Chapter 3 Fieldwork

Fieldwork for the 2012-13 English Housing Survey (EHS) was managed on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) by NatCen Social Research. All interviews were carried out by trained NatCen Social Research interviewers; the surveys by professional surveyors employed by CADS Housing Surveys. This chapter provides further details of fieldwork procedures, including interviewer and surveyor training.

Overview

3.1 The 2012-13 survey was conducted by a consortium led by NatCen Social Research. The consortium included CADS Housing Surveys who employ a large field force of professional surveyors to undertake the visual inspection of properties, and Building Research Establishment (BRE) who are responsible for developing the physical survey questionnaire and surveyor training manuals and delivering the surveyor training sessions.

Fieldwork period

3.2 Fieldwork for the survey commences in April each year and is spread over the year, in eight batches with two consecutive months of fieldwork per quarter. Interviewers are given six weeks in which to complete their quotas of work. Surveyor fieldwork is the last three weeks of the interview fieldwork period.

3.3 Fieldwork dates for 2012-13 were as follows:

	Interviewer		Surveyor	
	Start	Finish	Start	Finish
Quarter 1				
Wave 1	01 April 2012	13 May 2012	21 April 2012	13 May 2012
Wave 2	01 May 2012	12 June 2012	26 May 2012	17 June 2012
Quarter 2				
Wave 1	01 July 2012	12 August 2012	21 July 2014	12 August 2012
Wave 2	01 August 2012	12 September 2012	25 August 2012	16 September 2012
Quarter 3				
Wave 1	22 September 2012	04 November 2012	13 October 2012	04 November 2012
Wave 2	20 October 2012	02 December 2012	10 November 2012	02 December 2012
Quarter 4				
Wave 1	04 January 2012	17 February 2013	26 January 2013	17 February 2013
Wave 2	01 February 2013	17 March 2013	23 February 2013	17 March 2013

Training and project briefings

Interviewers

- 3.4 Interviewers working on the EHS are drawn from the NatCen Social Research pool of interviewers. Prior to starting work at NatCen, all interviewers receive three days of intensive training, which includes CAPI training and workshops on doorstep technique. After this, interviewers are supervised for up to three days in the field. Interviewers are also encouraged to 'shadow' more experienced colleagues as a method to learn from others and to share experiences.
- 3.5 Before starting work on the EHS, all interviewers are required to attend a one-day briefing on the survey. In 2012-13, as all the interviewers were new to the EHS, they all attended a briefing. In total, 431 new interviewers were briefed at 26 briefings.
- 3.6 The briefings were run by NatCen Social Research and attended, where possible, by DCLG and CADS Housing Surveys. The briefings provided a comprehensive overview of the survey and covered:
 - purpose of the study
 - previous EHS findings
 - study procedures including contacting respondents and identification and selection of dwellings and households, including HMOs (houses in multiple occupation)
 - how to motivate respondents to take part

- survey documents
- booking appointments for the physical surveyor visit
- · various exercises to test their understanding of the EHS
- (for new interviewers) going through a dummy interview
- 3.7 In advance of the briefing, interviewers were required to undertake a prebriefing exercise. This involved reading the project instructions and completing a questionnaire covering the main survey procedures. The exercise was reviewed at the briefing.

Surveyors

- 3.8 EHS surveyors are employed by CADS Housing Surveys and trained by BRE on the technical content of the survey. Surveyors new to the survey receive a five-day residential briefing. The rigorous residential training involves both desk-based and practical sessions and is designed to encourage surveyors to adopt a standard approach to the assessment and reporting of the condition of dwellings. Surveyors working on the EHS come from a range of professional backgrounds. Approximately half are qualified Environmental Health Officers; the remaining are from a variety of professional groups including architects and building surveyors.
- 3.9 Each year, surveyors who have worked on the EHS previously receive a one-day refresher briefing, supplemented by distance learning modules. The modules and subsequent quizzes were completed by the surveyors at home prior to attending the briefing and the results fed back to them during a dedicated training session.
- 3.10 There is a limited amount of turnover of surveyors each year. In 2012-13, 155 surveyors (including Regional Managers) worked on the EHS, all of whom had worked on the survey previously. No new surveyors were recruited and a five-day residential briefing was therefore not required. The 151 surveyors and four Regional managers who had previously worked on the survey attended seven refresher briefings.
- 3.11 The 2012-13 refresher briefing was designed to cover the following aspects:
 - identification of system built dwellings
 - surveying HMOs
 - ageing and repair of elements
 - HHSRS Housing Health and Safety Rating System [HHSRS] and extreme risks
 - refresh surveyors on those aspects of the recent Surveyor Variability SVS study which had the greatest variability: security, accessibility and local environment

