BR-MeX Working Group
Wholesaler data quality for B-MeX

Ofwat

Wednesday 27th March 2024

Ofwat

Aim of the session and agenda

This workshop highlights the need for good quality customer contact sample data from wholesalers, and works through IFF's recommendations to achieve this.

1. IFF pilot findings and importance of good quality direct customer contact sample data from wholesalers
2. IFF pilot findings and recommendations
   - Recommendation 1 – Exclusions / all ineligible contacts should be removed from direct customer contact sample
   - Recommendations 2 and 3 – Sample record requirements and essential data
   - Recommendation 4 – Primary reason for contact
   - Secondary / supporting reason for contact
3. Next steps

We will publish both the slides and a summary of the meeting on our website.

1. IFF pilot findings and importance of good quality direct customer contact sample data from wholesalers

Wholesaler customer contact sample – IFF findings from pilot work

For the pilot work:
- wholesalers delivered a 'raw' sample of 15,825 'direct' customer contacts
- relating to contacts occurred over 18th September to 18th October 2023

8,609 usable direct records (54% of 'raw' sample)

7,216 not usable records (46% of 'raw' sample)

Dialled sample:

COMPLETE	15%
No definite outcome	51%
Unobtainable	7%
Refused	16%
Ineligible	9%
Partial	2%

'Better' records	4,964 (58%)
'Poor' records	3,645 (42%)

Excluding Severn Trent:

'Better' records	83%
'Poor' records	17%

Complete rates
'Better' records	19%
'Poor' records	7%

Telephone number missing	54%
Date not in scope	16%
Duplicate records	29%
Exclusions under RFI	1%

'Poor' records are usable (ie. in scope and have a telephone number) but:
- had an unclear reason for contact; **and**
- either no named contact or company name on the sample.

2. IFF pilot findings and recommendations

Recommendations and guidance from IFF

Telephone interviews (CATI)
- Helps respondent understand difference between retailer and wholesaler
- Enables better 'quality control', e.g. prompting recollection of specific contact

Good quality customer contact sample
- Good quality customer contact sample on a regular basis is critical
- 'Better' quality customer contact records help:
  - maximize response rates
  - ability of respondents to recall and give good feedback
- 'Poor' quality customer contact records:
  - increase costs and time of running B-MeX survey
  - risk reducing quality of outputs e.g. longer gaps between customer contact occurring and fieldwork

Recommendation 1
- **All ineligible contacts should be removed from direct customer contact sample**

Recommendation 2
- Direct customer contact sample from all wholesalers **must contain all data fields deemed essential, and essential fields must be fully populated and in the correct format**.
- Should any essential data fields be 'refused' (eg a customer refuses to give their name), as much data as possible should be collected in other data fields (e.g. job title, business name) to allow interviewers to reach the correct contact for the survey.

Recommendation 3
- Direct customer contact sample from all wholesalers – **as much as possible populate non-essential fields**

Recommendation 4
- For the direct customer sample, **the 'Primary Reason for Contact' field will need to use pre-set codes or categories** which are consistent across all wholesalers
- A final list of categories (with clear definitions for each) should be devised and agreed on by wholesalers and Ofwat

Recommendation 5
- Regarding the secondary or more detailed "Reason for contact" – the text / categories used in this field would need to make sense when read out to a customer over the phone.

Recommendation 1 – Exclusions / all ineligible contacts should be removed from direct customer contact sample

IFF recommend that wholesalers should provide data for all _business customer_ contacts. Hence the sample should exclude the following:

- Any contacts related to household queries

- Any contacts relating to non-wholesaler activities – e.g. calls regarding a customer's retailer

- Contacts dealt with or with regard to developer services

- Wrong numbers, including calls where a customer has contacted the wrong company

- Contacts where the customer has called about a non-appointed activity and the call has no connection with the appointed business – e.g. insurance services and plumbing, private septic tanks / cesspits, highway gullies, hot water issues where it is confirmed there is no issue on the cold water supply

- Contacts about recreational and amenity activities – e.g. water skiing or angling facilities at visitor sites

- Enquires from CCW on behalf of a customer

- Any outbound contacts

- Any contacts related to bi-lateral transactions

Duplicates should not be removed – these will be checked and removed by the Agent.

(An accompanying table should be provided giving the total contacts contained in the sample file, and a table of exclusions, listing the total number of records that have been excluded within each of the above categories.)

Any comments?

