Working with partners and stakeholders can work extremely well, as in an example during a recent case of flooding, which was managed well working collaboratively, because enough provision was in place to allow this to happen, providing a better experience for the customer.
- The Resilience Fund and Tenancy Support has been an invaluable provision of support for customers, which is felt would benefit from being advertised along with information of guidance and advice to inform customers, to help with independence
- We saw positive behaviours as a result of the pandemic, some customers found their own solutions during 1<sup>st</sup> lockdown, however despite this, customers were more irritable in the 2<sup>nd</sup> lockdown creating greater demand. Information offered by Great Places in addition to financial support of the Resilience Fund made a huge difference for customers and on demand.
- Overall working agile works well, it allows teams to have a greater presence in communities, since time is freed up from doing paperwork, although there are some gaps in the current infrastructure, which can result in some tasks having to be done manually.

## 5. Barriers Identified

The discussions and consultation undertaken throughout this review also identified the following barriers to the most effective ways of working:

- An increase of customers in vulnerable situations being rehoused, without support packages and the expectation of the landlord to provide required support. Great Places’ tenancy coaches are a vital resource, helping customers manage and gain some

independence, equally in an advisory role to frontline colleagues working with customers needing extra support. The 'House to Home' is a valuable initiative, helping customers start tenancies on a better footing, detail is outlined in next section.

- Some feedback suggests digital facilities can be clunky for example problems encountered by customers attempting to upload photos, whilst reporting a repair, which doesn't give a good experience and created more demand on The Hub; improvement required to IT
- Customers have choice of ways to contact Great Places, although if delays are experienced during times of high demand, customers will contact the NSM direct, which can cause frustration if the NSM is unable to facilitate the customer's request
- NSMs currently can only report the repair using the same facilities as the customer increasing demand on their time - a suggestion is a dedicated line / email enabling teams to meet demand.
- New customers have been more accepting of the SDF ways of working, it has been a greater challenge for more long-standing customers to accept the changes in service delivery
- Anti-social behaviour can be extremely challenging, it's felt extra resourcing and some change is required to effectively manage both low-level and more complex cases; neighbourhood teams reported that in some cases, they felt the customer was being let down.
- There has been some challenge from stakeholders, who question and expect the same level of support to be offered from Great Places as other landlords, in relation to incidents of ASB.
- Financial hardship during the pandemic saw a rise in demand at this time, the loss of support from Welfare Rights team was felt by neighbourhood teams. Customers are signposted to other agencies and charities, although capacity to support can differ between LAs.
- Partnering relationships also differ, some are more established and readily available whereas other relationships still need to be built with much groundwork to be done, it would be valuable to review levels of demand for patches.
- To support the service model, it would help if central serving teams had greater understanding of frontline roles and impact their roles to provide an integral service to support customer service.

## **6. Review Summary**

In this next section, we'd like to summarise themes noted during our review, which focus mainly on aspects of communication, service delivery and feeling safe. (Please note that the data used to inform our decisions is provided at Appendix 1 of this report)

- Customer comments state the importance of feeling valued and respected, which may be obtained through the standard of their interactions with Great Places, supported by a

2-way relationship that shares the goal to deliver a quality service. We reviewed evidence during our scrutiny review that highlighted the importance of sharing knowledge of the SDF group-wide, this idea we feel also can apply to promotion of the framework with customers, opening channels of communication to support a common culture.