Contact procedures

Letters

- 3.12 All addresses received a letter in advance of the interviewer's first visit explaining the purpose of the study and stating that an interviewer would be visiting shortly. The letter also included details of how the address had been selected and gave reassurances about confidentiality by stating:
 - Your personal details will be kept strictly confidential and no-one looking at the study findings will be able to identify you or your household in any way.
- 3.13 These letters were sent centrally by NatCen Social Research (i.e. not by the interviewers). The interviewers carry laminated copies of the letters with them to aid recall of the advance letter on the doorstep.
- 3.14 A copy of the advance letter is available at Annex 3.1.

Leaflets

- 3.15 Respondents were given a leaflet about the study on the doorstep. This provided additional information about the survey including examples of how previous EHS data have been used. It also addressed potential concerns about data protection and provided contact details for NatCen Social Research and web addresses for DCLG and NatCen Social Research.
- 3.16 Households selected for a physical survey were also given a leaflet describing the purpose of the surveyor's visit and what to expect from the physical inspection.
- 3.17 Leaflets are updated annually. Copies of the 2012-13 leaflets are available at Annex 3.2.

Interview survey data collection

- 3.18 Prior to seeking an interview with a respondent at a sampled address, the interviewer undertakes a series of contact procedures using the EHS 'doorstep form'. These include:
 - collecting 'first impression' data from the sampled address to be used in non-response analysis
 - dwelling identification and, where necessary, randomly selecting a
 dwelling. In a small number of cases the sampled address contains
 more than one dwelling, which is defined as a unit of accommodation
 (e.g. a flat) where all the rooms and amenities are for the exclusive use
 of the household(s) occupying them. So, for example, if a house has

- been split into two self-contained flats then the interviewer randomly selects one flat to interview at
- identifying households and, where necessary, randomly selecting a household for interview
- collecting information from neighbours about non-contacts and vacant addresses
- 3.19 Properties that were vacant at the time of the interviewer's first call were then passed to CADS Housing Surveys to approach for a physical survey. These are sub-sampled on the same basis as occupied dwellings based on the last known tenure of the property.

Translations

- 3.20 NatCen employs some interviewers who can conduct the interview in a language other than English. However this is not always possible and interviewers tend to rely on household interpreters to complete interviews with non-English speakers. Household interpreters must be aged 13 or over and willing to translate on behalf of the interviewer.
- 3.21 In 2012-13, 11 interviews were carried out by a NatCen interviewer in a language other than English; 28 interviews were undertaken using a family or friend of the respondent as an interpreter.

Maximising response

- 3.22 In 2012-13, interviews were achieved for 13,652 households. This represents 59% of sampled addresses eligible for interview and is slightly below the target response rate of 60%.
- 3.23 Interviewers used a number of procedures to maximise response rates.
- 3.24 Interviewers were encouraged to make a minimum of nine calls at each address before classifying the address as a non-contact. These calls had to be at different times of the day and spread across the fieldwork period. At least two of these calls needed to be in the evening from Monday to Thursday and two had to be at the weekend.
- 3.25 Because of the adverse affect it would have on the surveyor fieldwork period, EHS addresses are not generally reissued, which is why interviewers are required to make so many calls at each address.
- 3.26 However, in 2012-13, below-target response in Quarter 1 meant that soft refusals and non-contacts were reissued: 957 cases in Wave 1 and 1,004 in Wave 2. Around three quarters of the cases that were reissued had refused or had a broken appointment at the first issue, and 20% had been non-contacts. The reissues were carried out by a different interviewer to the one who did the

- first issue. Fieldwork for these reissues took place between 25 June and 22 July 2012. The impact that reissuing had on the response rate is discussed in more detail in the following chapter.
- 3.27 Due to below target response rates, an incentive was introduced in Quarter 3. From Quarter 3 onwards, all participating households were given a £10 gift card at the end of the interview. The impact of introducing an incentive on response rates is provided in the following chapter.

