

Qualitative fieldwork guide – Focus Groups

Moderator note re tailoring: Please familiarise yourself with the specific circumstances of the participants beforehand and tailor questions/probe as appropriate throughout the session. Specific issues may include but are not limited to:

- Financially vulnerable – impact of incident on finances e.g. buying bottled water, constraints due to financial situation
- Vulnerable – impact on vulnerability e.g. require water/steady water pressure for health issue, constraints due to vulnerability e.g. impact on caring for people with vulnerabilities
- Children at home – impact of childcare/work

Group Discussion Guide

Introduction (10 minutes)

(0 - 10 mins)

Moderator introduction – 5 minutes:

- **Purpose of session:** Thanks for joining. You're all customers of Yorkshire Water who experienced some problems with their water supply in late October / early November. Ofwat and CCW have asked us to explore the experiences of customers who are affected by this kind of incident so that they can understand how customers feel about what has happened during an incident and how they would like their water company to act in that kind of situation.
- **Introduction to Blue Marble:** Independent market research agency who run research on behalf of organisations, not part of Ofwat or CCW or Yorkshire Water.
- **Data protection:** This conversation will be audio/video recorded – as covered during recruitment, Ofwat and CCW may view/listen to this recording, but it won't be shared beyond the research and policy teams. *(If necessary: We also have a representative for Ofwat/CCW here today – they won't be taking part in the discussion and just want to hear experiences from the horse's mouth, so please feel free to be open and honest.)* Your name won't appear in any reporting and won't be shared with any of the companies or more widely. Any opinions and comments will be anonymised during reporting.
- **Encouragement:** Want to understand their experiences and views – completely impartial so can be candid and not worry about causing offence. No right or wrong answers. Feel free to chip in and add to conversation, don't have to wait to be asked. Feel free to disagree – all viewpoints are interesting, but be respectful of people's views and allow each other to talk without interrupting.

Group introductions – 5 minutes:

Let's get to know each other a bit better.

- To get started, let's all take a turn to say our name, where we're joining from, who else lives at home, if anyone, and something about what you like to do in your free time.

Context on the incident (25 minutes)

(10 – 35 mins)

Objective: Build a picture of events from participants' perspective

Moderator to listen out for mentions of vulnerability in household/being on PSR, probe as appropriate in following questions, and flag responses from these people in notes so that we can determine any differences in expectations or support received.

Now that we know a bit more about each other it's time to turn our attention to the main focus of the research - as you know, we're here to talk about the problems with your water supply that you experienced in late October / early November.

We will cover your experience in some detail, but first of all, let's talk about what exactly the problem was with your water supply.

Moderator note: Use responses to pre-task to direct the conversation in this section – looking to draw people in and have conversations as a group about similarities and differences in experiences, rather than individual monologues. E.g. "Sally, I can see that you had low water pressure, did anyone else experience this..."

- Tell me about your experience of the issues with your water supply. *Allow spontaneous response, prompting with the below questions as necessary to provide fleshed out narrative.*
- What problem(s) did you have? Talk us through how the disruption differed throughout the period.
 - Was it just one type of problem, or more?
 - *Prompt if necessary – no water, low water pressure, intermittent water issues, discoloured water etc*
 - *Probe: if disruption fluctuated, to what extent were you warned/aware that the disruption could return?*
- Did anyone experience 'no water' for more than 12 hours at any point?
 - How would you define 'no water'?
 - *Probe: nothing out of the tap, a small amount, very low pressure, water that is not usable e.g. dirty/discoloured*
- How long did the problem(s) last for?
 - As far as you can remember, when did the issue start and end?
 - How did the issue change during that period, if at all?
 - *Moderator note: impact may have been on and off during the incident period.*
- How did the problem(s) with your water supply affect your household?
 - How were your day-to-day activities affected by the incident?
 - For those who experience low pressure:
 - What were/weren't you able to do with the level of pressure available?
 - What changes did you need to make to adjust to the situation? *Probe:*
 - *Eating and drinking*
 - *Personal hygiene and toileting*
 - *Cleaning and laundry*
 - *Work*
 - *Childcare/caring responsibilities (if applicable)*
 - *Leisure activities and pets*
 - *Moderator to explore different types of disruption experienced and ensure we get a full picture of how they were affected.*
- How easy or hard did you find it to carry on with day to day life during this period?