- We heard how customers look to Great Places for accountability, which can be reinforced with the development of a Customer Charter to outline expectations of both sides, supported by 2-way dialogue. We feel a charter should contain a section developed with customers, which outlines customers' responsibilities that contribute to help Great Places deliver great service, which will form a transactional agreement.
- Great Places has capacity to support customers to be more inclusive of their involvement, as in the example when a customer was directed to the ASB policy, supporting the principle of 'doing with not for' encouraging independence. A customer charter that agrees to share performance data, provides customers greater capacity to hold Great Places to account.
- We proposed a recommendation to add safety in a new SDF, which supports requirements of other housing sector charters and codes, where customers highlighted areas of importance, this will ensure information is easily accessible in one place. We feel this recommendation goes further than simply carrying out safety inspections, working safely and using quality products; customers said they wish to be reassured of safety via information, kept up to date and informed of change. The last 12 months or so has seen a lot of uncertainty, which may have had an impact, but whether or not customers' need for reassurance results from the pandemic, Great Places can develop relationships with customers, if this area of service delivery can be enhanced.
- Insight were encouraged to learn more about 'value added' initiatives in place to support customers such as the pilot project House to Home, continued support of the Resilience Fund, Tenancy Coaches and other activities offered by the Community Investment team, see details in appendix 6. We feel this provision is an integral part of service delivery, highlighting to customers Great Places offer support and advice, which in-turn can support a mutually respectful relationship of trust and safety.
- As mentioned earlier, it's felt the service delivery model has on the whole been a success in principle and practice, we heard of barriers, which if can be addressed would improve functionality therefore assist to provide reliability raising customer confidence to self-serve and use digital ways to contact Great Places and carry out transactions improving independence and offering choice.
- We recognise change to continually improve is essential and an integral part of service delivery and we feel the SDF provides a robust foundation helping this be achieved, which will be strengthened by the addition of a Customer Charter that can be measured. We were recently consulted in regard the Customer Experience strategy and reporting processes, we felt this is a valuable addition focussing feedback to enable oversight of customer

voice. We were also pleased to learn customers who score satisfaction low are contacted, offering a chance to gain understanding and opens dialogue. We're keen to see the SDF develop and how Insight's recommendations help influence revisions.

## **7. Insight Recommendations**

Based on the review findings, we'd like to propose the following recommendations to help inform the development of the new service delivery framework, which will meet customer priorities:

1. The revised Service Delivery Framework to contain a Customer Charter, designed in partnership with customers that clearly sets out;
  - Great Places' service promise,
  - how promises will be delivered to customers,
  - ways to evaluate and measure success,
  - who will hold the service to account?
  - customer pledge acknowledging their promise and responsibility in the 2-way relationship
2. Using a range of methods provide customers with quarterly updates to report on performance in-line with the promises, including customer satisfaction; to give meaningful oversight that allows the opportunity to comment and challenge
3. Develop ways to introduce the Service Delivery Framework rationale group-wide, that supports a customer-focussed culture, developing training to ensure complete knowledge of the framework and objectives, tailored to highlight each individuals specific role and responsibilities, including non-GP colleagues whose role is customer facing, such as contractors
4. Align the revised Service Delivery Framework principles and service promises to uphold and support requirements outlined in the Social Housing white paper, the NHF's Together with Tenants charter, the Housing Ombudsman code and Building Safety Bill monitoring performance to assess customer experiences meet requirements
5. Develop a consistent approach to collect feedback of customer experience of services, that provides detailed intelligence, which allows identification of causes of dissatisfaction, to highlight areas to monitor for improvement. For example, what contributed to service promises not being upheld or why did a customer have to chase a repair
6. Ensure frontline teams are consulted to gather intelligence of experiences of customers and frontline teams to understand any barriers and / or gaps, which may hinder the delivery of consistent standard of service in some areas
7. Revisit information that informs customers about the ASB service, to ensure it's meaningful and fully informs about the service offer, to help support frontline teams to effectively manage incidents with customers and agencies engaging appropriate support and setting realistic expectations, whether low level or more complex cases.

8. Customers commented feeling safe in the home and neighbourhoods was important, Insight would recommend inclusion of safety within the principles of the revised Service Delivery Framework with a focus to reassure customers. For example, provision of fire and building safety information, which is meaningful to customers, the confirmation of safety inspections to homes and communal areas, ensuring security of customer homes and clear knowledge of fire evacuation procedures, tailored for customers specific needs.