Surveyor appointments

- 3.28 Interviewers were also responsible for gaining consent from those households eligible for the physical survey. The approach to making appointments is kept under close review in order to maximise the consent rate. Information about the appointment times/preferences is transferred from NatCen Social Research to a secure CADS Housing Surveys website and CADS Helpline staff assist in changing and confirming arrangements between the surveyors and respondents for the physical inspection.
- 3.29 Interviewers were asked to make a firm, timed appointment wherever possible using information about the surveyor's availability. The interviewers were provided with a list of dates and 59-minute 'slots' when their surveyor had indicated they were available. This information was built in to the CAPI interview programme. Surveyors were also able to provide daily notes about each of their available days and overarching notes about their general availability and preferences for working. These notes were also displayed on the interviewers' laptop.
- 3.30 In 2012-13, interviewers were provided with more up-to-date information regarding the availability of the surveyor they were working with to undertake the follow-up physical survey. The surveyor's availability was updated each night during fieldwork. Interviewers obtained current availability, plus details of any existing appointments allocated to their surveyor, each time they connected with NatCen Social Research's servers, which they were instructed to do before starting work and when finishing work each day. Interviewers and surveyors were also provided with reciprocal contact details so that they could discuss work patterns and scheduling preferences if necessary.
- 3.31 As part of their training, interviewers were briefed on how to explain the physical survey to respondents and arrange the appointment for the surveyor to visit. Interviewer training included:
 - the surveyor fieldwork periods
 - transfer of information about appointments between CADS and NatCen
 - how to make appointments and what to take into account when making them
 - how to gain agreement from respondents for the physical survey

a practice of the booking appointment section of the CAPI

Interview survey data collection

- 3.32 The content of the interview survey is reviewed annually (see Chapter 2 for more detail). NatCen and DCLG thoroughly check all new and revised questions in the CAPI programme before the beginning of fieldwork including:
 - question and answer texts
 - all routing alternatives
 - textfills
 - soft and hard checks
- 3.33 The data for the first wave are also checked to ensure that the new/revised questions are working properly.
- 3.34 The data collection process for the interview survey is as follows:
 - interviewers conduct a computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI) with the household reference person (HRP) or their partner using a laptop
 - interviewers upload the survey data to NatCen
 - interviews are checked and edited where necessary by a team of editors; for example, if an interviewer makes a note in the CAPI that they are unsure how many bedrooms there are, the editor will check the note against the criteria for bedrooms and correct the answer if it is wrong
- 3.35 As part of the interview, private sector tenants are asked for permission to contact their landlord and to provide their landlord contact details. Those cases where this permission is given, and contacts can be successfully traced, form the sample for the EHS Private Landlords Survey (PLS). This survey with landlords and agents collects information on the size and composition of different groups of landlords, their property portfolio, why they are involved in renting, how they approach the maintenance and management of their properties, their future plans and their views on a range of issues within the private sector market.
- 3.36 The PLS was last conducted in 2010 based on landlord contact details collected in 2007-08 (by the EHCS) and in 2008-09 (by the EHS). Results were published on the DCLG website in 2011¹. Data are available for download from the UK Data Archive. A PLS was not conducted in 2012-13.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/private-landlords-survey-2010

although information on landlords was still collected to enable a PLS to be conducted at some point in the future.

