

NEW HOMES SURVEY FAQS FOR DEVELOPERS AND BUILDERS



Q1. How does the New Homes Survey work?

Every month, participating housebuilders submit details of all completions and corresponding new owner details to LABC Warranty.

From there, LABC Warranty sends out postal, email, or text message survey invitations to your home buyers eight weeks from the date of completion, depending on the data submitted, and according to any contact preferences.

Homebuilders can access the results via an online survey portal. The portal also includes a dashboard that gives a snapshot of feedback received, useful for benchmarking and reporting back to the business.

Q2. What is the Home Builders Federation (HBF)'s Star Rating scheme?

The HBF's Star Rating scheme was launched in 2005 and since then has become one of the largest new-home build satisfaction surveys of its kind in the UK.

As well as providing a key indicator of how well developers are performing, home builders often use their star rating to promote high levels of customer satisfaction to potential new buyers.

HBF member builders and developers who build at least 20 units a year can opt into the scheme by joining LABC Warranty's New Homes Survey.

Q3. Is the LABC Warranty New Homes Survey the same as the HBF Star Rating scheme?

Not quite! This is the LABC Warranty New Homes Survey. The results of this survey are used by the HBF to calculate your HBF Star Rating.

If you are an HBF member and you have requested to participate in the HBF Star Rating scheme, surveys are sent out to new homeowners eight weeks after the date of legal completion.

Q4. Where can I get a copy of the survey questionnaire?

Reference copies of the survey questionnaires are issued to all participating developers and are also available via your online portal. Further reference copies can be obtained from LABC Warranty at newhomessurvey@labcwarranty.co.uk. Reference copy questionnaires must not be given to homeowners to complete.

Q5. Where do the homeowners' names and contact details come from?

To participate in the LABC Warranty New Homes Survey, developers are required to send details of their home buyers to LABC Warranty.

This data is updated to reflect dates of exchange of contract and legal completion, together with any reservations that have fallen through.

Once a legal completion date is submitted, this date is used to send out the surveys. Data provided includes homeowner name, property address, date of legal completion, correspondence address, email address and data protection instruction.

Q6. What if a homeowner's email or correspondence address changes?

Any changes must be sent immediately using the supplied template to newhomessurvey@labcwarranty.co.uk. If possible, these changes will be made to ensure the survey is sent to the correct address but this cannot be guaranteed. It is imperative that the data is checked for accuracy before being submitted.

Q7. Are surveys sent out to all homeowners?

Surveys are sent to all new homeowners and occupiers of private sale new homes based on the data submitted. Surveys are sent to non-LABC Warranty homeowners as long as their contact details are provided as part of the builder data submission process.

Homeowners who have indicated to their builder that they wish to be excluded on data protection grounds will not be contacted, unless LABC Warranty has received a contradictory instruction. Homeowners who have advised LABC Warranty directly that they do not wish to be contacted will not be invited in any circumstances, even if permission has previously been given to their builder.

Q8. What happens if a customer wants to opt out of the survey?

Homeowners do not have to complete the survey. If they wish to stop further surveys being sent to them, they need to advise LABC Warranty who will update the survey database to remove them.

Q9. Can we add our own questions to the survey?

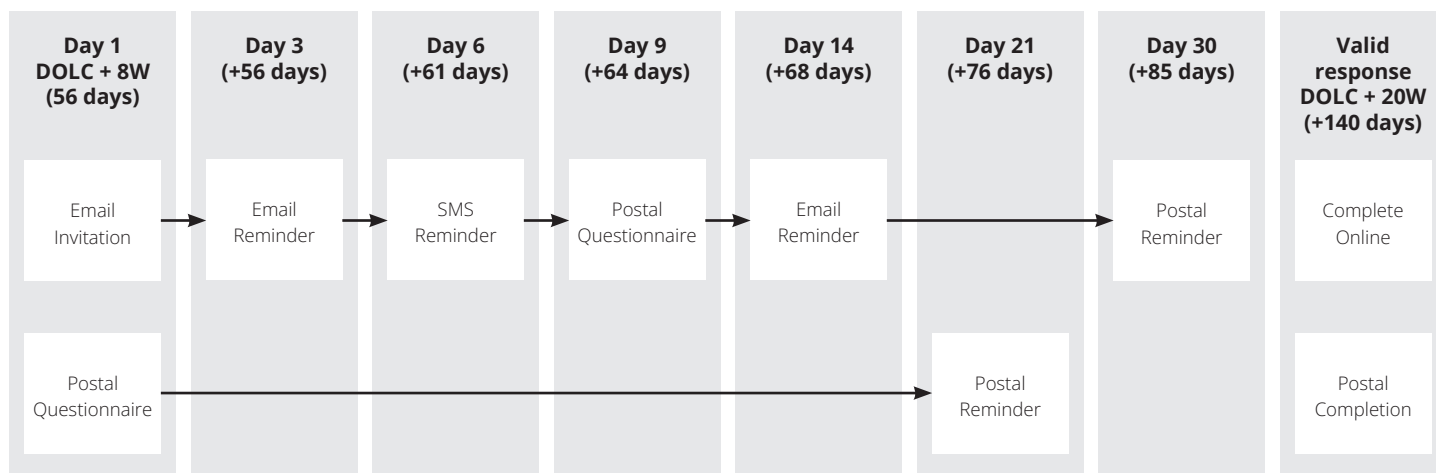
Yes, we can add additional questions to the survey. Please speak to your LABC Warranty Account Manager, or contact the LABC Warranty New Homes Survey team directly at newhomessurvey@labcwarranty.co.uk for more information, including costs.

