Ofwat and CCW | Customer experiences of sewage flooding events/incidents

Workshop discussion guide | FINAL | 17.02.22

Objectives

- To further explore what good and bad practice looks like in water company's responses to sewage flooding events/incidents and the extent to which customer expectations were met during their experiences.
- To understand how water companies' customer service could be improved for those experiencing a sewage flooding event/incident, at each stage of the experience (start, during, resolution) as well as for customers in different circumstances (vulnerable, moving house, multiple events).
- To explore perceptions towards the current guaranteed standards relating to sewage flooding (internal and external) and identify areas for improvement.

The purpose of this document is to serve as a guide to inform the flow of the discussions, rather than a definitive list of questions to cover. As these are qualitative sessions, the moderator will use the guide flexibly and be guided by what comes out of the discussions.

Moderator instructions are *italicised*

Questions in **bold** should always be asked (whilst others should be optional to help guide the conversation)

Section and aim	Key questions and probes	Time	Total
Onboarding *To ensure a timely start to the workshop*	*Share screen: 'Thanks for joining' slide* *All participants to be asked to join the event 10 minutes before it starts, to allow BritainThinks to address any technical issues. If all is working fine, participants can go and get a cup of tea / come back 5 mins before we start.* *Stop screen sharing*	-	-

| Introduction and welcome

To ensure everyone is on the same page about the purpose of the workshop, who is involved, and ground rules for the session | Hello, and thank you all for joining this evening. Everyone here today has already taken part in this research through an interview, and some of you may have met me before, but for those who haven't my name is [XXX] and I'm a researcher from BritainThinks, an independent research agency.

Share screen: Who is this research for?

As you know, we are conducting this research on behalf of Ofwat, the Water Services Regulation Authority and The Consumer Council for Water (CCW). Ofwat is the regulator for water services in England and Wales – overseeing water company performance to protect the interests of consumers, society and the environment. CCW is the independent voice for water consumers in England and Wales. They help consumers resolve complaints against their water company and use research to champion the interests of consumers.

As applicable: There are a couple of people joining us from Ofwat/CCW – they are just here to listen in, they will leave their camera and mic off the whole time. Please feel free to forget they are here!

Stop screen sharing

Everyone here has experienced a (Moderator to read below as applicable)

• Single instance of sewer flooding, inside their home
• Single instance of sewer flooding, outside their home
• Multiple instances of sewer flooding, inside their home
• Multiple instances of sewer flooding, outside their home

We've spoken to all of you about your personal experiences of these incidents. Today, we want to move on to thinking about **what water companies should be doing to support customers such as yourselves who experience a sewage flooding event or incident.** We will be asking you to draw on your own experiences to think about anything that was good about the service you received, what was bad as well as any key areas for improvement.

Share screen: 'Ground rules' slide

Explain terms of the session:

• The research findings will be anonymised and treated with total confidence. | 10 | 10 |

	• The only exception to this is if you say something that gives me reason to think you or someone else is at risk of harm. In the unlikely event that this happens, we may be legally obliged to pass this information on to the relevant authorities. • You can opt out of the research at any time. • We'll be talking for 120 minutes – finishing up at 8pm. • Incentives will be paid by bank transfer after the session. *Stop screen sharing* • *Obtain permission to audio record the research session and recap how the recording will be used (i.e. by BritainThinks for internal analysis purposes only).* • *Offer participants the opportunity to ask questions about the session.* • *Explain key tools of the online platform, and ensure comprehension across the group, including mute button and 'chat' messaging function* *Share screen: 'Introductions' slide* **To start off, it would be great to get an introduction to everyone. Please can you tell us:** • Your name • Where you live • Something you like about your home *Stop screen sharing*		
Summary of findings, and reflections *To bring participants to a similar starting point for thinking in-*	Over the last couple of weeks, we've spoken to 50 people from around England and Wales who have experienced a sewage flooding event/incident – be it inside or outside their home, just once or multiple times. I would like to start the session off by walking you through what we've heard so far. Please note that these findings are not exhaustive or in-depth at this stage, they are just a summary of some of the key things we've heard. *Share screen: 'What we've learned so far' slides* • Moderator to talk through running slides	10	20

depth on sewage flooding responses	Share screen: 'Summary of our findings' slide		
	Using the chat function, please can you tell us which, if any, of these statements best reflects your experience of sewage flooding?		
	• Why did you choose this statement? *Moderator to choose 1-2 people to say why, and ask others to share any thoughts in the chat.* • Is there anything here that doesn't align with your own experiences or feel true/accurate? Why? • Is there anything that you would add to these key findings?		
	Stop screen sharing		
	We're now going to be spending the rest of the session talking about how water companies can better serve their customers who have suffered from a flooding event or incident. I'd like to get your initial thoughts on this before we go into more detail.		
	Using the chat function again, what would you say are the three most important things that a water company should do for someone experiencing a sewage flooding event/incident such as yours? Please think about anything your water company did well as well as what, if anything, they could have done better.		
Requirements by **journey stage** *To understand customer's requirements of water companies at each stage of the journey*	I would now like to discuss in detail the different stages of experiencing a sewage flooding event/incident, to understand what you think water companies should be doing to support customers at each stage.	60	80
	Share screen: Overview of journey stages		
	On the screen is an overview of the different stages that a customer might go through when experiencing a sewage flooding event/incident. *Moderator to read detail on slide.*		
	We are going to look at each of these in detail, but first I would like to know if this feels right to you? To what extent does this reflect your experience?		
	• *Moderator to note down if another stage is required for discussion*		
	Share screen: Individual journey stage		

Moderator to move through different stages of the journey and ask the following question set each time:

- **In an ideal world, what would happen at this stage?**
  - What should the water company do?
    - What actions should they take? How would they go about taking this action? ***Moderator to fully probe to understand both actions that the water company should take, as well as how they deliver the service (e.g., response time and communication)***
  - Would anyone else be involved? If yes, what would they do?
- **Next, what would be the minimum** <u>acceptable</u> **response from your water company at this stage?** In other words, they're not going 'above and beyond' but providing a sufficient response nonetheless. *Moderator to probe to understand actions that the water company should take, as well as how they deliver the service*
- **What is the impact of each of these actions for the customer?**
  - *Moderator to explore how the proposed actions address the physical vs. emotional impacts of the event/incident.*
- **What would the customer's role be?**
  - What actions, if any, should they take? *Moderator probe to understand role customer should be expected to take, any key actions they should take*
- **How does this 'ideal world' compare to your experience?**
  - What, if anything, is the same?
  - What, if anything, is different?
  - *Moderator to use this reflection on their own experiences to prompt any further ideas about what would ideally happen at this stage of the journey*
- *For resolution section:*
  - Imagine the solution is something that is large scale i.e. needs significant infrastructure changes. How would you expect a water company to manage this scenario?
  - Imagine the solution is isolated to one property and there is considered 'low priority' for the water company, meaning it could be several years before it is fixed. How would you expect a water company to manage this scenario?
- Once all stages have been discussed:

	o Which stage / what aspect do you feel is the most important for water companies to get right? Why? *Stop screen sharing*		

Requirements by **customer type and situation**. *To understand variation in requirements due to individual circumstances*	I want to discuss what factors water companies should consider in their response to sewage flooding in a bit more depth.
	
	 • *Share screen.* 3 of 6 to be discussed per workshop, in rotation.
	
	 Case study 1: Parent(s) of young children. Single incident, internal.
	
	 Case study 2: House owner, who was not told about sewage flooding history of the property. Live alone. Multiple incidents, external.
	
	 Case study 3: Someone with a disability. Lives with partner. Single incident, internal.
	
	 Case study 4: Social housing renter. Lives alone. Multiple incidents, external.
	
	 Case study 5: A pensioner who lives alone. Single incident, internal.
	
	 Case study 6: A group of flatmates in their 20s. Multiple incidents, external.
	
	 For each case study, moderator to ask:
	
	 • **How, if at all, do you think the circumstances described here will impact [case study person's] experience of sewage flooding?**
	   o Why?
	   o *Moderator to listen out for / probe on practical and emotional consequences, and if these are more or less because of circumstances.*
	
	 • **How, if at all, do you think these circumstances should be taken into account by the water company when *responding* to any sewage flooding incident?**
	   o Why?
		15	95

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       ○ *Moderator to listen out for / probe on immediate response to sewage flooding, and longer-term response (e.g., preventative measures).*

- **How, if at all, should the water company take these circumstances into account if the sewage flooding instead happened:**
  - ○ *Moderator to ask as appropriate*
  - ○ **Once / multiple times?**
  - ○ **Inside their home / outside their home?**

Share screen: Summary case study slide

- **I want you to imagine that all three of these customers are experiencing sewage flooding at the same time. They all share the same water company, and call for help at the same time. Using the chat function, please can you tell me:**
  - ○ **Who, if any, should be prioritised?**
  - ○ **How, if at all, should the service they receive differ?**
  - ○ [*Moderator to probe*] Why?

Stop screen sharing

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Exploring compensation

To understand customers' starting point awareness of payments, and what their ideal would be

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In the final section of our discussion today, I want to explore what is in place currently to address the financial impact of sewage flooding,.

Firstly, using the chat function, please can you tell me if you think water companies *should* or *should not* offer any payments or compensation to customers experiencing flooding events?

- In what circumstances should customers be offered payments or compensation? And in what circumstances should they not?
- What payment or compensation should be offered? *i.e. reimbursement for property damage, pay out for emotional impact, impact on insurance premiums / issues in securing insurance etc*
- How should this payment or compensation amount be determined?

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There currently are minimum guidelines for water companies to follow on making a payment to customers following a sewage flooding incident. These are called the Guaranteed Standards Scheme.

- **Before today, were you aware of these guidelines?** If yes, how so?
- **Did you receive the pay-out referenced on these guidelines?**

Moderator to read through slide

- Using the chat function, please can you summarise for me (in a few words or one sentence) your initial thoughts about these payment guidelines?
    - *Moderator to probe why, briefly exploring any differences/similarities between their experiences*
- **What, if anything, do you think is good about these?**
- **What, if anything, do you think is bad about these or needs improvement?**
    - *Moderator to probe on why and record*
- **What, if anything, do you think is missing? What else could be included?**
    - *Moderator probe on payment and other aspects such as response times, clean up, number / frequency of problems (i.e. penalties if the company does not fix the problem)*

How would you *improve* the payment guidelines for customers who experience sewage flooding?

- Moderator to listen out for / probe on:
    - What minimum amount would be paid, and factors used to determine this (e.g., severity, type, customer circumstances, etc)
    - **How, if at all, do you think payment needs to reflect practicalities (i.e.., covering costs of experiencing the sewage flooding)?**
    - **How, if at all, do you think payment needs to reflect the emotional impact (i.e., immediate distress and long-term concern of sewage flooding)?**
    - Whether factors such as exceptional weather should factor into compensation, and in what way

	For external events: if section is covered within the time, show guidelines for internal flooding and get high level feedback, prompting on how they would feel if they experienced an internal event		
Wrap-up and close	I want to finish up by asking one final question about what water companies do in response to sewage flooding. Using the chat function, please can you tell me: • **What are the three key things water companies should do better response to sewage flooding?** o What one thing should water companies *not* do in response to sewage flooding? *Thank participants for their time and let them know that incentives will be processed soon.*	-	-