Physical survey data collection

- 3.37 The data collection process for the physical survey is as follows:
 - surveyors conduct the survey using a digital pen, paper form and digital camera
 - the paper form features a series of small black dots (Anoto pattern) that
 can be read by a digital pen. Every page has a unique combination of
 dots with different positions. The pattern indicates the exact position of
 the digital pen as it writes across each page. During a survey the digital
 pen's inbuilt camera captures and stores digital snapshots of the pen
 marks across the Anoto pattern
 - surveyors upload the survey data to a dedicated website where it is displayed as a facsimile of each page, for the surveyor to check and correct electronically. An extensive series of validation checks on range, plausibility and consistency have been developed which enable the surveyor to validate their own survey before submitting it to their regional manager
 - photographs are added to the website
 - corrected data are submitted to their regional manager for final checking and, if necessary, returned to the surveyor for correction or clarification via the website
 - the checked data are forwarded to BRE by regional managers for consolidation with the EHS results
- 3.38 The subjective nature of some assessments required for the physical survey means that a degree of variability is inevitable between surveyors in some of their judgements. To minimise the impact that any one surveyor can have on the results of any one area or type of property an annual upper target of 65 is set on the number of surveys any one surveyor can complete. An additional restriction is set relating to work within any one region, such that no one surveyor should complete more than 45 full surveys in any region (a limit of 36 exists for the North East as fewer physical surveys are conducted in this area compared with other areas). These rules contribute to improving the statistical reliability of the survey and providing more robust measures of housing conditions below the national level. In 2012-13, each surveyor was restricted to carrying out a certain number of surveys in a region (i.e. 45 or 36). Prior to this, the restriction had been expressed as a percentage of the total surveys completed within that region (e.g. surveyor was only allowed to carry out 3% of the surveys in a region). This meant that the actual number of surveys they were allowed to do varied each year, and depended on the response in their region(s). The change of approach in 2012-13 made it easier to manage

- regional limits, as maximum numbers were fixed in advance at the start of the year.
- 3.39 Although not used in 2012-13, calibration workbooks have been used in previous years to detect any variability that arises from surveyors making different judgements given the same information. The next scheduled calibration exercise is due to be undertaken in 2014-15. More detail on how the calibration workbooks have informed previous waves of the survey can be found in the 2011-12 technical advice note on data quality, published on the DCLG website: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-housing-survey-technical-advice.
- 3.40 To further analyse the effects of systematic surveyor variability on the precision of estimates from the physical survey, a Surveyor Variability Study (SVS) is routinely undertaken. Last conducted in 2009-10, the study involved a call-back exercise in which 300 properties were re-surveyed by a second surveyor and the results were compared. The 2009-10 SVS found that, overall; there was a high level of agreement between surveyors' assessments of properties. The next scheduled SVS will take place during the 2014-15 survey year. More information can be found in the 2009-10 SVS summary report, published on the DCLG website:

 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-housing-survey-

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-housing-survey-technical-advice

Annex 3.1: Advance Letter





Dear Householder,

Help us understand housing in England today.

You've been selected to help us with the English Housing Survey.

This study gathers information on people's housing circumstances, and the energy efficiency of housing in England. It is being carried out by NatCen Social Research, Britain's largest independent research organisation, for the Department for Communities and Local Government

With your help, we can make sure that all groups in the community are properly represented, which is important.

An interviewer will call at your address soon. All of our interviewers carry identity cards with their photograph.

We'll keep your details in strict confidence, and findings of the study can't be traced back to you or your household in any way.

If you have any questions, please call us on Freephone 0800 652 4572 or visit www.natcen.ac.uk/participant-area.

As a thank you we will give you a £10 voucher when your household takes part in the study.

Thanks in advance for your participation - with your help we can get a better understanding of housing in England today and help shape future housing policy.

Yours sincerely

SAlleer

Sarah Allcock

Project Co-ordinator, English Housing Survey

Social Research that works for society

NatCen Social Research, Kings House, 101 – 135 Kings Road, Brentwood, Essex CM14 4LX Tel. 0800 652 4572
A Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England No.4392418. A Charity registered in England (1091768).

How did you choose my address?

We chose your address at random from the Postcode Address File. This file is held by the Post Office and is available to the public.

What will happen to any information I give?

We will treat information you give in strict confidence under the Data Protection Act 1998. Your information will be used by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Department of Energy and Climate Change for the production of statistics only.