## **8. Overall Judgement**

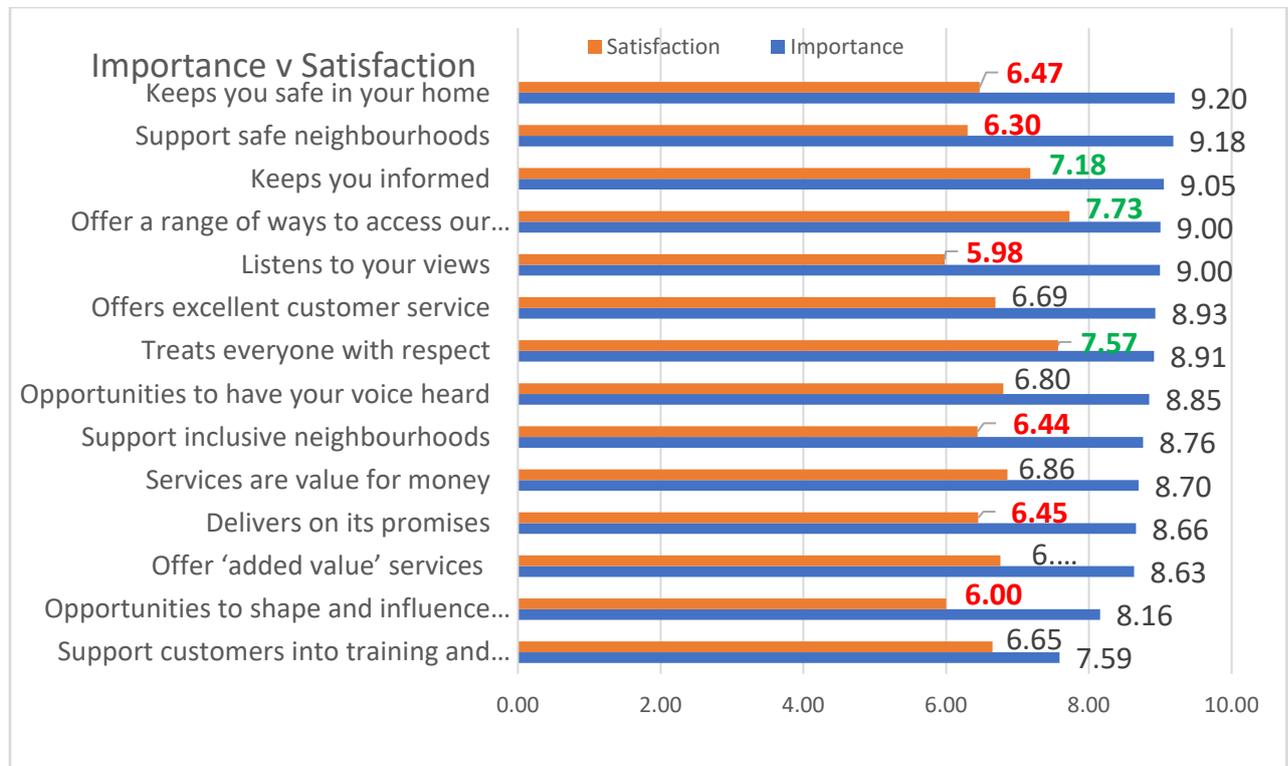
On this occasion, we found we couldn't agree criteria and scores to accurately represent an objective account of this review, that would be based on data. Our objectives for the review were to gather data from which we could identify 'what matters most' to customers, capture satisfaction and neighbourhoods' experiences working to the principles to inform a new revised framework. However, although data collected was insightful enabling recommendations to be identified, we didn't feel there was substantial data to evaluate the success of the current SDF from a customer perspective. Therefore, we'd like to give a synopsis based on our findings;

- the concept of a SDF to set a vision for customer service and 2-way relationship with customers and resulting service model, we heard has been valuable and had a positive impact in regards to neighbourhood teams ways of working, yet it has outgrown its remit so Insight feel review is timely and necessary to warrant its purpose.
- the absence of clear measures or service standards meant, we couldn't objectively, evaluate the success of the framework from a customer perspective. The data we reviewed gave a sense of customers' experiences and priorities, although what Insight couldn't do was decisively comment on impact of the SDF, in relation to customers experiences. It was this understanding, which contributed towards identification of our recommendations, particularly recommendation 1 to devise a Customer Charter with clear measures.

