



## Ofwat/CCW Discussion Guide

### FIELDWORK SUMMARY

- 7-day online community
- 60 participants
- 20-30 min activity each day

### BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES FOR MODERATOR ONLY

In 2019 Ofwat set out its strategy *Time to act, together*, which highlighted both the challenges and opportunities facing the water sector. Since then, conditions have if anything become more difficult, yet the basic needs of customers' expectations have not changed: for a reliable supply of service at affordable prices; support for those on low incomes or vulnerable situations; continued improvements to the environment; a collaborative approach to integrating customer feedback.

Ofwat is working with The Consumer Council for Water (CCW) on a programme to deliver a new customer licence condition which is clearer for water/wastewater companies and their customers, reflects customers' needs, and offers companies the flexibility to innovate in their delivery.

This project forms part of that programme and needs to provide customer insight to support the programme.

Specifically, the research needs to deliver insight into:

- Customer expectations of water/wastewater companies in relation to customer service and support
- Views on what principles the new licence condition should include
- Views on the accompanying guidance and how this should work
- How customers want water/wastewater companies to work with people in vulnerable circumstances

### PRE-TASK – SENT TO PARTICIPANTS IN ADVANCE

Before we start the online community, we'd like you to have a think about any times that you've contacted, or been contacted, by your water company in the last few months – if at all.

We're not thinking about regular communications like when they send you a bill, but if you've needed to contact them with a question or problem, or if they have contacted you about something other than a bill (e.g. to tell you that there's a problem or that they are doing works in your area).

In addition, can you think about:

1. What types of things would you contact your water company about?
2. When would you expect them to contact you?

If you have been in contact with your water company in the last few months, can you tell us:

1. What went well about this contact, if anything, and why (e.g. was the service quick, easy to contact, friendly etc.)?
2. What could have gone better about it, if anything, and why (e.g. difficult to get hold of, time-consuming, lots of steps etc.)?



We'll ask you to share your answers to these questions on Day 1 of the online community.

For future customers: amend to any utility provider inc. mobile phone contract.

## **Homepage - Instructions for taking part**

### **Welcome to the Community!**

We're [MODERATORS ON THE COMMUNITY] and we work for Walnut Unlimited, an independent research agency. We're delighted you could join us as part of this community for the next 7 days and thank you so much for agreeing to take part.

Over the course of our 7 days, we'd like to understand a bit about you, what is important to you in when it comes to your utilities. Each day, we'll be posting some questions for you to answer and some exciting tasks for you to complete. It should take around 20 - 30 mins each day and you can do them throughout the day!

Most importantly, it's all about you and your thoughts and feelings. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers – we are keen to understand your true views and experiences. We will be reading your answers and might ask you for a little more detail to understand more from you in some situations.

Just to remind you, if you post a video as part of this online community, we may use clips of this as part of our reporting, which may be published (e.g. on the internet on the Ofwat/CCW website, or in print). You are free to withdraw your consent for your videos to be used in this way until the report is published.

If you have any questions or are unsure about anything, please email Ferdousey at [ferdousey.basit@walnutunlimited.com](mailto:ferdousey.basit@walnutunlimited.com) or Katie at [katie.battersby@walnutunlimited.com](mailto:katie.battersby@walnutunlimited.com). You can also message us via the community and we'll be happy to help. There is an envelope icon in the top right-hand corner of the community for direct messaging.

[WELCOME VIDEO FROM MEMBERS OF THE WALNUT MODERATION TEAM, FOLLOWING THE SAME FORMAT AS TASK 1].

### **Welcome from Ofwat and CCW**

We're carrying out this research on behalf of Ofwat and CCW. Ofwat is the public body that regulates water and wastewater companies, and CCW is the independent body which represents the water customers.

They have shared a short video introducing themselves and telling you a little bit about the research. Please have a watch...

*Example text... Hello and welcome to this research. We are [NAMES] and we work for Ofwat/CCW. It's our job to make sure that water companies are giving great service to their customers.*

*Of course, this means that they have to provide clean water, dispose of wastewater, and give you clear and reasonable bills.*

*But on top of this, water companies need to communicate with you at the right times and in the right ways, they need to deal with problems when they happen, and they need to make sure they are meeting the needs of all the different customers that they have. That's what this project is about.*

*To make sure that water companies are doing all this in the best way for their customers, it's really important that we hear from you so that your views are a part of the conversation. We're really looking forward to hearing what you have to say in this research. Thanks so much for taking part!*

## COMMUNITY MODERATION

### DAY 1

#### Task 1 - About you

Let's start by hearing all about you. We would like you to upload a short video (1-2 mins) to introduce yourself:

- Say your first name, where you live, and who you live with (this could be friends, family, pets, or you might live by yourself)
- How do you fill your days? That could be working, volunteering, raising a family, or something else!
- And finally, how would your friends describe you in three words?