- Show of hands – where 0 is very easy and 10 is very hard, how easy or hard did you find it to carry on with day to day life?
- What else, if anything, was happening at the time which made it easier or harder to manage during the incident?
 - Were there any events happening locally? *E.g. weather (Storm Ciaran and Storm Babet), flooding, traffic issues (Kemira chemicals), boil water order (respondent might mix this up with pressure problem) etc?*
 - How about personally? *E.g. health flare up, school closed during half-term etc.*

A lot of the discussion today is going to be about how Yorkshire Water supported its customers during this incident in Late October / early November. Before we kick off, I'd like to check if anyone here is from a household which is on the Priority Services Register. This is a scheme which provides enhanced services to those who might need a bit of extra support, such as braille bills, or increased warning ahead of planned works.

- As far as you are aware, is anyone here from a household which is on the Priority Services Register? You don't have to say for what reason if you don't want to.

SHOW STIMULUS: PSR qualification

Physical disability	Blind or partial sight loss	Difficulty hearing or speaking	Health condition requiring constant supply of water e.g. Dialysis	Memory loss e.g. Dementia, Alzheimer's	Language other than English / literacy difficulties
Mental health condition e.g. depression	Older people	Unable to use internet (digitally excluded)	Developmental conditions e.g. Autism	Ill health	Children aged under 5 in household

On the screen there is a list of reasons why somebody might ask to be included in the PSR – this list isn't exhaustive though and there may be other similar reasons.

- Is there anyone here who thinks their household may qualify for priority services but aren't currently registered? You don't need to share the reason if you don't want to.
 - Were you aware of the priority services register before I mentioned it?

Moderator to note respondents from vulnerable households and households on PSR, probe as appropriate in following questions, and flag responses from these people in notes so that we can determine any differences in support received.

Company communication (20 minutes)

(35 – 55 mins)

Objective: Explore how effective company communications were during the incident

We're now going to talk about how Yorkshire Water responded to the incident. We're going to look at a few different elements of their response:

SHOW STIMULUS: Elements of response (1)

First we're going to look at what **communication** you might have had during the period in which you were experiencing problems with your water supply. *Nb. probe PSR/PSR-eligible respondents as appropriate and flag responses in notes*

NOTE TO MODERATOR – focus of the following questions is understanding the customer experience of Yorkshire Water's communications and the effectiveness of each type. In order to report this clearly, please link any comments back to the **SOURCE of communication e.g.:**

- Letter
- Email
- Text
- Social Media post / advert
- Website
- Call
- Visit in person
- Proactive press activity

and INFORMATION TYPE e.g.:

- Cause of water issue
- Timeline for resolution of issue
- Advice on what to do and how to manage
- 'Standard' support available
- Enhanced support available for those struggling or eligible for priority services e.g. water deliveries

- How did you first become aware of problems with the water supply in your area?
 - How long before you had problems did you hear about it, if at all?
 - *If heard about it before experiencing issues:* Where did you first hear about it? E.g. from water company, other organisation, agency, local community, news, social media, neighbours, friends (word of mouth)?
- Were you, or somebody else in your household, contacted by Yorkshire Water before or during the problems with your supply? *E.g. letter, text, email to somebody in household, post in community group in social media*
 - In which ways did you or the person in your household hear from them?
 - What type of information was included in communications you saw from Yorkshire Water? *For each type and source:*
 - How useful was the information given?
 - To what extent did it help you manage the situation, if at all?
 - How clear was the information given?
 - As far as you know, was the information factually correct?
 - At what point during the incident did you receive the first communication? When was this?
 - To what extent did you get the right information at the right time?
 - *Probe: were you given information on how long the incident was likely to last?*
 - *Probe: were you given information on how the disruption was going to change over time e.g. loss of supply to low pressure? Were you updated when the disruption did change?*
 - How many of this type of communication did you receive? How frequently?
 - What was the tone of the communication? How did you feel about the tone?