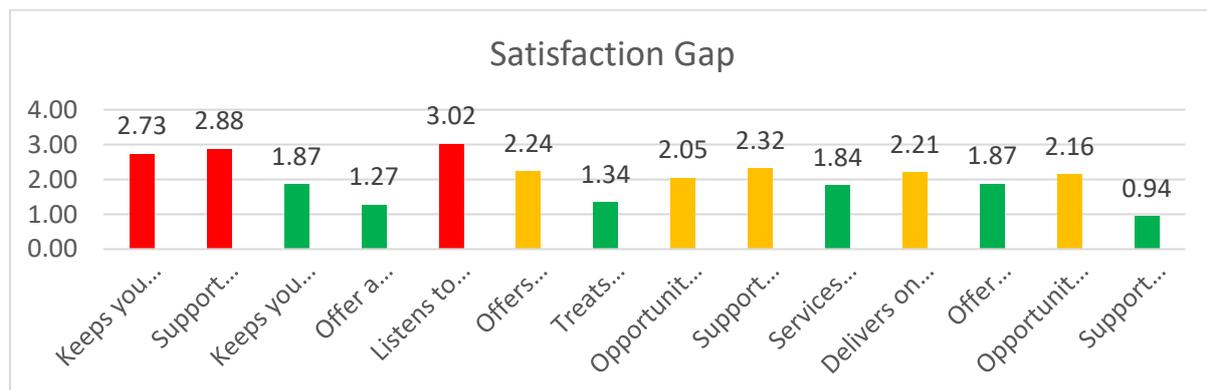
We are very keen to hear an update of progress in 6 months of the recommendations, when we feel, it maybe timelier to make an assessment. We would like to recognise the contribution and thank colleagues who have contributed to this review.

## Appendix 1 – Data Findings Used To Inform Recommendations & Findings

The chart below highlights average scores for both satisfaction and importance for each question asked, shown in order of importance to the customer



The 2<sup>nd</sup> chart highlights the 'satisfaction gap' shown in order of areas of most importance for customers, which can be compared to the 1st chart in appendix 1. The comparison shows areas that would have the greatest impact on customer satisfaction, (largest satisfaction gap) if improvements to the service were made such as Great Places, marked red in the chart.



The satisfaction gap was smallest for the following areas:

Service area	Importance	Satisfaction	Gap
Great Places support customers into training and employment	7.59	6.65	-0.94
Great Places offers a range of ways to access services	9.00	7.73	-1.27
Great Places treats everyone with respect	8.91	7.57	-1.34

Repairs BT review 2020, reporting a repair - customers said;

- Let them know if we can't make the appointment
- Prioritise jobs to make customers safe
- Fully know what is needed and send the correct team member to do the repair
- Clear communication with customer throughout the whole process
- Confirm appointments reported online

Repairs BT review, working in customers homes - customers said;

- Work safely
- Be respectful of customers home - clean & tidy
- Work done to a high standard
- Follow up appointments made quickly
- Attend when you say you will
- Accept any mistakes, apologise and put it right
- Opportunity to tell Great Places about their experience

Gas / Electrical Inspections - customers said;

- Come when you say you are coming / agreed appointment time
- Let customers know asap, if appointment needs to be changed
- Give at least 2 weeks notice for any check
- Offer shorter time slots than currently available, am / pm
- Consider things such as school runs, when arranging appointments

Customer Voice feedback - customers said;

- Being able to comment and give feedback
- Get involved when you want to
- See services improve
- Receive feedback after being involved, giving comment or completing a survey
- Opportunity to review and monitor performance
- Demonstrate meet regulatory requirements

Communication - customers said;

- Include info. of who to contact, such as; who is my Neighbourhood Services Manager

- Tell me what services and support are available to me
- Ensure information is meaningful, interesting to read and easy to understand
- Information is relevant to me, for example tailored to where I live and my home
- Provides accurate and up to date information
- Tells me how I can feedback, comment or reply