[OPTION TO WRITE IN A SHORT PARAGRAPH IF NOT COMFORTABLE WITH THE VIDEO]

#### Task 2 – Share your pre-task!

Let's recap! We'd like you to share with us your pre-task.

- What types of things would you contact your water company about?
- When would you expect them to contact you?

If you have been in contact with your water company in the last few months, can you tell us:

- What happened? What were you in contact about? Tell us as much detail as possible
- What went well about this contact, if anything?
- What could have gone better about it, if anything?
- To what extent do you feel that the water company dealt with your contact with them *appropriately*? By this we mean how you think you should be treated by your water company.
  - What does it mean for a water company to treat its customers 'appropriately' – what do you expect from them?

#### Task 3 – How is your water company doing?

Thanks for that! Now, before we go into lots of detail over the next few days, we'd just like to find out how your water company is doing. If you have two suppliers (one for water, one for wastewater), then just pick the most relevant one and tell us about them.

- How would you rate your water (or wastewater) company on these factors? (Very good, quite good, neutral, quite poor, very poor, not applicable)
  - Quality of water they provide to your property
  - Reliability of water supply
  - Removing wastewater and sewage from your property
  - Fixing problems when things go wrong
  - Dealing with billing and bills
  - Customer service
- For each: Why did you say that? Can you give us an example?

#### Task 4 – Let’s do a quiz!

As the final task on day one, we thought it may be fun to have a short quiz to see how much you know about water in England and Wales. This is just for fun so no need to think too much about it. We’ll show you the answers on the next screen and see if anything was surprising. (Correct answers highlighted and links below to more info.)

- How much water does an average person use in a day? (25l / **145l** / 350l)<sup>1</sup>
- What's the rainiest place in England and Wales? (London / **Snowdonia** / Manchester)<sup>2</sup>
- How many miles of water pipes are there in England and Wales? (25000 / 150000 / **215,000** - enough to go around the equator 8 times!)<sup>3</sup>
- What percentage of people in England and Wales turn off the tap when they brush their teeth? (10% / **65%** / 90%)<sup>4</sup>
- What’s the biggest ‘fatberg’ ever discovered in England and Wales? (A fatberg is a giant blockage in sewers made up of non-biodegradable substances like wet-wipes, fat, oil and grease.) (10t / **300t** / 1000t)<sup>5</sup>
- How many water companies are there in England and Wales? (2 / 8 / **17**)<sup>6</sup>

Next page:

- Here are the correct answers [ADD SOME INTERESTING ADDITIONAL FACTS FOR FLAVOUR]. How did you do? Was anything surprising?

Prompt: That’s all for Day 1! Thank you so much for your responses today, we look forward to welcoming you back tomorrow for Day 2 😊.

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<sup>1</sup> chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/reports/AtHomewithWater%287%29.pdf

<sup>2</sup> https://www.yourweather.co.uk/news/trending/where-is-the-wettest-place-in-the-uk-weather-rain.html#:~:text=That%20achievement%20goes%20to%20the,wettest%20place%20in%20the%20UK.

<sup>3</sup> https://piperepair.co.uk/2020/12/09/water-supply-in-the-uk-5-facts-about-our-water-and-the-network-behind-it/#:~:text=Water%20reaches%20our%20homes%20through,to%20the%20moon%20and%20back.

<sup>4</sup> https://www.water.org.uk/news-item/vast-majority-of-brits-have-no-idea-how-much-water-they-use-each-day/#:~:text=63%25%20of%20UK%20adults%20say,when%20they%20brush%20their%20teeth

<sup>5</sup> https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fatberg

<sup>6</sup> https://www.ofwat.gov.uk/households/your-water-company/contact-companies/



## DAY 2

Welcome back for day 2 of the community!

### Task 1 – Share with us your best stories!

Yesterday we asked you about your water company, and you told us about some of the great or not-so-great things that they are doing.

