



Piloting approaches to capturing customer experience in the water sector for PR24; Business Customer Experience in Wales

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction

Ofwat commissioned Accent to test approaches to delivering customer satisfaction surveys for the C-MeX (Customer Experience and Customer Service components (CES and CSS)), D-MeX (qualitative/survey component only), and Business Customer Experience in Wales surveys (BCIWS), in advance of their continuation into the PR24 period.

The initial stage of the research comprised of a desk review of methodologies, conducted from a macro perspective, offering a bird's eye view of the suite of relevant methodologies potentially available for deployment by Ofwat.

Subsequent phases of the pilot programme involved reviewing the existing outputs of the various surveys (CES & CSS, D-MeX, Business Customer Experience in Wales), and testing (via physical pilots) alternative (and/or enhanced) versions of them.

This report covers the Business Customer Experience in Wales survey pilot. Reports covering the literature review, and the physical pilots of the C-MeX and D-MeX survey methodologies are published separately.

1.2 Business Customer Experience in Wales Survey

Introduction

The need for a physical pilot exploring the Business Customer Experience in Wales Survey was driven by Ofwat's desire to trial approaches to deliver customer satisfaction surveys during the next price review period, to identify how best to survey customers in Wales, and to identify any special considerations that might be applicable to this audience.

The fieldwork components of interest were defined as being (a) general customers, (b) customers that have had contact with the company, and (c) customers who have been subjected to an operational incident.

All fieldwork was conducted by CATI (to maximise sample, expected to be very low volume for Hafren Dyfrdwy in particular).

It was a stated objective to explore using a 0-10 scale (in line with C-MeX & D-MeX) rather than the 1-5 scale previously used.

Because this is a totally new approach (at least as far as Ofwat commissioned fieldwork goes, with previous iterations having been commissioned direct by Dwr Cymru Welsh Water and Hafren Dyfrdwy), no existing method or data was available to refer to.

Fieldwork

The plan was to conduct fieldwork amongst three groups of customers; “Non-Contact” customers (that is, the general customer base), “Contact” customers (customers who have been in contact with their supplier), and “Operational Incident” customers (customers who have been subject to some operational issue related to their water or sewerage services).

“Non-Contact” Participants

Both companies were able to supply Non-Contact sample.

- Hafren Dyfrdwy supplied their entire customer database. A low percentage of usable contact details (c50%) was observed on it (which limits feasibility, sustainability, and customer representation of any future fieldwork).
- Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water supplied a subset drawn from their main customer database. Whilst the supplied sample did have contact data for all records, it is not clear whether this is reflective of the whole data set.

A target sample size of 150 was set (and subsequently achieved - 100 Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water and 50 Hafren Dyfrdwy).

Response rates were in line with expectations (1 in 6 for Hafren Dyfrdwy and 1 in 3 for Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water).

A reasonable range of customers were interviewed, in terms of company size and the primary water usage groups (e.g. used for industrial processing, used to supply a service, used as an ingredient/product part, normal domestic type use).

The mean Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) score collected from the sample of 150 participants was 77.1, with a 95% confidence interval of 3.9. The calculated (CI) at 500 interviews (the likely maximum sustainable annual sample size for Hafren Dyfrdwy) was ± 2.25 , and for 1,000 interviews, ± 1.5 . These are comparable to the other Measure of Experience surveys (and are acceptable, even at Hafren’s restricted maximum annual sample size).

“Contact” Participants

Both companies were able to supply Contact sample. Both supplied sample covering a period of one month for billing related issues, and two months for contacts related to operational type issues (either water or sewerage related issues).

A target sample size of 300 interviews was set (split, despite strong suspicions that it would be unachievable, 200 Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water and 100 Hafren Dyfrdwy, with each further split half billing and half operations type contacts).

Whilst we were able to achieve a sample of 300, it was only possible to achieve 31 Hafren Dyfrdwy interviews (27 billing and 4 operations). The balance (269 interviews) was conducted with Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water customers.

Response rates by both company and sample type were in line with expectations (1 in 9 for Hafren Dyfrdwy and 1 in 6 for Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water, and 1 in 10 for Billing and 1 in 5 for Operations).

The mean CSAT score collected from the sample of 300 participants, was 77.1 with a 95% confidence interval of 3.46. The calculated CI at 350 interviews (the likely maximum sustainable

annual sample size for Hafren Dyfrdwy if billing/ops quotas were not imposed) was +3.75, and for 1,000 interviews, +-1.87. These are comparable to the other Measure of Experience surveys (and are acceptable, even at Hafren's restricted maximum annual sample size).

“Operational Incident” Participants

Neither company was able to supply “Operational Incident” marked sample. Questions remain, on how this group might be defined and whether water companies could eventually supply it.

Ultimately therefore, testing a sample led Operational Incident approach was not possible in this pilot.

The possibility of free-finding Operational Incident type participants over the course of approaching the Non-Contact sample was explored. It was found that around 20% of participants interviewed from this sample did self-report an operational incident (using their own definition) in the last 3 months.

Due to the fact that only 26 Operational Incident type participants were found, no reliable conclusions can be drawn as to the robustness of the CSAT scores collected.

It is not clear that there is a clear workable way to effectively sample Operational Incident customers at present.

Questionnaire

- The 0-10 scale was interpreted without difficulty by participants, no obvious barrier to adopting it was found.
- The questionnaires used were effective and subject to a small number of very minor amendments ready to be deployed.

Conclusion

At a high level, both the “Contact” and the “Non-Contact” surveys went very well; sampling was effective and manageable, response rates good, the survey itself worked well, and the resulting data is sufficiently robust.

The caveat to that, is that for Hafren Dyfrdwy in particular, paucity of sample restricts the maximum annual sample size for both Contact and Non-Contact surveys. Whilst it appears that sufficient sample of both types does exist to make both surveys workable overall, setting any quotas within them (for example billing vs. operational contacts) may be precluded.

This pilot showed that there are significant operational issues that make the adoption of an “Operational Incident” component of the Business Customer Experience in Wales Survey problematic at this stage.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

Ofwat is the economic regulator of the water and wastewater sectors in England and Wales. Ofwat work with a broad range of stakeholders including the UK Government, the Welsh Government, water companies, consumer organisations and other regulators.

At PR19 Ofwat introduced the customer measure of experience (C-MeX) and the developer services measure of experience (D-MeX) with the aim of improving the experience of residential customers and developer services customers, including house builders, self-lay providers and new appointees.