### Consultation; customer feels safe in own home

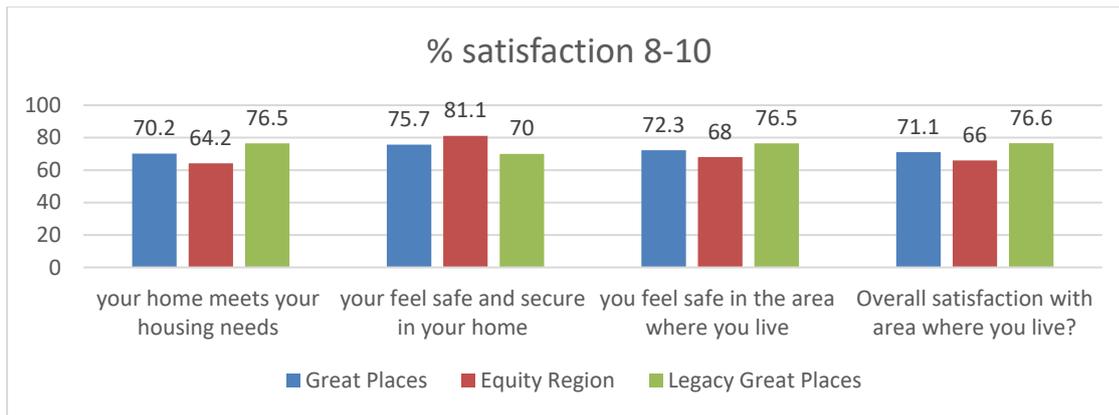
	No. of resp.		Ave. Sat.	Ave. Imp.	Sat. Gap
	Sat.	Imp			
<b>Asbestos Inspections and Removals</b> op. reassures customer of safety in home	4	9	8.25	9.89	-1.64
<b>Fire Risk Ass. &amp; Fire Safety Equip.</b> info. given about fire safety of comm. areas	44	103	5.49	8.70	-3.21
<b>Gas and Electrical Testing</b> operative reassures customer all is safe	144	252	8.51	9.78	-1.26
<b>Lift Maintenance</b> op. confirms at end of visit all is safe	8	28	7.00	7.96	-0.96

### Comparison of Equity region & GP customer feedback

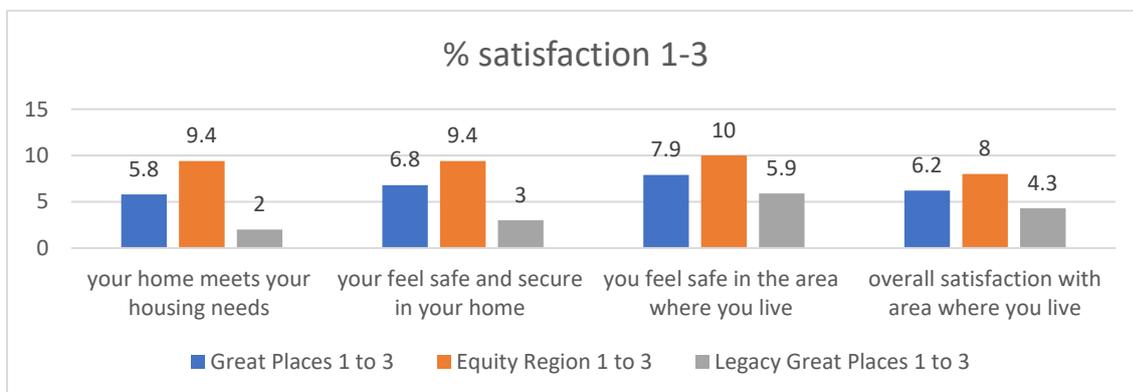
105 responses made up of 53 Equity region and 52 legacy Great Places customers

	your home meets your housing needs			you feel safe and secure in your home			you feel safe in the area where you live			overall sat. of area		
	Sat	Imp	Gap	Sat	Imp	Gap	Sat	Imp	Gap	Sat	Imp	Gap
Great Places	8.0	9.0	-1.0	8.1	9.0	-0.9	8.2	9.1	-0.9	8.2	9.1	-0.9
Equity Reg	7.5	8.8	-1.3	8.0	9.1	-1.1	8.0	9.2	-1.2	8.0	9.1	-1.1
Legacy GP	8.5	9.1	-0.6	8.2	9.0	-0.8	8.4	9.1	-0.7	8.4	9.1	-0.7