Now we'd like to focus specifically on *customer service* – that means how well your water company deals with you when they contact you or when you contact them.

And today we'd like to hear not just about your water company, but *all utility companies* that you use – including gas and electricity, broadband, and your mobile phone provider (if you have one).

- Thinking about your broadband or mobile provider, tell us about the best examples of customer service you have had? This could be a company that's really easy to get hold of, one that gives you all the right information at the right time, contacts you in a way that suits you, fixes problems quickly, or something else. What made the customer service so good?
- Thinking about energy provider(s) (gas and electric), tell us about the best examples of customer service you have had? This could be a company that's really easy to get hold of, one that gives you all the right information at the right time, contacts you in a way that suits you, fixes problems quickly, or something else. What made the customer service so good?

OPTION TO SUBMIT THESE ANSWERS AS TEXT OR VIDEO UPLOAD.

### Task 2 – Tell us about poor customer service that you've had!

Now we'd like to hear some of your bad experiences!

- Thinking about your broadband or mobile provider, tell us about a time when you received poor customer service. This could be a company that's really difficult to get hold of, that never gives you the right information, doesn't fix problems quickly, or that doesn't tell you important information at the right time. What made the communication so bad?
- And thinking about your energy provider(s) (gas and electric), tell us about a time when you received poor customer service. This could be a company that's really difficult to get hold of, that never gives you the right information, doesn't fix problems quickly, or that doesn't tell you important information at the right time. What made the communication so bad?

OPTION TO SUBMIT THESE ANSWERS AS TEXT OR VIDEO UPLOAD.

### Task 3 – what does this mean for water companies?

Okay, you've talked about the types of things that you might be in touch with your water company about, and told us about the great (and not so great!) examples from utility providers.

For the last task today, we'd like to hear what 'great customer service' would be like for you when it comes to water companies.

- What should water companies do to make sure that you have great customer service from them?
- What should they *not* do?

### OPEN DISCUSSION BOARD

Throughout the online community, we’re inviting you to take part in some extra discussions to share your views and experiences with other community members. These will be open throughout the week. Feel free to take part in these as much or as little as you want, depending on what interests you.

*Thread 1: What, if anything, do you do to save water at home? What are your top tips for other members of the community?*

That’s all for Day 2! Thank you again for your input today, we’ve really enjoyed learning from your experiences. We’ll see you again tomorrow for Day 3!

### DAY 3

Welcome back to day 3. Today, we’ll be sharing lots of information with you and we’re not expecting you to tell us very much back – this is just about setting the scene for the next few days of the community. There is a lot to take in, so sit back and enjoy.

#### Task 1.1 – What do water companies do?

Most people don’t think too much about the water they drink. You turn on the tap, and out comes what seems like a never-ending supply of clean, safe water. Water companies are responsible for making this happen, but they also have other responsibilities that you may not have considered. Have a look at this information.

SCRIPTING NOTE: SHOW BOLD TEXT FROM BELOW, AND HAVE A LINK TO SEE MORE DETAIL IF NEEDED (THE BULLETS BELOW THE BOLD TEXT).

What do water companies do?		
<p><b>Provide clean drinking water to your home</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ collect and store water from rainfall, rivers, lakes and reservoirs</li> <li>▪ make sure this water is safe to drink by cleaning and treating it</li> <li>▪ supply it to homes and businesses through pipes</li> <li>▪ provide bottled water to customers if an incident means there is no water coming out of taps</li> </ul>	<p><b>Deal with wastewater – everything that does down the sink or toilet in your house and the rainwater which falls on properties and roads</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ collect wastewater through sewers and transfer it to treatment plants</li> <li>▪ treat wastewater to make it safe, and release it back into the environment safely</li> <li>▪ respond to incidents such as sewage flooding homes or gardens</li> </ul>	<p><b>Maintain and invest in the infrastructure that supports the water and sewerage systems</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ fix and replace pipes</li> <li>▪ maintain and develop water and wastewater treatment works</li> <li>▪ keep sewers clear of blockages</li> <li>▪ look after sources of water such as reservoirs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Protect the environment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ conserve water and help customers to do the same</li> </ul>	<p><b>Billing and customer service</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ provide customers with accurate and timely bills and take payments</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ look after natural habitats of wildlife that live near or in water sources</li> <li>▪ minimise pollution incidents from untreated sewerage entering rivers or seas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ support those struggling to pay</li> <li>▪ provide customers with the information they need</li> <li>▪ respond to customer contacts about service problems</li> <li>▪ provide additional help with the way services are delivered where people need it</li> </ul>	
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Task 1.2 Most of the time, we might not need to have much contact with our water company. They provide water to our homes, and send regular bills. But why else might we be in touch. Have a look at this list below, and select all the ones that apply to you. [TABLE SPLIT IN TWO, AND ITEMS GROUPED UNDER HEADINGS – E.G. BILLING, INCIDENTS ETC.]