At PR19 Ofwat also introduced corresponding bespoke performance commitments for Dŵr Cymru and Hafren Dyfrdwy, focused on the experience of business customers in Wales, the vast majority of which cannot choose their retail services provider (the business customer experience in Wales measure).

The purpose of these measures is to incentivise water companies to provide an excellent customer experience in England and Wales for residential, developer services and business customers respectively.

PR24 will retain C-MeX, D-MeX and Business Customer Experience in Wales. Ofwat agreed to review the effectiveness of these mechanisms before consulting on their proposals for the next price review period (from April 2025 to March 2030) in the PR24 draft determinations and publishing the final decision in the PR24 final determinations in December 2024.

As part of this review, Ofwat have engaged with stakeholders on the overall design of the mechanisms through a range of workshops and meetings, including water companies, customer groups and representatives of property developers and competitors in the new connections market.

Based on this engagement a number of key proposals have emerged which include broadening the operational incidents component in C-MeX, increasing the weight of the survey component in D-MeX and adding a contact component for business customer experience in Wales.

Following this, for PR24, Ofwat are reviewing surveying methods to:

- reflect significant changes in customer behaviour;
- ensure robust and reliable results;
- take account of stakeholder feedback and other research projects;
- future proof the approach up to 2030.

Ofwat commissioned Accent to conduct this research, that will inform the survey designs for the three measures of experience for the PR24 period.

2.2 Objectives

The research objectives were to:

- provide advice and make recommendations on the best approach to capturing customer views for PR24;
- pilot a range of methods for customer surveys that can be delivered in a robust and fair way, and which can be sustained through to 2030;
- test understanding of the questionnaires with the relevant customer base; and
- make recommendations for the delivery of the surveys for the next price review period, covering methodology, frequency, categorisation, different customer groups and other areas of interest.

2.3 Scope of this Report

This report is restricted to the pilot of the Business Customer Experience in Wales Survey. Reports covering the literature review, and the physical pilots of the C-MeX and D-MeX survey methodologies are published separately.

3 Business Customer Experience in Wales Survey (BCEWS)

3.1 Background

In the current Business Customer Experience in Wales (BCEIW survey), Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water and Hafren Dyfrdwy have identical bespoke performance commitments.

The basic requirement is to carry out 250 interviews with business customers every quarter, or 1,000 per year. Due to paucity of sample Hafren Dyfrdwy are only required to conduct 500 per year. Each the sample is drawn from the water companies' entire non-household customer/business customer base.

The customer satisfaction score is then calculated. The overall score is calculated as an average business customer satisfaction score by using a 5 point scoring question.

Currently, business customer satisfaction surveys are taken from the generality of business customers (whether or not a customer has contacted their company).

3.2 Objectives

As the Business Customer Experience in Wales survey has previously been commissioned directly by the relevant water companies, there is no historic BCEIW survey data available for analysis, and this pilot was treated as a "first dip".

This pilot explored:

- The impact, if any, of using a 0-10 scale for CSAT (rather than the 1-5 historically used on the BCEIWS)
- How best to survey customers that have contacted their water company, and whether there are any particular considerations to be aware of.
- Whether it is feasible to add a component of the sample that are customers who have experienced operational issues.

Design areas included:

- Sample design and methodological deployment
- Questionnaire design

Analysis areas included:

- Response Rate Analysis
- Firmographics
- Data robustness/comparability
- Feasibility of the proposed methodology
 - o Sustainability (in terms of the ability for the survey to be repeated into the future)
 - o Operational deployment

- Suitability of the questionnaire as a survey instrument
- Cost effectiveness

3.3 Design Areas

For the purpose of the Pilot, the same methodology was used as for the current Business Customer Experience in Wales survey, namely CATI. The Contact and Non-Contact elements of the surveys were treated as two separate surveys. Therefore, sampling, piloting and quotas were also treated individually. Other methodologies were not explored, primarily due to the paucity of sample in Hafren Dyfrdwy's area (with CATI known to be the methodology with the highest conversion rate in surveys of this type). Having said that, companies were invited to provide email addresses where known, with the potential to explore response rates. However, insufficient records of this type have been provided to run a representative test.

Sample design and methodological deployment

Water companies wishing to participate in the pilot (by supplying sample), first registered that intention with Accent. Both companies (Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water, and Hafren Dyfrdwy) registered and subsequently supplied sample via the portal mechanism usually used for C-MeX CSS.

Sampling

Contact survey

Initial quotas were set for the target of 300 interviews:

- 150 interviews for BILLING (split if sample allowed, into 100 Welsh Water and 50 Hafren Dyfrdwy)
- 150 interviews for OPERATIONS (if possible, split into 100 Welsh Water and 50 Hafren Dyfrdwy).

It was suspected that this quota split was likely to be unachievable due to the paucity of Hafren Dyfrdwy sample (operations in particular).

Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water and Hafren Dyfrdwy both supplied databases of customers who had made contact in January.

As fieldwork ran on and sample dried up, further "operations" records were supplied by both Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water and Hafren Dyfrdwy.

Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water required further guidance on precisely what should and should not be provided as a valid contact (having initially provided a sample set of 1,290 records, but with a CONTACT REASON that precipitated suppression alongside 526 of the billing records).

Non-Contact survey (incl. "Operational Incidents")

Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water and Hafren Dyfrdwy both supplied customer databases as per the instructions in the sample requirements note.

- Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water supplied 10,000 records as requested, all with phone numbers.
- Hafren Dyfrdwy supplied 7,080 records (representing the entire supply database). Of these, 4,015 had phone numbers.

At time of fieldwork, discussions on the definition of an “operational incident”, and the measures that the water companies needed to take to ensure proper categorisation/flagging of records, had not been concluded. Water companies were advised that they could use whatever definition they felt best able to provide or was most appropriate.

In the event neither company was able to append an “operational incident” flag in the timescales available. Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water have requested further definition in this area.

Across Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water and Hafren Dyfrdwy, 183 sample records were suppressed from the Non-Contact sample (as they appeared on the Contact sample in use on the other arm of this pilot).

Quotas for this survey were set at 150 with the following breakdown:

- 50 interviews for Hafren Dyfrdwy
- 100 interviews for Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water

Questionnaire design

Both questionnaires included the updated scoring question that used the 0 to 10 scale (where 0 represented Extremely dissatisfied, 5 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and 10 Extremely satisfied).

Contact survey

The Contact questionnaire was designed using the C-MeX CSS questionnaire as a blueprint; however, the questions were designed to make sense from the point of view of a business customer.