Recommendations 2 and 3 – Sample record requirements and essential data

Data Field		Must be fully populated?	Data type	Notes
ID				Optional – if you have an internal / system ID you may wish to include this to help if there are queries about individual records
CONTACT_NAME		Y	Text field	Full name of the person the contact is with
CONTACT_TEL		Y	Numeric	Must be valid telephone number
SERVICE_TYPE		Y	Coded field	Water / Wastewater
CONTACT_DATE		Y	DD/MM/YYY	
CONTACT_OUTCOME		Y	Coded field	Status at point contact ended ie. Resolved / Not resolved / Unknown
CONTACT_REASON_PRIMARY		Y	Coded field	See following slides
CONTACT_REASON_DETAIL		Y	Text field	Detailed reason for contact. Text entered here must be understandable to the survey agent and contactor (e.g. no numeric codes, industry/company jargon etc.).
CONTACT_JOBROLE			Text field	Job title or role of the person the contact is with
CONTACT_EMAIL			Text field	To be populated whenever possible
BUSINESS_NAME			Text field	Name of the business contact is with
Business address	BUSINESS_ADD1		Text field	
	BUSINESS_ADD2		Text field	
	BUSINESS_ADD3		Text field	(Leave blank if not required for address)
	BUSINESS_ADD4		Text field	(Leave blank if not required for address)
	BUSINESS_ADD5		Text field	(Leave blank if not required for address)
	BUSINESS_POSTCODE		Text field	Must be valid postcode
RETAILER			Text field	Customer's retailer
CONTACT_CHANNEL			Coded field	Email; telephone; web/social media; physical / paper

Coded fields – to be finalised based on consultation with wholesalers

Data Field	Code	Label
CONTACT_CHANNEL	1	Telephone
	2	Email
	3	Web / social media
	4	Internal / operational
	5	Paper / physical
SERVICE_TYPE	1	Water
	2	Wastewater
	3	Both
	4	Unknown
CONTACT_OUTCOME	1	Resolved
	2	Not resolved
	3	Unknown
CONTACT_REASON_PRIMARY	1	Meter Issues
	2	Feedback, Enquiries and Communications
	3	Water Supply and Leaks
	4	Company Work and Maintenance
	5	Location and Boundaries
	6	Water Quality
	7	Infrastructure
	8	General and Miscellaneous
	9	Wastewater

Suggest Service_type align with C-MeX definitions

See next slide

Recommendation 4 – Primary reason for contact

IFF recommends that the 'Primary Reason for Contact' field will need to use pre-set codes or categories which are consistent across all wholesalers.

IFF devised the following categories for pilot fieldwork, based on a coding exercise of the 600+ categories / labels received across the pilot data:

IFF 'starter set' used in pilot work. Needs checking and revision.

1	Meter Issues
2	Feedback, Enquiries and Communications
3	Water Supply and Leaks
4	Company Work and Maintenance
5	Location and Boundaries
6	Water Quality
7	Infrastructure
8	General and Miscellaneous
9	Wastewater

IFF note that wholesalers will have more expert understanding of their customer base and the types of contact they receive. Hence IFF recommend a final list of categories (with clear definitions for each) should be devised and agreed on by wholesalers and Ofwat.

IFF suggest that these could be further refined and tested during the shadow year.

IFF further note that these categories do not need to replace any existing internal categories – wholesalers could undertake a re-coding exercise before delivering their sample to derive these categories from their own system codes.

Reason for contact – detail. AKA secondary / supporting reason for contact

IFF note that, regarding secondary / supporting reason for contact – previously called "lower level reason for contact" – these data will be used to jog a respondent's memory at the start of the survey, and to check that the reason for contact is correct.

Hence the text / categories used in this field would need to make sense when read out to a customer over the phone – so wholesalers should avoid using numeric codes, industry/company jargon etc.

- Examples of the type of information that is useful for prompting customers:
    - "Water Burst / Leak Initial Report"; "Reporting low water pressure"; "Discoloured Water – Brown/Orange/Yellow"; "Reporting flooding inside the property"
- Examples of poor / unusable information (all taken at random from the pilot sample):
    - Use of codes / jargon that won't make sense to respondents, or lack of info: "INV. LEAK 2"; "Not assigned"; "AMI: NHH-Retailer Driven-MX External"; "Bits"
    - Too much detail / internal notes: "10m x 10m wet bubbling up from the ground" // "trunk main? cus and leakage tech have said it could possibly be" // "please can we investigate" // "cus needs you to call him and meet him first as their is cows and a bull in the field *NO ACCESS UNLESS SPOKE WITH [NAME]* [full name redacted], [tel no redacted] // please call en route"

Any comments?

Next steps

Wholesalers and data quality

- Further work and agreement likely needed on ensuring good quality direct customer contact data is available?

  - Recommendation 1 – Exclusions / all ineligible contacts should be removed from direct customer contact sample

  - Recommendations 2 and 3 - Sample record requirements and essential data

  - Recommendation 4 - Primary reason for contact

  - Secondary / supporting reason for contact

- Further workshop helpful?

'Shadow' period

- Ofwat and MOSL currently in process of tendering for agent to run Shadow period

- First sample of direct customer contact data from Wholesalers likely required end May 2025

- We are considering whether a 'dry run' of direct customer contact data in respect of contacts occurring in May may be helpful ie. our agent would during June analyse and process these May data with a view to understanding and ironing out any issues but not use them for fieldwork.