<b>Customers might contact their water company...</b>	<b>Water companies might contact customers about...</b>
<b>To change their address</b>	Changing to billing
<b>To check a bill</b>	Financial support that may be available
<b>To ask for financial assistance</b>	Planned works in the local area that may disrupt water supply
<b>Because they can't pay a bill</b>	An incident interrupting supply (e.g. burst pipe / leak)
<b>To report a leak</b>	An incident when water may not be safe to drink for a time
<b>If their water has been cut off for some reason</b>	Discoloured water
<b>To report sewage in their home or garden</b>	How to use less water
<b>To report discoloured water</b>	How their money is spent/invested
<b>To ask to go on a company's priority services register</b>	Support for the local area (e.g. supporting a local food bank)
<b>To report low water pressure</b>	Environmental initiatives
	A possible data breach and what to do

	Ways to get in touch with the water company
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## Task 2 – Who are Ofwat and CCW?

On Day 1 we told you that this research is being carried out on behalf of Ofwat and CCW, but who are these organisations and what do they do?

### Introduction to Ofwat

*Ofwat is the economic regulator of water and wastewater companies in England and Wales. Our role is to ensure water companies do the right thing: supporting customers and communities, improving the environment, and making sure our water supplies are secure for future generations. We work with governments, other regulators, water companies, communities and business to achieve the best possible outcome for water customers.*

### Introduction to CCW

*CCW is the independent voice for water consumers in England and Wales. We help thousands of people resolve complaints against their water company, while providing free advice and support. At CCW, we stand up for what is right, championing people's best interests and making sure decisions are made with their views in mind.*

*We use our research and complaints data to step into the shoes of water consumers. We understand their experiences and use the facts and evidence behind this to share best practice and improve industry standards.*

- How much of this did you already know? Is there anything that you weren't aware of or that surprised you?
- Do you have any questions about what you've heard/read? We'll try to get back to you with any answers over the course of the next few days.

## Task 3 – What is a Customer Service Agreement?

Okay, now we're going to get a bit technical, but it's important for the rest of the research so please bear with us... 😊

*For a water company to operate, they need to agree to do certain things – like a contract with Ofwat. Some of these things are quite technical, like making sure that the water is safe to drink, but others are more about how water companies provide great service to their customers.*

*In this research, we're talking about what water companies have to do in relation to Customer Service – basically a form of Customer Service Agreement that water companies have to sign up to.*

*The Customer Service Agreement is set by Ofwat, after they have listened to lots of different people – including you!*

*This Agreement has a few different parts to it, which we'll talk about in more detail over the next few days, but in summary there are these parts:*

1. *The 'Results' - this is what should happen if the water company is meeting the Agreement.*
2. *The 'Actions' – these are the things that water companies need to do to make sure they get the Results.*

*If this all sounds a bit theoretical, don't worry – it is! We'll be giving you some concrete examples over the next couple of days which will show you how these things can work in practice.*



- How much of this did you already know? Is there anything that you weren't aware of or that surprised you?
- Do you have any questions about what you've heard/read? We'll try to get back to you with any answers over the course of the next few days.

HAVE A LIGHT ACTIVITY HERE – E.G. A VERY SIMPLE QUIZ ON THE ABOVE INFORMATION.

That's all for Day 3! Thank you again for your input today, we hope you've enjoyed finding out a bit more about how the water industry works in England and Wales. We'll see you again tomorrow for Day 4!

#### DAY 4 – 'Putting things right when they go wrong'

Welcome back for Day 4! Yesterday we gave you lots of information, and you're welcome to go back and review that if you'd like. Otherwise, let's crack on!

Over the next three days we are going to introduce you to three parts of the Customer Service Agreement which Ofwat and CCW are working on, and get your views on these. We definitely don't expect you to be an expert on any of this, we're just really interested in your views and opinions.