Non-Contact survey

The Non-Contact questionnaire was designed using the current C-MeX CES questionnaire as a blueprint and questions were redesigned to make sense from the point of view of business customers.

Operational Incidents

Additionally, the Non-Contact questionnaire included the question to capture self-reported instances of “operational issues” as well some firmographic questions.

Both Surveys

Following the design stage, both questionnaires were cognitively tested with five business participants each. Full questionnaire can be found in Appendix A. The findings from cognitive testing were incorporated into the design.

The main change for the Contact survey was rewording of the question regarding a supply for a business customer to mirror the question in the CSS survey, but in this case allowing only business customers through to the survey.

The changes for the Non-Contact survey were minor and were limited to adding some additional examples to codes in the firm demographic questions.

Both cognitive reports can be found in Appendix B.

3.4 Analysis Areas

Response Rate Analysis

Non-Contact Survey

The fieldwork for the Non-Contact element of the BCEIW was carried out between 21st February and 1st March 2024.

The sample supplied was sufficient and the 150 targeted interviews were achieved.

Table 1. Number of interviews achieved in the BCEIW Non-Contact survey

Water Company (sample based)	No. In Sample	Interviews	Live sample	Unused
Hafren Dyfrdwy	4,014	50	3,732	3,327
Dwr Cymru Welsh Water	8,297	100	7,988	7,651

The survey worked well, and we were able to achieve the desired number of overall interviews.

Contact Survey

The fieldwork for the Contact element of the BCEIW was carried out between 22nd February and 18th March 2024.

Due to the low volumes of “Contact” sample available from Hafren Dyfrdwy (and notwithstanding the fact that every effort was taken to maximise the Hafren Dyfrdwy sample), the 300 interviews were achieved with the following breakdown:

Table 2. Number of interviews achieved BCEIW Contact survey

	No. In Sample	Interviews	Live Sample	Unused
All Sample	2,183	300	312	0
Hafren Dyfrdwy	266	31	7	0
Hafren Dyfrdwy - Billing	249	27	0	0
Hafren Dyfrdwy – Operations*	17	4	7	0
Dwr Cymru Welsh Water	1,917	265	305	0
Dwr Cymru Welsh Water - Billing	1,251	123	0	0
Dwr Cymru Welsh Water – Operations*	666	146	305	0
Billing	1,500	150	0	0
Operations*	683	150	312	0

Nb. Operations interviews were obtained from sample covering all contacts in January and February 2024. Billing interviews were obtained from sample containing contacts from January 2024 only.

The following table further breaks the achieved quota down “Operations” into the constituent components of “Water” and “Waste”.

Table 3. Quotas by operations

	Dwr Cymru Welsh Water	Hafren Dyfrdwy	Total
Your water bill	123	27	150
Your water supply	114	4	118
Your wastewater or sewerage supply	32	0	32
Total	269	31	300

It is a concern for the robustness and sustainability that despite using sample covering all contacts over a period of 2 months, it was not possible to get any “Hafren Dyfrdwy Waste” interviews at all, and only 4 “Hafren Dyfrdwy Water” interviews.

77 participants fell out of scope due to the enquiry not being related to a business (these participants said it was related to a household or something else);

- 8 Hafren Dyfrdwy (1 to 4.5 ratio against interviews) and 69 Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (roughly 1 to 5)
- This could be a reflection of the phrasing used, as much as sample accuracy.

The interviewers reported that with large organisations it is often too difficult to identify the correct participant if there is no named lead, so accurate sample information and as much information about the contact as possible should be included in the sample, especially for larger organisations.

Firmographics

Company size

Companies of various sizes participated in the surveying, as follows:

Table 4. Welsh businesses distribution by employee size

	Dwr Cymru Welsh Water	Hafren Dyfrdwy	Total
0 (sole trader)	18	10	28
1 to 9 employees (micro)	51	23	74
10 to 49 employees (small)	21	10	31
50 to 249 employees (medium)	5	5	10
250+ employees (large)		2	2
Prefer not to say	5		5
Total	100	50	150

Companies were also asked how many UK sites their organisation had.

Table 5. Welsh Businesses distribution by number of sites

	Dwr Cymru Welsh Water	Hafren Dyfrdwy	Total
1	77	31	108
2	8	9	17
3	3	5	8
4	5	1	6
5-10	2	3	5
11-50	3	1	4
51-250	0	0	0
250+	1		1
Prefer not to say	1		1
Total	100	50	150

Water Use

Companies were also asked how their organisation mainly uses water at its premises.

Table 6. Welsh Businesses distribution by use of water on premises

	Dwr Cymru Welsh Water	Hafren Dyfrdwy	Total
For the manufacturing process which is essential to the running of your organisation (e.g., to power machinery, agricultural production, food production in a restaurant/cafe etc.)	14	5	19
For the supply of services your organisation provides (e.g., cleaning services etc)	14	1	15
For an ingredient or part of the product or service your organisation provides (e.g., food or drink, chemical, cosmetics manufacturer etc)	6	2	8
For normal domestic use for your organisation`s customers and employees (e.g., customer toilets, supply of drinking water)	79	37	116
None of the above	7	10	17
Don't Know	1		1
Total	100	50	150

“Operational Incidents”

Of the total of 150 participants in the Non-Contact survey, 26 (17.3%) reported having had an issue with their water supply in the last 3 months. 8 were related to water pressure, 7 to water quality and 7 to burst water pipes or flooding. The other 4 were all related to other areas.

Additionally, of the 94 participants that were supplied with wastewater services, 2 (2.1%) reported having had an issue with their waste/sewerage supply in the last 3 months. One issue was related to smells and the other was not specified.

Data Robustness/comparability

Mean CSAT scores were calculated across the methodologies, and 95% confidence intervals calculated.

Nb. In all cases, scores were multiplied up to be scores out of 100 (to provide parity with the C-MeX and D-MeX scoring regime, and with other calculations of this nature elsewhere in this report).

Table 7. Mean CSAT score by survey

	Mean CSAT Score	95% Confidence Interval; standard error of mean	Lower Confidence Limit	Upper Confidence Limit	Base
Contact	75.3	3.46	71.84	78.76	300
Non-Contact	77.1	3.90	73.20	81.00	150

This table shows that overall, the 95% confidence interval for the Contact sample is 3.46. That means that we can be 95% certain that the true mean CSAT score is within 3.46 of the calculated

mean of 75.3 (or to put it another way, is between 71.84 and 78.76). This sort of error margin is around what would be expected, and further analysis will follow, investigating what it means for the robustness of any scores at an annual level.