- Did anyone here receive any texts from Yorkshire Water? If not, were you expecting to?
- Did anyone's household not receive any direct communications from Yorkshire Water *e.g. letter, text, email to somebody in household, post in community group in social media*
 - Why do you think your household didn't receive any communications? Are you or somebody in your household named on the water bill?
 - How did you feel about not having any direct communication from Yorkshire Water? How, if at all, did that change your/your household's experience of the incident?
- Did anyone here see any indirect communication from Yorkshire Water? For example, on Yorkshire Water's website, social media, local tv news, local radio?
 - Where did you see these indirect communications?
 - What type of information was included in the indirect communications you saw from Yorkshire Water? *For each type and source:*
 - At what point during the incident did you see it?
 - How useful was the information given?
 - To what extent did it help you manage the situation, if at all?
 - How clear was the information given?
 - As far as you know, was the information factually correct?
 - To what extent did you get the right information at the right time?
 - What was the tone of the communication? How did you feel about the tone?
 - How often, if at all, did you check for new communications and where did you look for these? How frequent were any updates that you saw?
- Overall, how did you feel about the amount of information provided by Yorkshire Water?
 - Too much, too little, about right?
 - Was there anything that you would have liked to have received more information about?
 - Were there any gaps in the information? What additional information, if any, would you like to see if this situation happened again?
 - What method of communication would you prefer in this type of situation? E.g. email, letter, text etc
- Did anyone here contact Yorkshire Water directly?
 - Why did you contact them? Was it for information, a complaint (formal or otherwise, or something else)?
 - How did you contact them – what channel did you use? How easy or difficult was it to make contact?
 - What happened?
 - How did the company respond, if at all?
 - How long did it take the company to respond? Was this acceptable to you/within expectations?
 - How did you feel about the interaction? What were the positives and negatives of contacting them directly?
 - How many times did you contact them? *If more than once, probe on why.*
- What, if anything, worked particularly well about Yorkshire Water's communications?

- How, if at all, would you improve the communication from Yorkshire Water during this kind of incident? *Allow spontaneous response, then probe:*
 - Channel
 - Amount/frequency/timing of comms
 - Type/amount/clarity of information
 - Tone
- Were you in contact with any other organisations during the incident e.g. local council, CCW, Ofwat, charities etc?
 - If so, which ones?
 - Why were you in contact with them? E.g. respondent reached out to make complaint, respondent contacted by group who offered support etc
 - How useful was the contact? What did it achieve?

Company support during an incident (15 minutes)

(55 – 70 mins)

Objective: Explore how effective the provision of support was during and after the incident

Display stimulus – Elements of response (2)

We're now going to look at what **support** Yorkshire Water provided during the period in which you were experiencing problems with your water supply. *Nb. probe PSR/PSR-eligible respondents as appropriate and flag responses in notes*

- To what extent, if at all, do you feel that Yorkshire Water provided support to you and your household during the incident
 - What types of support did you receive from Yorkshire Water during the incident?
Allow spontaneous response
- Was water delivered to you? *Moderator note – record if PSR/vulnerable requested but did not have water delivered*
 - How did you get the water delivered? E.g. requested it, delivered without asking
 - How did the delivery work? E.g. amount delivered, frequency etc
 - How did you find the process? What worked well/not so well?
 - How would you improve the process of receiving water?
 - Did you expect water delivery to be available?
- Did you receive a visit from the company?
 - Why did you receive a visit from the company? *E.g. requested it, door to door visit etc.*
 - What was the purpose of the visit?
 - How did the visit make you feel?
- What other types of support did you receive, if any?
 - How useful was this support?
- Overall, how effective was the support that you received?
 - How appropriate was the amount of support that you received?
 - To what extent did you receive 'the right support at the right time'?
 - How did the support you received change over time, if at all?
- To what extent did the support you received meet your expectations?

- How, if at all, would you improve the support given to households like yours during this kind of incident?
 - What additional support or provisions would you have liked to receive?
 - *If unsure, probe: water stations e.g. when supply is off, companies often set up water stations local to the affected area to provide a certain amount of water each day.*
 - What else, if anything, did your household need during the incident
- What support did you receive from other organisations or agencies during the incident, if any?
 - How useful was this?