You may not be the person in your household who pays for your water bill. If you're not, then for the purpose of these activities, assume that you are the bill-payer, and how you would like your water company to deal with you on that basis.

Today we're going to look at the 1<sup>st</sup> (of 3) parts of the Customer Service Agreement. This part is about 'when things go wrong', and making sure that water companies do what they need to do to make things right.

Just to re-cap, there are two elements to each part of the Licence Condition:

#### Task 1: 'When something goes wrong, customers have confidence their water company will put things right'

This is the first part. First let's look at the 'Result'.

##### Result

**When something goes wrong, affected customers have confidence their water company will put it right**

- What are your initial thoughts about this?
  - If something went wrong with your water company (for example, there's no water in your taps), what would it take for you to have confidence that they would put it right? What would they need to do to make sure that you trusted them to put it right?
- As far as you know, how well is your water company doing at this at the moment? If possible, can you give any examples?

And now let's look at the Result and the Actions together.

##### Result

##### Actions

**When something does go wrong affected customers have confidence their company will put it right**

1. The water company provides appropriate support when things go wrong and helps to put things right.
2. The water company learns from past experiences to improve customer service in the future

- What are your thoughts about the Actions?
  - What does ‘appropriate support’ mean to you? What kinds of things would water companies need to do to provide ‘appropriate support’ to you when things go wrong?
  - What does it mean for water companies to ‘learn from past experiences and improve customer service in the future’? What would you expect them to do to achieve this?

**Task 2 – check out these scenarios**

2.1 Let’s see what this could look like through a few examples.

**Example 1**

When something does go wrong affected customers have confidence their company will put it right		
Church Road is an inner city street with a mixture of houses and flats, rented and owned by families, single adults and pensioners.	For the last year, every time there is heavy rain, the drains in the gardens overflow, and raw sewage is brought up into the gardens on the street.	Every time this happens, the residents phone the water company, and they have visited the street several times to inspect the site and have carried out repairs that last for a few weeks or months.
After a while, the problem always returns, and the residents often have to clean up the mess themselves. Some are more able than others to do this, and the neighbours help each other – but they wish the problem would just be fixed for good.	The smell often means that residents can’t open their windows when it happens. They have made several complaints by phone to the water company but always seem to get a different answer.	The residents are fed up, and they complain to their local newspaper and MP.

- Imagine that you lived on Church Street. How would you feel if you experienced this situation?
  - What would you do about it?
- What would you expect the water company to do in this situation to put things right? What action should they take?
  - What would give you confidence that they were putting things right?
  - How should they communicate with you? What would you want to know? How would you like to hear from them?
  - What should the water company do to make it easier for you to contact them when you need to in relation to this? How would you like to contact them?
  - What information would you want from the water company throughout this situation?
  - How quickly would you expect them to put things right?
- After this situation has been resolved, what should the water company learn so that they can do better in the future?
  - How should they show customers that they have learned from their experience?
  - What would be enough to convince you that they had learned?

## 2.2 Have a look at this example.

*Imagine that your water company has a data breach – this could be someone hacking their systems and being able to get access to lots of their customers’ personal data. These data include your name, address, email, and phone number, but not any bank information.*

- What would you expect the water company to do in this situation to put things right? What action should they take?
  - What would give you confidence that the water company was taking the right steps to put things right?
  - How should they communicate with you? What would you want to know? How would you like to hear from them?
  - What should the water company do to make it easier for you to contact them when you need to in relation to this? How would you like to contact them?
  - What information would you want from the water company throughout this situation?
  - How quickly would you expect them to put things right?
- After this situation has been resolved, what should the water company learn so that they can do better in the future?
  - How should they show customers that they have learned from their experience?
  - What would be enough to convince you that they had learned?

### **Task 4 – anything missing?**

- Finally today, looking back at the Customer Service Agreement, including the Result and the Actions, is there anything missing? Anything you’d like to see that’s not there?

Once you’ve finished, please feel free to have a look at what other people have been saying about these questions, and add any of your own comments or questions on them!

That’s all for Day 4! Thank you again for your input today, it’s been really useful. We’ll see you again tomorrow for Day 5 for the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the Customer Service Agreement!