The chart shows comparative % satisfaction scores filtered by Equity, legacy GP regions and new structure Great Places. The SDF was launched 3+ years ago, note Equity region doesn't work to SDF



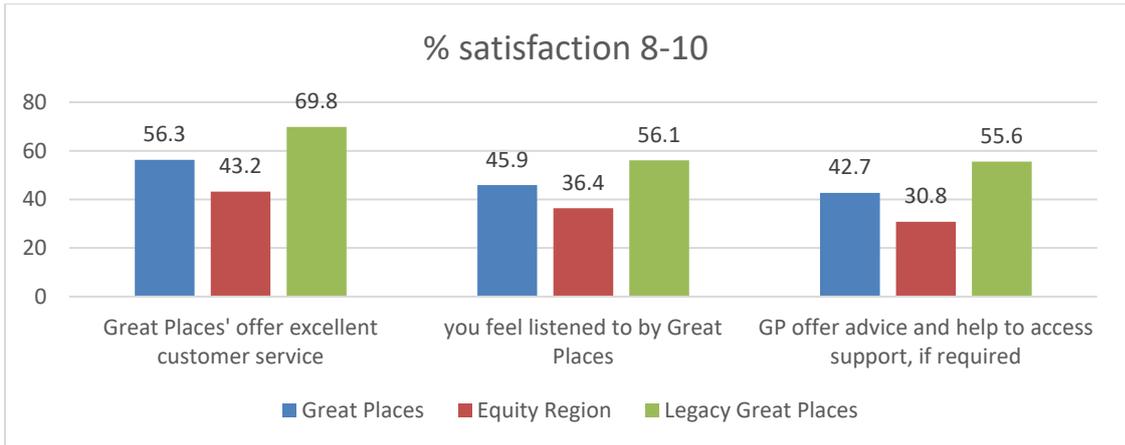
Results show legacy Great Places customers were more satisfied when asked to score i) home meets housing needs, ii) feel safe and secure in the area where I live, and iii) overall satisfaction with area but less favourably compared to Equity region in relation to feeling safe and secure in your home.



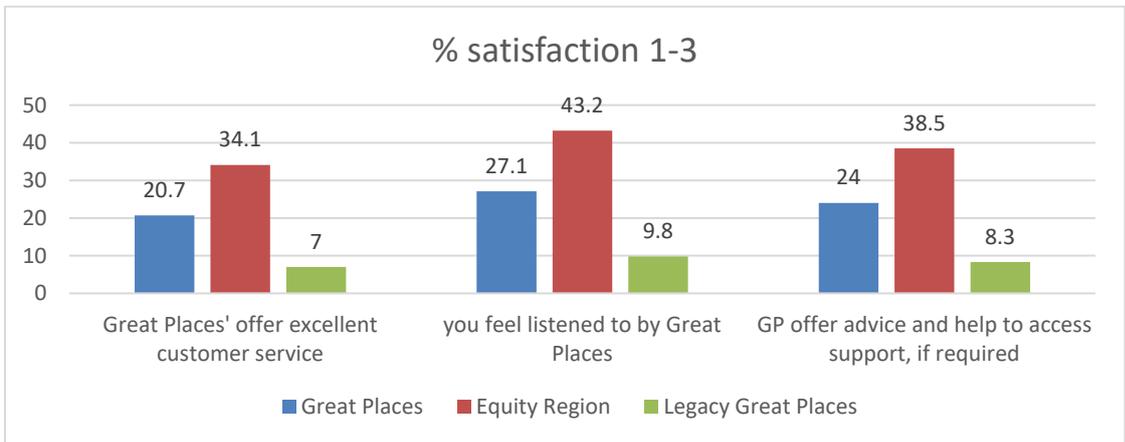
Results for the chart show a greater % of Equity customers scored 1-3 for these 4 areas, % figures.