Q10. How and when are surveys sent out?

Invitations are sent eight weeks after the date of legal completion, followed by reminders unless a survey is completed in the meantime.

If an email address is available, an email invitation is sent containing a link to complete the survey online, followed by reminders (email, SMS and/or postal) if a completed response is not received. If a mobile phone number is provided, an SMS reminder is sent containing a link to complete the survey online.

If only a postal address is available, a survey is posted to the property address (or correspondence address if provided) for the homeowner to complete and return, followed by a postal reminder.



Q11. How do homeowners complete the survey online?

If an email address is available at the point of invitation, LABC Warranty will send the homeowner an email containing an encrypted link to the online version of the survey.

If a mobile phone number is available at the point of invitation, LABC Warranty will send an SMS reminder for the eight-week survey with an encrypted link to complete the survey online.

If no response is received to the email or SMS, or if only a postal address is available, then a paper copy of the survey is posted to the homeowner. This postal invitation and questionnaire also contain unique details to enable them to access the online version of the survey, if they wish to respond online instead.

Q12. Can additional copies of the survey be sent out to homeowners?

No. The survey methodology states that to ensure consistency and integrity, the survey invitations are only to be sent out based on the agreed timescales.

If the homeowner has mislaid their survey they may contact LABC Warranty who will provide them with details to complete the survey online.

These details will only be sent to the homeowner via the mechanism used for their initial invitation(s) and only if within the valid response window. Homeowners requiring a large print version of the survey should contact LABC Warranty.

Q13. Does LABC Warranty provide incentives to homeowners to encourage them to complete the survey?

No. LABC Warranty values the importance of feedback and good response rates, and the best practice is to inform customers that this feedback channel exists, prior to their invitation.

However, in line with the Bribery Act 2010, builders must not incentivise or pressurise homeowners into completing the survey with potentially dishonest responses.

Surveys must not be completed by the builder on behalf of the homeowner, and to avoid the perception of influence, nor should the builder be present whilst the homeowner completes the survey. Homeowners should return the completed survey directly to LABC Warranty.

HBF is regularly updated regarding the survey results and any anomalies that may impact the results and the integrity of the survey may result in a builder being withdrawn from the survey, and their HBF Star Rating results becoming unavailable.

Q14. Should builders liaise with homeowners regarding the completion of the survey?

No. LABC Warranty should be the sole party communicating with the homeowner about the survey during the 8-20 weeks following legal completion.

Builders can make homeowners aware that an invitation will be sent out by LABC Warranty but should not discuss or seek to influence the homeowners' response (refer also to Q13).

However, before LABC Warranty starts the invitation process, we are happy for you to make homeowners aware that they may be invited to complete a survey, subject to their contact details being appropriately provided and any relevant data protection instructions.

Q15. Can you tell me who has been invited to complete the survey?

No. This detailed information is not made available but survey volumes sent can be viewed in the online reports by year, quarter or month at group, subsidiary and site level in the online customer portal.

The invitation and reminder process is handled by LABC Warranty in accordance with the defined survey methodology and as detailed above. The invitation data is obtained from two sources (please refer to Q5), and screened using the data protection information provided by the builder and also that held by LABC Warranty.

Some homeowners do choose to opt out of receiving correspondence from LABC Warranty such as customer satisfaction surveys, meaning that builders may not see invitations being sent for all their legal completions.

Q16. Do homeowners need to return/complete the survey within a certain timescale?