## Day 5 – ‘meeting customers’ diverse needs’

Welcome back for Day 5, in which we’re going to look at the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the Customer Service Agreement. This time, it’s about making sure that water companies understand and respond to the different needs of all their customers.

Water companies supply water to households with lots of different types of people with different needs. Some of them may be vulnerable in one or more ways. For example, they may need services delivered slightly differently due to a disability, medical condition or life event or they may have a low income and need help with their bills This licence condition is about making sure water companies are taking all their different customers into consideration when they are providing services.

### Task 1: ‘The full diversity of customers’ needs are identified, understood, and met by water companies’

This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Result.

#### Result

**The full diversity of customers’ needs are identified, understood, and met by water companies in the services and extra help they provide.**

- What are your initial thoughts about this?
  - What do you think we mean by ‘full diversity of customers’?
- As far as you know, how well is your water company doing at this at the moment? If possible, can you give any examples?

And now let’s look at the Result and the Actions together.

#### Result

**The full diversity of customers’ needs are identified, understood, and met by water companies in the services and extra help they provide.**

#### Actions

1. The water company understands the needs of its customers and provides appropriate support (including/especially customers in vulnerable circumstances)
2. The water company provides appropriate support for customers in vulnerable circumstances
3. The water company provides a range of appropriate support options for customers who are struggling to pay, and to customers who are in debt

- What are your thoughts about the Actions?
  - How can water companies find out about the specific needs of different customers, including those who may be vulnerable?
  - Which groups of customers should water companies be paying particular attention to?
  - What support should water companies be providing to customers in vulnerable circumstances?
  - How should water companies support people who are struggling to pay their bills or are in debt?

### Task 2 – check out these scenarios

Have a look at the following scenarios.

**Example 1**

The full diversity of customers needs are identified, understood and met by companies in the services and extra help they provide			
<p>Mr Long is a single father on benefits with three young children. He would like to work but he can't afford childcare.</p> <p>He lives in a rented flat with an energy pre-payment meter. He has a pay-as-you-go phone and no credit cards.</p>	<p>Mr Long is trying to keep up with his bills, but he's falling behind on some of them due to paying for food, school uniforms and unexpected bills.</p> <p>He is in debt with a number of companies including his water company. He pays via Payzone at his local shop.</p>	<p>Mr Long is suffering from poor mental health and finds it upsetting and exhausting to talk about his financial problems.</p>	<p>He is not sleeping well, he skips meals so that his children can have food, and he's constantly worried about his bills.</p> <p>However, when they arrive, he often just puts them in a drawer without opening them because it makes him feel so anxious.</p>
<p>One day, there's a knock at the door and a man shouts through the letterbox that he's from a debt collection agency.</p>	<p>Mr Long hides out of sight until the person goes. He doesn't know which company the debt collectors are working for and he doesn't want to answer the door in case it's something he can't pay back.</p>	<p>He doesn't know where to go for help, and he doesn't want to tell anyone in case he loses his children.</p>	<p>One day, Mr Long receives a letter with the HM Courts logo on it, so he decides to open it. He reads that a County Court judgement has been made against him by his water company for non-payment.</p> <p>This is likely to affect his credit rating for years, and he's worried every time there's someone outside that it may be a bailiff.</p>

- How do you think Mr Long felt during this situation?
  - How well do you think the water company managed the situation?
- Is there anything here that water companies could learn from in terms of supporting customers in vulnerable situations?
  - How could they improve the way they tried to understand Mr Long's needs?
  - How could they have provided more appropriate support to Mr Long?
  - How could they have given him more support with his bills?
- What difference could it make to Mr Long if the water company did this?

**Example 2**

*Mrs Kohli is an elderly Asian woman. She has lived alone for the last year since her husband died. She has a carer who visits once a day, and her daughter visits once a week. One day she noticed a huge increase in her water bill when she started to be charged hundreds of pounds a month.*

*The water company said she was having the equivalent of 300 baths a month. When Mrs Kohli contacted the water company, they found a leak. The company told her they would fix the leak and in the meantime she could cancel her direct debit. This meant she would not have the money taken out of her account each month until the leak was fixed.*

*Mrs Kohli did this, but she needed to ask her daughter for help because she's not confident with banking – her husband used to look after the bills.*

*But the company then started chasing her for the payments, sending her letters, texts and voicemails about debt collection. The complaints manager at the company said she could ignore*

*all these messages. But the company kept sending them and it was stressful for Mrs Kohli. This went on for months. It took more than a year to fix the leak.*

- How do you think Mrs Kohli felt during this situation?
  - How well do you think the water company managed the situation?
- Is there anything here that water companies could learn from in terms of supporting customers?
  - Is there anything *additional* the company should think about when supporting *customers who are vulnerable*?
  - How could they improve the way they tried to understand Mrs Kohli's needs?
  - How could they have provided more appropriate support to Mrs Kohli?
  - What would the water company need to do differently to provide great customer service to Mrs Kohli?
- What difference could it make to Mrs Kohli if the water company did this?