For details of the English Housing Survey's Data Security Strategy, please see: www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-housing-survey-data-security-strategyand-arrangements.

Who is carrying out the study?

The Department for Communities and Local Government has asked NatCen Social Research to carry out the study.

What is the interview about?

The interview covers a range of housing topics including your housing circumstances, satisfaction with your accommodation and neighbourhood, and energy efficiency in your home.

How will my contribution help?

The anonymous statistics will be used by government to help develop housing and energy-related policies.

The statistics are also used outside of government. For example, housing organisations, such as the National Fair Housing Alliance, and charities, such as Age UK and Shelter, freely use the anonymous data.

Where can I spend my £10 voucher?

Your voucher is a £10 gift card which you can spend at a number of high street shops, such as Argos, Debenhams and Boots.

Annex 3.2: Leaflets

Interviewer (main survey) leaflet

The English Housing Survey

This leaflet answers some of the questions you may have about taking part in this study.



What is the English Housing Survey?

The English Housing Survey (EHS) is conducted by NatCen Social Research on behalf of the Departn for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), the department responsible for developing government housing policy in England.

The study is the main source of information on people's housing circumstances and the condition of housing in England. It collects up-to-date information from all types of households - whether they are wner-occupiers or rent from a local authority housing association, or private landlord. The EHS is conducted throughout the year across England.

All sectors of society are represented, ensuring that the study results reflect the population of the country.



Who are NatCen Social Research?

NatCen Social Research are an independent, nonprofit institute with a core team of over 150 research specialists and 1,200 interviewers. Last year we developed more than 75 social research reports for government, educational bodies, charities and

responsible businesses. At NatCen Social Research we believe our work has the power to make people's lives



Why does this study matter?

The study results are used by the government to assess how housing circumstances vary across the country and between different types of household.

This information helps to:

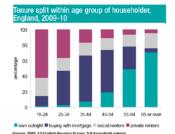
- · measure whether housing conditions are getting better or worse, and how satisfied people are with their home and neighbourhood;
- · understand whether housing is affordable, both for renters and private owners:
- · show whether the steps taken to improve energy efficiency and cut carbon emissions in both public and private housing are working; and
- target housing policies and resources. The study's results are used to ensure that funding is directed to the people and regions where it is most needed.

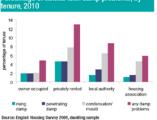
Nore information about the study is available from the DCLG web site:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-forcommunities-and-local-government/about/statistics

The study's results

The study's results are also used by housing associations, non-governmental organisations surveyors, universities and others. Here are two







Is the study confidential?

Yes, the information you give us will be treated as strictly confidential as directed by the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. It will be used by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and their counterparts in the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC), to produce anonymous statistics that will not identify you or anyone in your household. These anonymous statistics are analysed by government and other approved organisation such as universities, non-governmental organisations, and surveyors. For further details see DCLG's EHS Data Security Strategy on their website.



Why did we choose you?

As it is not possible to ask everyone to take part in the study, a selection of addresses is selected to represent the entire country. Your address is one of these and was selected at random from a list of postal addresses held by Royal Mail.

You are important for the study because the random sample will give a true cross-section of the community. We are interested in people from all age groups, all parts of the country, and all types of homes.

We cannot substitute another address for yours as this would bias the sample's results, so your contribution is very important to the study. By taking part you help us provide an accurate picture of how changes in the economy and government policy affect you and your

Contact us

If you have any queries about taking part in this study. ase call our freephone Survey Enquiry Line on 0800 652 4572.

Alternatively, you can write to:

NatCen Social Research Operations Department 101-135 Kings House Kings Road CM14 4LX

Thank you for your help.

