



An introduction to mystery shopping

What is mystery shopping?

Mystery shopping is a form of market research where people are trained to test out the customer services of an organisation.

What do mystery shoppers do?

Mystery shoppers call, write or email into the organisation with everyday questions about our services, for example requesting a repair, getting a transfer or reporting anti-social behaviour. They monitor how long it took staff to answer the phone, how they were greeted and how professionally their request was handled, including if staff were polite and informative.

Mystery shoppers then report back to us what they found out and we work together to make recommendations for improvements if needed.

Why does my landlord want residents to do mystery shopping?

Who best to test our customer service than you, our customers?

We want to train residents as mystery shoppers so you can check that we are providing excellent customer services and if not, tell us how we can improve.

It will be a reality check to test whether we are doing what we say we will do in our policies and procedures.

Who can be a mystery shopper?

You have to be a customer of Somer Community Housing Trust or Redland Housing Association, that is, either a tenant, leaseholder, shared owner or an owner that pays the Trust or Redland for a service.

What happens to the information we receive from mystery shoppers?

The information is used to write a report for the management team and residents' committee and action will be taken to make things better.

Mystery shoppers are not identified; all information given is anonymous and does not identify individual members of staff.

How much time will it take?

You will need to be able to attend two training sessions which we will be running in early 2008. We offer support with transport, childcare and other care costs to enable you to attend and will aim to hold the training at a time to suit you.

We expect residents to take about 10 minutes to carry out each mystery shop and 20 minutes to fill out a form about the experience. We will give you written instructions to guide you through the mystery shop. The shops are normally done over a few days, making one mystery shop per day, so as not to attract attention.

What skills will I need?

You do not need any previous experience, but you will need to:

- be able to use the phone;
- be able to read and follow the questionnaire and fill it in clearly;
- be able to attend training sessions; and
- be able to listen accurately.

What benefits are there?

You will benefit from free training, support and experience, which could assist you in future work or volunteer roles.

You will receive £50 worth of shopping vouchers on completion of an agreed number of mystery shopping tasks.

You will be reimbursed for any expenses you incur such as telephone calls, travel expenses and care costs.

Mystery shopping will benefit all residents as it will provide evidence about customer services from the customer's point of view and be used to make improvements.

Will staff know that a mystery shop is taking place?

Staff will be aware that we intend to carry out mystery shopping, but they will not know when or by whom.