### **Task 3 – anything missing?**

- Finally today, looking back at the Result and the Actions, is there anything missing? Anything you'd like to see that's not there? Or anything you would change?

Once you've finished, please feel free to have a look at what other people have been saying about these questions, and add any of your own comments or questions on them!

That's all for Day 5! Thank you again for your input today, it's been really useful. Tomorrow we'll look at the 3<sup>rd</sup> (and final!) part of the Customer Service Agreement.

## DAY 6 – ‘customers are well informed’

Welcome back for Day 6, where we’ll be talking about the 3<sup>rd</sup> (and final!) part of the Customer Service Agreement.

### Task 1: Developing a licence condition so that ‘Customers are well informed’

This is the first Result.

Result
<b>Customers are well informed</b>

- What are your initial thoughts about this?
  - What does it mean to you?
  - How important is it that water companies do this?

And now let’s look at the Result and Actions

Result	Actions
<b>Customers are well informed</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The water company is proactive in its communications so that customers receive the right information at the right time, including during incidents</li> <li>2. The water company makes it easy for customers to contact them and provide easy-to-access contact information</li> </ol>

- What are your thoughts about the Actions?
- What should your water company keep you informed about?
  - How often do you want to hear from them?
  - How do you want to hear from them – by phone, email, text, letter? Is it different depending on what they are contacting you about?
  - Which groups of customers should water companies be paying particular attention to?
- When do you want to contact your water company? What about?
  - How easy is it for you to get in contact with them now?
  - How would you like to be able to contact your water company? What channels work best for you? That could be by phone, email, webchat, a written letter or something else.
  - Would you want to contact them in different ways about different things? For example ‘changing you address’ or ‘reporting sewage in your home’? What difference would it make to you in terms of how you would like to contact your water company?

### Task 2 – check out this scenario.

Have a look at the following scenario.

Customers are well informed			
Mr Jarvis is a teacher and he commutes from his home to school. One morning he notices that his water is off, but he's in a rush and decides to forgo his shower before work.	On the way he is stuck in traffic for over an hour – it usually only takes 10mins. Clearly there are some roadworks going on that he wasn't expecting.	At school, he discovers that the water at school is also off. On the radio, there are reports of a burst water main overnight that serves his local area. The radio station tries to contact the water company but no one is available.	The school phones the water company, it takes half an hour to get through and they don't have any timeframe for when water will be back on. There is also no information on the company's website, and the students and teachers are sent home.
At home, Mr Jarvis finds that his water is still off. He checks the water company website and it says that the water will be back on 'soon'.	He is not satisfied with this so he phones his water company, again taking 30mins to get through. They say that his house is in a special area and it will take longer to fix but they are not sure how long.	They give him an address to collect some bottled water but when he arrives it has closed so he goes to the shop instead.	The water company does not contact the school, but the next day the water is back on. A few weeks later, the water company sends Mr Jarvis a letter apologising for the water outage.

- Imagine you were Mr Jarvis. How would you feel in this situation?
- How could the water company have communicated more *proactively* with Mr Jarvis in this situation? What would you expect?
- How could the water company have *made it easier for Mr Jarvis to contact them* in this scenario?
- What difference could it make to Mr Jarvis if the water company did this?

### Task 3 – a case study

In the previous scenario, you probably identified a number of areas where the water company could have done things better. Take a look at this example and see what you think.

*A customer receives a text message from their water company to say they have reports the water supply in their area may have been interrupted and that they are investigating. On checking they find their water is off. They receive a subsequent message quickly after to tell them the problem has been found and an estimated time for supplies to be restored later that day. The water company text the customer with information on who to contact if they need water urgently for medical or other reasons. They are provided with details of a nearby location where they can pick up water bottles from the water company. The water company keep the customer updated each hour and, four hours later, confirm the water supply is back on.*

- In this example, what (if anything!) did the water company do well to communicate proactively with customers so they have the right information at the right time)?
  - Could they have improved / done anything better here?
- And what (if anything!) did they do well to make it easy for customers to contact them and providing easy-to-access contact information?
  - Could they have improved / done anything better here?
- If your water company responded in this way when there was an incident, what difference would it make to you?