Non-Contact Survey

The table that follows shows the 95% confidence interval on these pilot results, but also at a sample size of 1,000.

Table 8. Mean CSAT scores for water companies with confidence limits

	Mean CSAT Score	95% CI	Lower Confidence Limit	Upper Confidence Limit	Base	Ideal Base	Ideal base CI
Dwr Cymru Welsh Water	78.9	4.66	74.24	83.56	100	1,000	1.46
Hafren Dyfrdwy	73.4	7.07	66.33	80.47	50	1,000	1.58

This shows that at a sample size of 1,000 interviews per company, we might expect to see CSAT scores with a margin of error of around 1.5 (on a score out of 100). These would be robust and reliable means, to the same sort of degree currently evidenced on C-MeX and the largest D-MeX sample sizes.

It seems almost certain that with the current prevalence of contact data (i.e. telephone numbers), Hafren Dyfrdwy's customer database would not stretch to 1,000 interviews even in year 1. Were a sample size of 500 achieved (the target that has previously been agreed for Hafren Dyfrdwy), the CI would be 2.24. At 300, it would be 2.89 (still respectable, and comparable with D-MeX interviews for smaller companies).

Contact Survey

The following table addresses the question of the robustness of the Contact based interviewing (as conducted in the pilot). It shows again the 95% confidence interval on these pilot results, but also (a) the CI at a sample size of 500, and (b) the CI at 348 (the maximum predicted possible for Hafren Dyfrdwy) and 1,000 (feasible for Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water only):

Table 9. Mean CSAT scores and confidence intervals for 500 interviews

	Mean CSAT Score	95% CI	Base	CI at 500	Max n=	Max CI
Dwr Cymru Welsh Water	75.6	3.61	269	2.65	>1,000	1.87
Hafren Dyfrdwy	72.9	12.00	31	2.99	348	3.57

We can see that Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water 95% CI at the pilot sample size is 3.61. We are 95% confident that the mean CSAT score for Welsh Water in this pilot was within the range of 75.6 plus or minus 3.61. At a possible sample size of 500, the CI reduces to 2.65. This is not terribly wide, but as a point of interest the final figure in the top row of the table is the CI calculated at a sample size of 1,000 (eminently achievable given the volumes of sample available and the response rate in the pilot), at 1.87. There is scope to add robustness through sample size for Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water in particular.

Hafren Dyfrdwy’s row is arguably more interesting and more relevant. Especially in the case of the rightmost figure – which in this case is the maximum number of interviews we believe it would be possible to get in any given year based on the sample provided for the pilot; c350. The pilot sample size was low (just 31 interviews, representing the maximum possible yield from 2 months of ops contacts and 1 month of billing), and consequently we see a very wide confidence interval of 12 – Hafren Dyfrdwy’s mean CSAT score in this pilot is (with a 95% degree of confidence) somewhere between 60.9 and 84.9. However, over a larger sample size it becomes much more reasonable; at 500 interviews it is 2.99. Even at the maximum sample size we believe to be possible over a year with the current levels of contacts, c350, it is 3.58 (again comparable with some D-MeX scores).

“Operational Incident”

“Operational Incident” sample can come from two obvious sources; contact sample related to operational incidents (like the operations component of C-MeX CSS, and a subset of the “Contact” component introduced above), or free-found amongst the wider Non-Contact customer base (either randomly found or targeted via specifically flagged sample).

Using Contact sample related to operational issues (the first potential source of operational incident participants) can be considered using the data produced in the “Contact” pilot fieldwork, by splitting out the “Operations” contacts and analysing confidence intervals:

Table 10. Welsh Business CSAT score with confidence intervals "operations" contacts only

	Mean CSAT Score	95% CI	Lower Confidence Limit	Upper Confidence Limit	Base	Ideal	Ideal CI	Estimated max*	Max CI
Dwr Cymru Welsh Water Operations	72.7	5.08	67.62	77.78	146	333	3.36	1,000	1.94
Hafren Dyfrdwy Operations	85				4			24	

The 95% CI for Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water’s “Operations” contacts was, over the base of 146 interviews conducted with this cohort in this pilot, 5.08. This is quite wide, but calculations show that at the hypothesised sample size of 333 interviews it recedes to 3.36 (which is on the wide side – but we would note that sufficient sample appears to exist for well over 1,000 interviews to be achievable from this sample should a larger base sample than 1,000 desirable). Although we provide no statistical analysis on the subject, we observe that of the 146 Welsh Water Operations interviews, 32 were related to “Waste” contacts. These volumes would be sufficient to set a quota for the 333 Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water operations interviews to be further split between Water and Waste.

We have declined to even present any confidence interval analysis for Hafren Dyfrdwy in the table above. We were only able to achieve 4 interviews with Hafren Dyfrdwy “Operations” sample in total, from a supplied sample of just 17 records post deduplicating (representing the entirety of Hafren Dyfrdwy’s Contact sample for the whole of January and February – so 1/6th of the likely annual volume. This sort of sample size (4 interviews) is not sufficiently large for any

robust statistical tests to be applied, and we would observe that even at a sample size of 24 (estimated maximum achievable over a year) statistical reliability would be very low indeed. The final observation to be made on this, is that all 17 of the supplied Operations Contact sample coming from Hafren Dyfrdwy were “Water” related, and none “Waste”. Therefore, even within the small sample size of 24 that might be hoped for, there is no scope for applying further quotas such as Water vs. Waste.

Free finding using Customer databases (Non-Contact)

At the point in time at which this pilot was conducted, it had not been possible to define an “operational incident” to put in place measures to enable sample selection by it. Therefore, we cannot consider the option of “targeted via specifically flagged sample” and so disregard it from the scope of this analysis. The only cautionary note we *would* add on this subject, is that it might be useful consider the findings of the C-MeX pilot in this regard; water companies *were* able to, using all sorts of different criteria, identify “operational incident” sample. However, each turned out to be a designation that unanimously turned out to be so far away from customer perception as to make it effectively unusable (unless one is prepared to ignore the participant perspective). That is not to say that eventually it may not be possible to agree a definition, or that once agreed it cannot be used for the purpose intended – but it should be noted that agreeing a common definition for an operational incident is not the end of the issues associated with the question.

Using “Operational Incident” subjects happened upon in the course of conducting the Non-Contact component of the fieldwork is the other potential source of these participants. Recall that for the purposes of this exercise, targeting (via sample) is not currently technically feasible. This means that we are restricted¹ to the interview numbers found naturally during the Non-Contact fieldwork.