Some comments of dissatisfaction relate to security of shared accommodation, such as communal door, non-visitors gaining access to flats and garden area, issues with neighbours, visitors and ASB

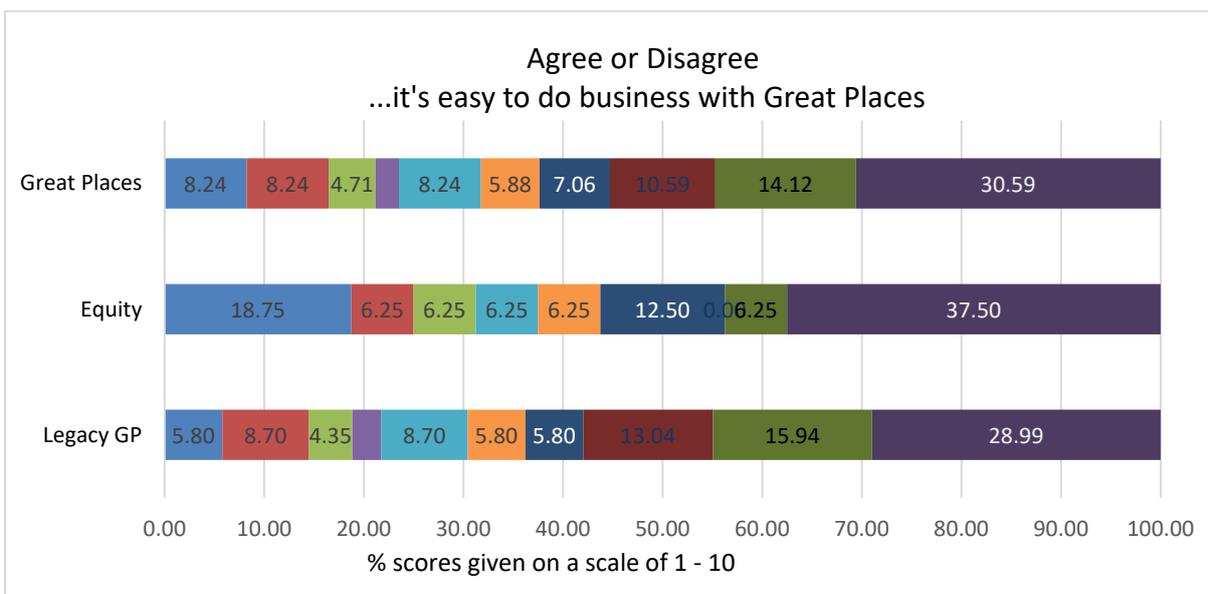
	Great Places' offer excellent customer service			you feel listened to by Great Places			GP offer advice and help to access support, if required		
	Sat	Imp	Gap	Sat	Imp	Gap	Sat	Imp	Gap
Great Places	6.8	8.2	-1.4	6.3	7.5	-1.2	6.3	7.5	-1.2
Equity Reg	5.8	8.1	-2.4	5.2	7.0	-1.8	5.2	7.0	-1.8
Legacy Great Places	8.0	8.3	-0.4	7.4	8.0	-0.6	7.6	8.1	-0.5



The scores in the chart above show more legacy Great Places customers responded favourably giving to all 3 questions compared to Equity region customers. The chart below of 1-3 scores, shows Equity region customers who scored dissatisfaction is significantly greater to legacy Great Places customers.



### Testing the principle – Great Places are easy to do business with



Customer Groups	% of scores given between 8-10
Great Places	55
Equity region	43.8
Legacy Great Places	57.97

The chart below shows scores when customers were asked about the importance of the service offer being clearly explained and regular performance updates given. For this question customers were asked to score on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not important and 10 is important. The chart shows a majority of customers in both regions felt it important Great Places share this detail about services