Company support after an incident (7.5 minutes)

(70 – 77.5 mins)

Objective: Explore how effective the provision of support was during the resolution phase and beyond

Display stimulus: Elements of response (3)

We're now going to look at what happened at the end of the incident and beyond. *Nb. probe PSR/PSR-eligible respondents as appropriate and flag responses in notes*

- How long did it take for things to go back to normal?
 - How does this compare with what Yorkshire Water told you?
 - How satisfied are you with the amount of time it took for the issue to be fully resolved?
- What communication, if any, have you received from Yorkshire Water since the issue was resolved?
 - What type of communication have you received? How many times?
 - What was the content of the communications? *Probe whether contained any information around actions taken to prevent/reduce impact of future disruptions to water supply*
 - How did you feel about the communications?

Financial compensation (7.5 minutes)

(77.5 – 85 mins)

Objective: Understand the compensation process, amounts received and views on this

Display stimulus: Elements of response (4)

We're now going to talk about any compensation which you might have received (or are in the process of receiving).

Let's start with what you're aware of:

- To your knowledge, is compensation is being offered?
 - *Probe: what for/to whom/how much?*
- Where can you learn about what compensation is being offered?
 - Has this been communicated to you?

Moderator to show Yorkshire Water message on how to apply for compensation

- Have you seen this message?
 - Have you applied for compensation?
 - Do you think this is fair?
- If not, were you aware of this? And where did you learn about it?
- Has anyone here received any financial compensation from Yorkshire Water because of the water problems that took place (or been told they will or won't receive it)? Has anyone tried to apply but have not heard back?

If yes:

- What amount were you given?
 - What form did this take? (e.g. payment to account, deduction from bill)
 - How do you feel about the amount you were awarded? How fair do you feel the amount was?
 - How quickly did you receive it?
 - How was the compensation referred to by Yorkshire Water e.g. 'compensation', 'reimbursement', 'guaranteed standards scheme' or something else?
- How did you receive this?
 - Was it automatic or did you request it?
 - If you requested it, what process did you go through? What was Yorkshire Water's response?
 - How did you feel about the process to obtain compensation? How easy or difficult did you find it?
 - Are you aware that there is a complaints process if you need it?
 - What improvements, if any, would you make to the compensation process? *Probe for ideal timing of comms about compensation*
- To what extent do you feel that the compensation payment for water supply interruption and/or low water pressure reflects the financial and emotional cost of being impacted by this incident? Why?

Let's now talk about what requirements water companies might have to provide compensation.

- *Show of hands:* Would you expect water companies to be required to provide compensation for this kind of incident? If so, is there any particular element of the incident that should lead to compensation? If yes:
 - What kind of compensation might that be?
 - Where did you find out about this compensation?
 - Would you expect compensation to differ between 'low pressure' and 'no supply'? If so, in what way? And why?

SHOW STIMULUS: Yorkshire Water customer charter

Moderator to show Yorkshire Water customer charter for pressure

- What are your thoughts on this?
- Is this in keeping with expectations?

Moderator to show Yorkshire Water for customer charter for planned and/or unplanned work – as appropriate based on experiences in group

- Do any of these scenarios feel more in keeping with your experience?

- What are your thoughts on this?
- Is this in keeping with expectations?

Looking ahead and wrap up (5 minutes)

(85 – 90 mins)

Objective: Explore how effective the provision of support was during and after the incident

We almost at the end of our session now – thanks so much for sharing your experiences. Before we go, I'd like to summarise how you felt Yorkshire Water handled the incident and what they should focus on if this kind of incident happens again.

- Thinking about what we've discussed today, on a scale of 0 – 10, where 0 is very poorly and 10 is very effectively, how well do you think Yorkshire Water handled this incident overall? (Get score from each in turn.)
- Please tell me one thing that you think Yorkshire Water did well and one thing that you think Yorkshire Water should focus on improving for any future incident. (Ask each in turn)
- (If time) Finally, how confident or not confident do you feel that Yorkshire Water would handle any future incident effectively?

Ok that's everything – thanks so much for your time today. You will receive your incentive payments within a week and they will be paid by Fieldmouse Research who recruited you.

Finally, do you consent to being recontacted by the recruiter in the event that we are seeking further feedback?