Recall also that a potentially usable pot of 26 “Operational Incident” subjects *were* found during the course of the Non-Contact pilot fieldwork:

Table 11. Operational Incidents breakdown per water company

	Welsh Water	Hafren Dyfrdwy	Total
Yes	16	10	26
No	84	40	124
Total	100	50	150

Using a participant led definition (the only one available at time of publishing), some 18.5% of participants did claim to have experienced an operational incident in the last 3 months (a figure consistent across the two companies).

This is relevant because it leads us to observe that this is the sort of rate at which “Operational Incident” (participant defined) interviews might be accrued during the course of the Non-Contact fieldwork. At 333 per company per year, it is not unreasonable to assume that we might stumble naturally upon as many as 60 operational incident customers in this fashion. At 500, c90. At 1,000, perhaps roughly 185.

There are too few “Operational Incident” interviews that we did achieve in this manner, to conduct reliable statistical analysis into the robustness likely to be achieved at this level. In our

¹ unless an expensive, sample consuming (where in the case of Hafren Dyfrdwy it does not exist to consume), approach of continuing to free finding after the Non-Contact fieldwork has closed, is adopted.

experience though, that a minimum sample size of between 30 and 50 is required for robust results.

Feasibility of the methodology

Sustainability

There are certainly major sustainability challenges associated with this study, where Hafren Dyfrdwy is concerned.

- For the “Non-Contact” component, it is expected that Hafren Dyfrdwy’s sample would be unlikely to yield much more than 500 interviews, year on year. This does match up to the current reduced annual target that has been agreed between Hafren Dyfrdwy and CCW (of 500 per year).

We observe that this could be mitigated somewhat, were Hafren Dyfrdwy able to boost the level of contact detail held on their customer database (aside from sustainability concerns, having almost 50% of the customer base completely excluded for the want of a phone number, is not an ideal scenario).

No such sustainability concerns exist for Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water.

- For the “Contact” component, there are major feasibility constraints with respect to Hafren Dyfrdwy in particular. At best (and completely disregarding the prospect of any sub-quotas of Operational vs. Billing Contacts), somewhere in the region of 350 *might* be achievable for Hafren Dyfrdwy.

Nevertheless, robustness at a sample size of 350 is such that the exercise would still have merit.

No such sustainability concerns exist for Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (and indeed it may even be possible to implement even sub-quotas of billing vs. operations for this company), up to and potentially beyond 1,000 interviews per year.

- For the option of introducing a component of “Operational Issues”, there are challenges in a number of areas. Firstly, the lack of agreed definition of an operational incident (and the very high likelihood of participants disagreeing, if C-MeX CES is any indicator), means that targeting this participant type as a standalone exercise is unlikely to be tenable.

Secondly, the low volume of available sample combined with the low chance of a randomly selected participant having experienced an operational issue, means that even if run in tandem with the Non-Contact interviews, feasibility for Hafren Dyfrdwy is low. To put a figure on it, a sample size of 90 “Operational Incident” interviews *might* be achievable, when collected during the course of conducting 500 “Non-Contact” interviews, but it should be noted that unless the same interviews were counted twice (once as “Non-Contact” and once as “Operational Incident”), the Non-Contact sample would be reduced to 410. Confidence intervals on as few as 90 “Operational Incident” interviews would likely be quite wide.

No such sustainability concerns exist for Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water, but it is still important to note the proportional relationship between “Non-Contact” and “Operational Incident” interviews; roughly that for every 5 Non-Contact interviews, 4 Non-Contact Non-Incident interviews are yielded, alongside 1 Non-Contact Operational Incident interview. The reason

this is important is because it potentially provides a framework for assessing cost-effectiveness – “Operational Incident” interviews accrued in the course of “Non-Contact” interviews will cost the same as any other Non-Contact interview. Every “Operational Incident” interview beyond the point at which the “Non-Contact” interviewing ceases, will be more costly (because for every interview achieved, 4 willing participants who happen not to have experienced an operational incident will need to be turned away).

Operational Deployment

■ Sample sizes and feasibility

Almost all the challenges associated with this measure are in the area of operational deployment (insofar as they all stem from the physical challenge posed by pulling the highest amount of survey data possible from the very small customer base of Hafren Dyfrdwy).

There appears to be no easy solution to the issue, and much has already been made of the maximum likely achievable sample of the various interview types in the Hafren Dyfrdwy area, the statistical reliability (or otherwise) of those sample sizes, and the question over the long-term sustainability of consistently attempting to draw the maximum from a very finite pot of customers.

■ Frequency of survey

The Non-Contact component of the survey is naturally suited to quarterly fieldwork, run gently over the whole period. Each quarter stock can be taken, customer databases refreshed/updated, fresh exclusions (for example refusals or interviews) can be made, old exclusions (e.g. refusals or interviews from > 6 months ago) can be removed etc. This applies equally to the “Operational Incident” and “Non-Operational Incident” components (should the distinction be adopted).

The Contact component of the survey (should it be adopted) is suited to monthly fieldwork (akin to D-MeX), whereby fresh Contact sample related to the full previous calendar month is provided to the agent as soon as possible in the following month. In this case a good amount of time is required to maximise the sample. It must be noted that this means that the Contact component will run around 1 month behind the Non-Contact component. This in turn means that any reporting patterns will run at least a month behind what is likely to be in current implementation.

■ Representation

Data has been provided on the natural fall-out of key firmographic features. It should be noted that any desire to manipulate the data away from the natural fall-out, has consequences. To attempt to set quotas in the field will damage response rates, which in turn would damage sustainability and what is achievable. To use weighting to address imbalances is an option, but the general notes that (a) caution must be taken when weighting small sample sizes, and (b) that keeping the number of variables to be weighted by, to a minimum (certainly fewer than 4), would be well heeded.

Suitability of the questionnaires as survey instruments

The surveys both worked well (as expected, given that they are based on existing surveys already in operation in the suite of Measures of Experience).

The anticipated length of the **Non-Contact survey** interview was 5 minutes, and on average it took **4:03 minutes**.

Some feedback points were noted:

- Participants were asked who their water provider was, and if they didn't know it was looked up. Despite having achieved the targeted 150 interviews (50 Hafren Dyfrdwy and 100 Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water) according to the sample, the split in the interview data was 44 Hafren Dyfrdwy + 106 Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water.

This discrepancy suggests that perhaps the sample – the definitive authority on the subject - should be allowed to lead this rather than participants.