To find out more about NatCen Social Research, visit our website: www.natcen.ac.uk/about-us



Department for Communities and Local Government

NatCen

Social Research that works for society

Interviewer leaflet_v4



Why your help is important

www.natcen.ac.uk

Physical Survey leaflet

The survey team comprises:



Department for Communities and Local Government

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is the government department that sponsors the EHS to collect information on changing trends in housing, the condition of the housing stock and the characteristics of households living in different types of housing. www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-andlocal-government/about/statistics

NatCen Social Research that works for society

NatCen Social Research are an independent, non-profit institute, working for government, educational bodies, charities and responsible businesses. NatCen Social Research are conducting the household interview part of the study. www.natcen.ac.uk



MMBL-CADS will be conducting the visual inspection of the property using professional surveyors qualified to assess housing conditions and energy efficiency.

www.cadesignservices.co.uk

Physical survey leaflet_v3

Your appointment with the surveyor is:		
Date:		
Time:		
Name of surveyor:		
EHS Helpline: 0845 389 0486		

Just over half of all households where an interview has taken place are randomly selected for a follow-up physical inspection by a surveyor

interview which was the first part of the

English Housing Survey (EHS) study. We

hope you will now agree to take part in

the second phase which consists of a

physical inspection of your property.

Thank you for taking part in the

We would like to arrange a convenient time when a qualified surveyor can visit your home. The interviewer has details of when surveyors are working in your



Who will conduct the physical inspection?

The EHS is conducted on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). DCLG have appointed MMBL-CADS to undertake the physical inspection. MMBL-CADS employ professional surveyors qualified to conduct the EHS assessments.



What is the purpose of the physical inspection?

During the interview you kindly told us about your housing circumstances and aspirations, and your views on your home and neighbourhood.

To supplement this information we also need a professional assessment of your home so that we can determine what types of household are living in the least energy efficient homes and how housing conditions vary between household

The chart below gives just one example of results available from the information collected by the EHS.



English Housing Survey, dwelling sample

What will the surveyor do?

Our surveyor will call at an agreed time that is convenient to you. On arrival the surveyor will introduce themselves and show you their identity card.

Their assessment will take about an hour and although most of this will be spent surveying the outside of the home, they

will ask to see all the rooms inside. The inspection is a visual one and will not involve any disruption to your home or



Do I have to take part in the physical inspection?

As with the interview, we rely upon voluntary co-operation, which is essential if our research is to be successful. Your home has been chosen at random to provide a balanced picture of all parts of the country and types of property and household. By taking part you help us to provide an accurate picture of housing in England



Should I let my landlord or freeholder know I am taking part?

There is no reason to inform your landlord or freeholder of your participation unless you want to. As the interviewer will have explained, all your responses at interview and the information collected at the physical will not be passed onto your landlord.



Will I get any feedback after the physical inspection?

While the EHS is designed to provide government with a reliable assessment of the energy efficiency and condition of the housing stock it is not as detailed as a survey that you would pay to have conducted yourself. We are not therefore able to provide any feedback on your home unless the surveyor identifies any issues which they consider to be an imminent risk to you or your family. In this situation they will alert you to the problem and advise you to take immediate action.



Is the physical inspection confidential?

The information collected at both the interview and physical inspection stages of the study is handled in the strictest confidence by DCLG, NatCen Social Research, and their appointed contractors as directed by the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. It will be used to produce statistics that will not identify you or anyone in your household. These anonymous statistics are analysed by government and other approved organisations, such as universities Non-Governmental Organisations, and surveyors.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this important national study





Users of the study leaflet





We gather information on a variety of topics, including buying aspirations, satisfaction with neighbourhood, mortgages and rents, and fire safety. Information on these topics is useful for many public bodies and interested parties, such as...

Housing Organisations

- National Fair Housing Alliance
- Chartered Institute for Environmental Health
- National Housing Federation
- Chartered Institute of Housing
- TSA: The Social Housing Regulator

Government and Councils e.g.

- Office for Disability Issues
- Child Poverty Unit
- Department for Energy and Climate Change
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- Local councils

Charities and Non-Governmental Organisations e.g.

- Shelter
- English Heritage
- Energy Saving Trust
- · Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Association for the Conservation of Energy
- Age UK

Universities e.g.

- · University College London
- Loughborough University
- Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Imperial College
- Sheffield Hallam University
- School of Real Estate & Planning, University of Reading

Also International Organisations, Design Consultancies, Surveyors and Engineers.

NatCen

Social Research that works for society

Users of the study leaflet_v2