- How would it make you feel?
- Would it change the way you think about your water company?

**Task 4 – anything missing?**

- Finally today, looking back at the condition, including the Result and the Actions, is there anything missing? Anything you'd like to see that's not there?

Once you've finished, please feel free to have a look at what other people have been saying about these questions, and add any of your own comments or questions on them!

That's all for Day 6! Thank you again for your input today, it's been really useful. We'll see you again tomorrow for the final day of the Community!

## DAY 7 – Reflections

We've made it to the last day of this community – thank you so much for all your input so far.

On this last day we just want to reflect on the things we've been talking about, and giving you some more information about what's going to happen in the focus group in a couple of weeks.

### Task 1 – Thinking back...

Thinking back to all the materials we shared with you, (Attach them as a reminder)

- RANKING: Please rank these from most important to least important for you.
- Tell us why you have ranked them in this way?

### Task 2 – Where are the gaps?

Apart from the three areas that we've been looking at, are there any other areas that you think are important for water companies to be doing more, or working better?

- Are there any gaps?
- If you could add one thing, what would it be?

### Task 3 – introduction to guidance

So far, we have talked about two aspects of the Customer Service Agreement: the intended 'Result', and the 'Actions' that water companies need to do to make sure they get the right Result.

There is a third part to this, which is called the 'Guidance'. In this, Ofwat and CCW aim to provide guidance to water companies about *how* they should meet the Results.

- *Why Guidance, not rules?*
  - *Ofwat and CCW are responsible for regulating the water industry and making sure that customers' voices are heard as part of that, but they may not be best placed to say in detail how water companies should go about doing their jobs. Each water company is different, serve different regions and communities, and they may have different ways to meet the same outcomes that work best for them*
- *So what will the guidance do?*
  - *That's something we'll discuss more in the focus groups. Guidance could be quite specific (e.g. 'you should do this'), or it could be more general (e.g. giving examples of best practice to water companies).*
  - *An example might be on how specific guidance is on how often water companies should update customers when an incident takes place that affects their water supply (e.g. no water coming from their taps).*

*Should the guidance be quite broad, such as –*

- *Water companies should provide appropriate information to customers when an incident takes place that affects customers' water supply*

*Should the guidance include a bit more detail, such as -*

- *Water companies should provide appropriate information to customers when an incident takes place that affects customers' water supply, and make sure customers receive regular updates.*



*Should the guidance be more specific, such as -*

- *Water companies should provide appropriate information to customers when an incident takes place that affects customers' water supply, and make sure customers receive regular updates – including hourly updates posted onto the company's website.*
  - *We'll ask you your opinion on examples like this in the focus group*
- *What happens if things change?*
  - *The idea behind the guidance is that it is quite flexible. Once the Result and Actions are set, they are quite hard to change, but changing the Guidance will be more straightforward, and that's part of the reason that we're talking about it*
- *What happens if water companies don't fulfil the Customer Service Agreement?*
  - *Water companies could need to show that they are meeting the customer service agreement, and if they don't, there are various things that Ofwat can do including taking legal action. The exact response would depend on things like whether it was a 'one-off' incident, how serious it was, and how people were affected.*
- *From what you've just read, do you have any initial thoughts on the idea of Guidance, its level of detail and requirements?*
  - *What's your initial response to the idea of Guidance being quite general, without specifying exactly and in detail how water companies should do things?*

#### **Task 4 – Record a video summary or write a letter!**

So this is the final task on the community! We'd like you to think about everything we've discussed over the last week, and either record a short video, or write a letter to Ofwat (on this platform – not a real letter!) summing up:

- *What things have you learned that you liked? What were the positive things that you learned about?*
- *What concerns did you have about what you learned? Do you have any doubts?*
- *Any other suggestions or comments that you'd like to make.*

Prompt: That's all for today, thanks for your responses these last 7 days. We've really enjoyed hearing all your views, and look forward to seeing you in the focus group very soon!

THANK AND CLOSE