- Question on the *primary use of water in organisation* (Q7): A number of participants responded along the lines of “for staff toilets and cleaning”, which could potentially be added as a response code to this question.
- Question assessing the *industry* (Q10): A fair number of participants selected “Other”. The list used was the same as Affordability and Acceptability Testing (A&AT), however for the purposes of this survey, the list can be revised.

The anticipated length of the **Contact survey** interview was 5 minutes, but on average it took **3:11 minutes**.

No notable questionnaire feedback was collected. The interviewers found that the survey itself was well received and very straight forward.

- Interviewers did report that larger organisation it was more difficult to identify a participant if there wasn't a named lead on the contact – emphasising the role companies have in securing the feasibility of the work through full and accurate contact data collection.

Introduction of a 0-10 scale

The new 0 to 10 scale scoring question was successful administered in both surveys and was well received by participants without any comments of difficulty. With no historic data available to analyse the effects beyond that are not possible to quantify.

Value for Money

In terms of direct “cost per interview”, the Business Customer Experience in Wales Survey does not compare favourably against any of the other MeX methodologies, doubling the CPI of the most expensive MeX component (CES).

However, this is caused by the nature of the project rather than anything else – low interview volumes over a long period of time, extracting the maximum possible from a very small finite sample pot (inflating the major elements of the cost – interviewing, supervision, management, reporting, data processing – on a “per interview” level).

With a scenario as described here (small volumes of interviews, hard fought), this is to be expected. More cost-effective methodologies (such as email/online) are inappropriate because the lower response rates typically associated with them damage the feasibility of the measure as a whole (at least for Hafren Dyfrdwy). Equally, the savings that accompany large sample sizes are not available either due to limited sample or to the fact the measure covers just two companies (compared to 17 for the other MeXes).

In terms of the “cost for the whole measure”, it’s a different picture; the entire cost of a year’s fieldwork and reporting would equate to no more than a quarter or two’s worth of expenditure of even the cheapest MeX (C-MeX CSS). To enable an entire measure on this basis could be seen to be relatively good value from this perspective.

4 Appendices

4.1 APPENDIX A – Questionnaires

BCEIWS Contact Questionnaire

Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is and I am calling from Accent on behalf of Ofwat, the economic regulator for the water sector in England and Wales. Could I talk to #ID#?

WHEN TALKING TO RIGHT PERSON: Ofwat would like your help in understanding how water and sewerage companies deal with their customers. I understand that you have been in contact with #WATERBRAND#, and we would like to ask you a few questions about the service you received.

IF NO NAME ON SAMPLE SAY. I understand that someone on this number has been in touch with #WATERBRAND#. Could I talk to the person who was in contact with #WATERBRAND#? **IF TALKING TO CORRECT PERSON, CONTINUE. OTHERWISE ASK TO BE TRANSFERRED OR MAKE APPOINTMENT TO CALL BACK**

INTERVIEWER, CONTACT WAS AS FOLLOWS – pls use as necessary: #dateofcontact#, #higherlevelreason#

WHEN TALKING TO RIGHT PERSON: Ofwat would like your help in understanding how water and sewerage companies deal with their customers and we would like to ask you a few questions about the service you received.

This information will be used to help Ofwat understand how #WATERBRAND# is performing, and the survey will take around 5 minutes to complete.

Accent abides by data protection laws at all times, and your responses will be treated in the strictest confidence unless you agree otherwise.

You can find out more information about Ofwat's surveys and what is done with the information that is collected in the Privacy Policy on Ofwat's website **Read out if necessary:** <https://www.ofwat.gov.uk/publication/privacy-policy>

Please note that this call may be monitored or recorded to verify accuracy or for training purposes.

IF NECESSARY:

You have been selected at random from customers contacting [Water Company Name].

INTCHECK. **INTERVIEWER:** PLEASE CONFIRM YOU HAVE ADVISED THE PARTICIPANT OF:

Calls being recorded

INTCHECK2. **INTERVIEWER:** PLEASE CONFIRM YOU HAVE ASKED AND CHECKED THAT THE PARTICIPANT IS **NOT** TAKING THE INTERVIEW ON A MOBILE DEVICE WHILE DRIVING OR OPERATING EQUIPMENT

Yes, it is safe for the participant to proceed

No, it isn't safe – we need to call back later GO TO APPT SCREEN

Scoping questions

Q1 Firstly, can I confirm that you were the person who was in contact with [Water Company] on [insert date]? **INTERVIEWER: PROMPT PARTICIPANT WITH DETAILS OF CONTACT IF NECESSARY [CONTACT TYPE], AND SPEAK TO THE RIGHT PERSON**

Yes **GO TO Q2**
No **THANK AND CLOSE**

Q2 Was this contact related to water services for a home, a business, or somewhere else?

A home **THANK & CLOSE**
A business
Somewhere else **THANK & CLOSE**

Q3 **IF NO REASON FOR CONTACT AVAILABLE ON SAMPLE, GO TO Q4. ASK OTHERS:** And can you confirm that you contacted [Water Company] about a query related to **[CONTACT TYPE]**?

Yes **GO TO Q5**
No

Q4 **IF NO REASON ON SAMPLE ASK:** What was the main reason for making contact with [Water Company] on this occasion? **READ OUT (IF NECESSARY:** Please pick the closest that applies):

ENSURE PARTICIPANT IS THINKING ABOUT WATER COMPANY INDICATED IN SAMPLE. IF PARTICIPANT CONFUSED AT ALL ABOUT WHICH ORGANISATION THEY CONTACTED, THANK & CLOSE

Anything to do with billing, your account
Anything to do with your supply of water
Anything to do with your sewerage service
General query (please specify):

INTERVIEW ON REASON GIVEN AT THIS QUESTION

DP: Fix [FINAL CONTACT TYPE] based Q4 (or if Q4 absent, the sample)

Main Questionnaire

Error! Reference source not found.

Q5 Thank you, I can confirm you are in scope for the survey. The questionnaire will take about 5 minutes to complete.

Could you confirm *how* you had contact with [Water Company] on [insert date]? **SINGLE CODE ONLY**

I contacted them by:
Telephone

- Letter
- Email
- A form on their website
- 'Live chat' on their website
- Text
- Social media (e.g. X/Facebook/Instagram)
- An app
- in person visit at the water company
- Completing a transaction on my online account with the water company
- Other (Please specify) _____

Q6 Is the matter now fully resolved?

- Yes
- No

Q7 Taking everything into account how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your recent experience with [Water Company]? Please use a scale of 0-10, where 0 = extremely dissatisfied, 5 = neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 10 = extremely satisfied.

