



## PILOTING

### **WHAT IS PILOTING?**

Piloting is an exercise carried out to test your consultation to make sure it works before you carry it out for real. A pilot usually involves getting a small number of people to participate in a test consultation under the same conditions as the real survey will be carried out. The people who take part in the consultation are asked to highlight any problems that they notice. This can include the following:

- Poor wording of questions
- Spelling mistakes
- Questions not making sense.
- Questions not being clear about how you should answer them.
- Faults in the software (if using online equipment)
- Poor questions – don't provide the answer you were after.
- Lack of or poor quality instructions on how to take part.

Piloting is often used for consultations that use written information (e.g. postal & telephone questionnaires) but this does not mean that other types of consultation should not be piloted as long as it is practical to do so.

### **WHY SHOULD I PILOT?**

No matter how diligent you are it is likely that you will have missed something in planning your consultation. Therefore, piloting your consultation is essential because it can save time, money and effort. A pilot can also throw up things that simply could not be predicted.

An effective pilot will show up any problems and give you the chance to correct them. If you do not pilot and there are problems with the full (live) consultation then you risk your consultation failing and your responses being invalid.



## **WHEN SHOULD I PILOT?**

There is no specific time to carry out a pilot. It will mostly be down to your own timescales but it should be as early as possible. If you leave it for too long and it does identify problems you might find yourself in a position where there isn't time to make the changes or you have to postpone the consultation.