Yes. To have their feedback included in the aggregate scores, homeowners need to complete and return their survey within a certain timescale. The response window is 20 weeks from the legal completion date. Surveys received after these dates will be treated as "invalid" with only the response rate statistics updated. It is possible to view the details of invalid responses via the online reports. (See also Q.22)

Q17. Can you tell me who has responded to the survey?

In some cases. We are unable to confirm on an individual homeowner/policy basis if a completed survey has or hasn't been received.

However, where a homeowner has responded to the survey and advised that they are happy for the details of their individual response to be shared with the builder, this information will be made available in the online report.

For homeowners who respond and choose to keep their identity private, the details of their response will be made available to builders but not information that would enable you to link their identity with the response.

Q18. Can you tell me which site a response relates to if a homeowner has indicated that they do not want their identity shared?

Yes, you will be able to see the site details under both shared and hidden responses. Automatic email alerts can also be set up in order for you to receive details each time a positive or negative response is received to the "would you recommend" question. This will include the site details but nothing to indicate which plot or policy number the response relates to.

Q19. Can you tell me who has yet to respond to the New Homes Survey?

No. Homeowners may choose whether or not to complete the survey and LABC Warranty does not provide builders with details of persons who choose not to respond in order to avoid homeowners potentially being unduly pressured to complete the survey (which would also fall outside of the defined invitation and reminder process common to all participating builders - see Q10 for details of invitation and reminder timings).

Although a gap analysis between 'known completions' and 'shared identity' is possible; if an individual response isn't available to view, it cannot be assumed that the homeowner hasn't yet completed the survey (or that they haven't been invited), they may have completed the survey and wished their identity to be anonymous.

Q20. Why hasn't a certain homeowner received a survey?

Please refer to other questions in this document which should explain why a certain homeowner has not been selected to participate in the survey or why you are unable to view their response.

If you feel that there may be a systemic issue that requires further investigation, please raise this with your company's group or head office representative who will liaise with LABC Warranty. We will initiate a formal investigation if appropriate.

Q21. What if the homeowner owns and resides at the property but is away for five or more months (e.g. armed forces) and is therefore unable to complete the survey within the valid response window?

The timings of invitations and the valid response period for the industry-wide survey are defined by the survey methodology and to ensure consistency there are no exceptions.

Q22. What is an invalid response?

A completed survey can be classed as invalid for any of the following reasons:

- returned too late (completed outside of the valid response window)
- returned blank (all standard survey questions unanswered)
- completed by a "tenant", "shared owner" or "investor" (owner but not living at the address shown)
- a returned questionnaire is not in the original format sent by LABC WARRANTY (i.e. the document received is a photocopy/fax copy of the original or a 'reference copy')
- a survey response already been received – first response only is recorded

All invalid responses will be excluded from the aggregate scores shown in the reports.

Q23. Can homeowners request to amend their answers or retract their entire survey?

No. Once a completed survey is received by LABC Warranty the results will not be amended or retracted.

If a homeowner advises LABC Warranty after completing the survey that they incorrectly provided consent to share their identity, this cannot be amended.

Q24. When is the survey year?

The HBF Star Rating survey year runs from 1 October to 30 September the following year, based on the date of legal completion (not the date a homeowner submits any feedback).

You can join LABC Warranty's New Homes Survey at any time but HBF Star Rating will be calculated using 12 months of data from 1 October to 30 September.

Q25. When are the results announced?

For HBF members only, at the end of the survey year (once the period for receiving valid questionnaires has passed) LABC Warranty provides the results of the "would you recommend" question from the eight-week survey to HBF to enable them to calculate the results for their star rating scheme members (HBF are also provided with summary industry-level statistics).

LABC Warranty is able to provide access to all participating builders to view their New Homes Survey results via online reports. The online reports contain live data that is updated each time a survey is returned.

The reports available show responses by site, detail individual responses if the homeowner has given their permission for this, and also provide an insight into factors affecting whether someone would recommend you. Please contact LABC Warranty for further details.

Q26. What is the expected response rate?

Response rates vary and can be influenced by the quality of the information LABC Warranty has been provided. Response rates are available to view via the LABC Warranty online dashboard.

Q27. We already participate in the HBF Star Rating scheme. Can we participate through LABC Warranty as well?

All surveys have to be submitted via one survey/warranty provider. You are able to switch providers if this is done before the start of the HBF Survey year (1st October). Your sites do not need to be registered with LABC Warranty for homeowners on those sites to participate in the LABC Warranty New Homes Survey, and therefore in the HBF Star Rating scheme.

Q28. Where can I find further information about the LABC Warranty New Homes Survey reports that are available?

Please speak to your LABC Warranty Account Manager or contact LABC Warranty at newhomessurvey@labcwarranty.co.uk.