Extremely dissatisfied					Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied					Extremely satisfied
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Q8 Why did you give that score?

Q9 Thank you for your time and co-operation in completing this survey. On behalf of Ofwat we would like to thank you for your feedback.

Would you be willing to be contacted again if we need to clarify any of the answers you have given today?

- Yes
- No

Q10 **IF Q9= YES** Please can we take a note of your name and where we can contact you?

Name: [CATI: DP, IMPORT FROM ID]
 Telephone: [CATI: DP, IMPORT FROM TELNUMBER]

Interviewer Confirmation

I confirm that this interview was properly conducted and is completely confidential

- Yes
- No

End

Thank you. On behalf of Ofwat I would like to thank you for your time and feedback, and I hope you enjoy the rest of your day/evening

BCEIWS Non-Contact Questionnaire

Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is from Accent, an independent research agency. We are conducting a survey on behalf of Ofwat, the economic regulator for the water sector in England and Wales. Ofwat would like to understand customer's experience with their water company and I'd like to ask you a few questions about your water company.

This information will be used to help Ofwat understand how your water company is performing and will take around 5 minutes to complete.

Accent abides by data protection laws at all times, and your responses will be treated in the strictest confidence. You can find out more information about Ofwat's surveys and what is done with the information collected in the Privacy Notice on Ofwat's website.

Please note that this call may be monitored or recorded for training purposes.

IF NECESSARY:

- You have been selected at random from [WATER COMPANY]'s customer database, shared with us at Ofwat's instruction.
- Ofwat's privacy policy can be accessed using this link: www.ofwat.gov.uk/privacy-policy

Can I confirm that you are happy to participate in the survey?

Yes

No THANK & CLOSE

INTCHECK. **INTERVIEWER:** PLEASE CONFIRM YOU HAVE ADVISED THE PARTICIPANT OF:

Calls being recorded

INTCHECK2. **INTERVIEWER:** PLEASE CONFIRM YOU HAVE ASKED AND CHECKED THAT THE PARTICIPANT IS **NOT** TAKING THE INTERVIEW ON A MOBILE DEVICE WHILE DRIVING OR OPERATING EQUIPMENT

Yes, it is safe for the participant to proceed

No, it isn't safe – we need to call back later GO TO APPT SCREEN

Main Questionnaire

Q1 Please can I just check which water company supplies **fresh/drinking water** to your business/site? **DO NOT READ OUT. SINGLE CODE.**

Affinity Water **THANK & CLOSE**

Anglian Water **THANK & CLOSE**

Bournemouth Water **THANK & CLOSE**

Bristol Water **THANK & CLOSE**

Cambridge Water **THANK & CLOSE**

Essex & Suffolk Water **THANK & CLOSE**

Hafren Dyfrdwy

Hartlepool Water **THANK & CLOSE**

Northumbrian Water **THANK & CLOSE**

Portsmouth Water **THANK & CLOSE**

Severn Trent Water **THANK & CLOSE**
South East Water **THANK & CLOSE**
Southern Water **THANK & CLOSE**
South Staffs Water **THANK & CLOSE**
South West Water **THANK & CLOSE**
Sutton & East Surrey (SES) Water **THANK & CLOSE**
Thames Water **THANK & CLOSE**
United Utilities **THANK & CLOSE**
Welsh Water/Dŵr Cymru
Wessex Water **THANK & CLOSE**
Yorkshire Water **THANK & CLOSE**
Don't know **GO TO Q2**

CHECK QUOTAS

Q2 ASK IF DON'T KNOW AT Q1 (OTHERS GO TO Q1A). Please tell us the beginning of your postcode at that site. So if your full postcode is CF64 1BN please just tell us CF64 1. (This will be used to check who supplies your water and wastewater services)

CHECK WATER COMPANY USING POSTCODE CHECKER. Based on your postcode area, I believe your water supply company should be [Fresh Water Company]. Is that correct?

Yes

No/don't know **THANK & CLOSE**

CHECK QUOTAS

Q1A DO NOT SHOW TO DON'T KNOW AT Q1 Please can I just check which water company supplies **wastewater/sewerage** services to your business/site? **DO NOT READ OUT. SINGLE CODE.**

We do not receive wastewater/sewerage services at this site

Anglian Water **THANK & CLOSE**
Hafren Dyfrdwy
Northumbrian Water **THANK & CLOSE**
Portsmouth Water **THANK & CLOSE**
Severn Trent Water **THANK & CLOSE**
Southern Water **THANK & CLOSE**
South West Water **THANK & CLOSE**
Thames Water **THANK & CLOSE**
United Utilities **THANK & CLOSE**
Welsh Water/Dŵr Cymru
Wessex Water **THANK & CLOSE**
Yorkshire Water **THANK & CLOSE**
Don't know **GO TO Q2A**

Q2A ASK IF DON'T KNOW AT Q1A (OTHERS GO TO Q3). Please tell us the beginning of your postcode at that site. So if your full postcode is CF64 1BN please just tell us CF64 1. (This will be used to check who supplies your water and wastewater services)

**CHECK WASTEWATER COMPANY USING POSTCODE CHECKER.
SHOW IF DON'T KNOW AT Q1 OR DON'T KNOW Q1A**

Based on your postcode area, I believe your wastewater supply company should be [Waste Water Company]. Is that correct?

Yes

No/don't know **ALLOW TO CONTINUE BUT DO NOT SHOW Q6**

Q3 Still thinking from the perspective of your business/site, I would now like you to think about your experience of [Fresh Water Company].

Taking everything into account how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with [Fresh Water Company]? Please use a scale of 0-10 ,where 0 is extremely dissatisfied, 5 is neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 10 is extremely satisfied.

Extremely dissatisfied					Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied						Extremely satisfied
0	1	2	3	4	5	6		7	8	9	10

Q4 Why did you give that score?

.....

Q5 As far as you are aware, has your business experienced any issues with your **fresh/drinking water supply** in the last 3 months?

Yes (specify).....

No

Q6 ASK IF Q1A IS NOT 1; DO NOT ASK IF CODE 2 AT QA2

And has your business experienced any issues with your **wastewater/sewerage services** in the last 3 months?

Yes (specify).....

No

Business details

Thank you. We now have a few questions about your business to check that we are speaking to a variety of businesses.

Q7 How does your organisation mainly use water at its premises? **MULTICODE**

INTERVIEWER: Please read out the examples in brackets

Please select all that apply

For the manufacturing process which is essential to the running of your organisation (e.g. to power machinery, agricultural production, food production in a restaurant/cafe etc.)

