

Meeting note

13:00 – 15:00, Tuesday 27 June 2023

Outcomes working group – C-MeX

This note provides a summary of the key points raised by water companies and other stakeholders during a virtual workshop on detailed implementation issues of the **customer measure of experience** (C-MeX).

This meeting was part of our [review of the C-MeX incentive mechanism](#) for the 2024 price review (PR24).

1. C-MeX sampling methods

There were mixed views on whether contacts from customers that are more like transactions, such as paying a bill, than interactions, such as to make a complaint about a customer service issue, should be removed from the samples provided by companies to be surveyed in the customer service survey (CSS) of C-MeX:

- Some stakeholders supported this option as it could focus companies on improving the satisfaction of customers that contacted them about issues that are more difficult to resolve, rather than on transactional contacts such as paying a bill, which may be picked up by the customer experience survey (CES);
- However other stakeholders disagreed, stating reasons such as:
 - we should not assume transactions are not an important part of customer experience;
 - removing those transactions from C-MeX could disincentivise automation which customers value;
 - retaining such customers in the C-MeX sample will capture customers that go on to take more tangible interactions with their company, such as resetting their password before going on to pay a bill; and
 - some customers that have had bad experiences in other areas may already be represented in other ODIs.
- A few stakeholders argued that while digital transactional contacts could be removed, all telephony contacts should remain in the sample as they require interaction with the company.

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- One stakeholder suggested introducing quotas or weights for transactional contacts to avoid them dominating the billing component of C-MeX.
 - CCW suggested that the experiences of complainants and vulnerable customers should have sampling quotas applied to them so they can take precedence over purely transactional contacts.

On the principles of reviewing the categories for inclusion in the C-MeX sample:

- Some stakeholders emphasised that, whichever option is implemented, we need to ensure companies handle and report the contact data consistently.
- One company cautioned against introducing excessive complexity in C-MeX.

2. C-MeX survey methods

Severn Trent Water presented on its experience with the C-MeX survey methods. It emphasised that over the last few years it has observed a strong shift towards digital channels in its customer contacts (eg the traffic to its website increased 129% between 2015 and 2020).

Other companies shared they have observed the same trends in the use of their digital channels, and supported adopting a different survey method approach that reflects the increase in digital contacts. However, some companies warned that the increase in digital contacts might not be directly proportional to the decrease in non-digital contacts – possibly because certain types of contact remain more likely to be conducted by one method over the other.

There was some support for implementing a ‘push to web’ method, in which respondents are first asked to complete the survey online (via post, emails or SMS for example) before any other mode is offered, for the PR24 C-MeX survey:

- Some stakeholders supported this option, as it could reduce differences attributed to the survey method and future proof it, it would negate the need for an online correction factor, and it could reach customers more effectively than existing methods, including vulnerable customers by signposting to a range of alternative survey methods when the online option is not suitable;
- However, other stakeholders expressed their concerns with this method, including that it could be resource intensive and expensive;
- Some stakeholders supported a move to a continuous approach to surveying, which differs from the current approach based on surveying from a sample of contacts received by companies in a single week each calendar month. However, others

expressed concern with companies' ability to carry out their own research being impacted by the burden of continuous C-MeX surveying;

- One stakeholder emphasised the importance of ensuring the chosen approach is future-proof and that it will not overwhelm the same group of people with surveys;
- One company noted the importance of informing companies of changes in survey methods timely so they can implement it for PR24.

3. C-MeX data insights

On the additional insights we could get from the C-MeX data:

- CCW suggested implementing more in-depth follow up for specific qualitative interviewees to understand the reasons for certain satisfaction scores;
- One company suggested companies could be provided with more location data from the customer experience survey (CES) (eg postcode data), to enable useful focussing of resources to improve customer service issues.

4. Wider points to revisit

- How the CES sample can be more representative, check and challenge and survey sample sizes.