For the supply of services your organisation provides (e.g. cleaning services etc)

For an ingredient or part of the product or service your organisation provides (e.g. food or drink, chemical, cosmetics manufacturer etc)

For normal domestic use for your organisation's customers and employees (e.g. customer toilets, supply of drinking water)

None of the above (Please specify) **INTERVIEWER:** Please ask participant to elaborate and type in the box
Don't Know

Q8 How many sites in the UK does your organisation operate from?

- 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5-10
 - 11-50
 - 51-250
 - 250+
 - Prefer not to say
-

Q9 How many employees does your organisation have in the UK?

- 0 (sole trader)
 - 1 to 9 employees (micro)
 - 10 to 49 employees (small)
 - 50 to 249 employees (medium)
 - 250+ employees (large)
 - Prefer not to say
-

Q10 Which of the following best defines the core activity of your organisation?

- Agriculture, forestry and fishing
 - Mining and quarrying
 - Energy or water service & supply
 - Manufacturing
 - Construction
 - Wholesale and retail trade (including motor vehicles repair)
 - Transport and storage
 - Hotels & catering
 - IT and Communication
 - Finance and insurance activities
 - Real estate activities
 - Professional, scientific and technical activities
 - Administrative and Support Service Activities
 - Public administration and defence
 - Education
 - Human health and social work activities
 - Arts, entertainment and recreation
 - Other service activities
 - Other (please specify)
 - Prefer not to say
-

Q11 Thank you. Please can I take a note of your name and where we can contact you for quality control purposes?

Name:

Telephone number:.....

Refused

Interviewer Confirmation

I confirm that this interview was properly conducted and is completely confidential

Yes

No

End

Thank you. On behalf of Ofwat I would like to thank you for your time and feedback, and I hope you enjoy the rest of your day/evening.

4.2 Appendix B – Cognitive Testing Reports

BCEIWS Contact Questionnaire Cognitive Testing Report



3631 PR24 Business Customer Experience in Wales – Contact Cognitive Interviews Report

February 2024

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Prepared for: Ofwat

File name: 3631_ Business Customer Experience in Wales – Contact Cognitive Interviews Report_V2



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objectives

Cognitive testing for the business customer in Wales contact survey was conducted to ensure accessibility and comprehensibility of the questionnaire.

Cognitive interviews involve taking a participant through the survey to probe for levels of comprehension, ease of progression and response to the questionnaire.

Findings from these interviews will help fine tune the details of the questionnaire in order to create a final version that will be used during fieldwork.

1.2 Methodology

The five interviews took place between 1st and 7th of February 2024.

The prescribed methodology for this survey is Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). Therefore, the methodology of the cognitive interviews reflected this. All interviews took place in a CATI format and were undertaken through Accent's Telephone Unit.

Interviewers used cognitive probes to assess certain questions while inviting participants to comment at any point on anything they found unclear. The interviews lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes.

Example of cognitive probes used:

- Is it clear what you are being asked?
- Is the language clear or unclear?
- How could things be made clearer to you and others answering the survey?
- How easy/difficult is it for you to answer these questions?

1.3 Sample

Recruitment was carried out internally by Accent's Telephone Unit.

Best efforts were used to capture a mixture of:

- Company size
- Industry
- Contact type

For a precise breakdown please see *Table 1: Sample breakdown* below

Participants were offered a £30 incentive for completing the cognitive interview.

Table 65: Sample breakdown

Factor	Characteristic	Number achieved
Company Size	Sole trader	1
	Micro (1-9 employees)	2
	Small (10-49 employees)	2
Industry	Hotels and catering	2
	Retail	1
	Real estate activities	1
	Other (Printing)	1
Reason for contact	Water	1
	Sewage	1
	Billing	3

2. FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 Introduction

Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is and I am calling from Accent on behalf of Ofwat, the economic regulator for the water sector in England and Wales. Could I talk to #ID#?

WHEN TALKING TO RIGHT PERSON: Ofwat would like your help in understanding how water and sewerage companies deal with their customers. I understand that you have been in contact with #WATERBRAND#, and we would like to ask you a few questions about the service you received.

IF NO NAME ON SAMPLE SAY. I understand that someone on this number has been in touch with #WATERBRAND#. Could I talk to the person who was in contact with #WATERBRAND#? IF TALKING TO CORRECT PERSON, CONTINUE. OTHERWISE ASK TO BE TRANSFERRED OR MAKE APPOINTMENT TO CALL BACK

INTERVIEWER, CONTACT WAS AS FOLLOWS – pls use as necessary: #dateofcontact#, #higherlevelreason#

WHEN TALKING TO RIGHT PERSON: Ofwat would like your help in understanding how water and sewerage companies deal with their customers and we would like to ask you a few questions about the service you received.

This information will be used to help Ofwat understand how #WATERBRAND# is performing, and the survey will take around 5 minutes to complete.

Accent abides by data protection laws at all times, and your responses will be treated in the strictest confidence unless you agree otherwise.

You can find out more information about Ofwat's surveys and what is done with the information that is collected in the Privacy Policy on Ofwat's website Read out if necessary: <https://www.ofwat.gov.uk/publication/privacy-policy>

Please note that this call may be monitored or recorded to verify accuracy or for training purposes.

IF NECESSARY:

You have been selected at random from customers contacting [Water Company Name].

Feedback:

Participants were read the introduction and were able to easily understand it. There were no comments regarding it.

1.2 Scoping questions

Q1. Firstly, can I confirm that you were the person who was in contact with [Water Company] on [insert date]? CATI ONLY

Q2. Could I just check, was this contact in regard to [Water Company] supplying water services to you/your company as a Business customer?

Q3. And can you confirm that you contacted [Water Company] about a query related to [CONTACT TYPE]?

Q4. IF NO REASON IN SAMPLE What was the main reason for making contact with [Water Company] on this occasion?

Feedback:

Most participants were able to understand these questions and had no issues answering them.

One participant was slightly confused about the wording in Q2. He thought it was something to do with the physical supply of water not the issue he had contacted the water company for. Participant suggested replacing the word supplying with providing for clarity.

Action:

- Potentially reword question to make it slightly clearer as per examples below:
 - Could I just check, was this contact in regard to [Water Company] providing water services to you/your company as a Business customer?
 - Was this contact related to water services for a home, a business, or somewhere else?
 - Home (thank and close)
 - Business
 - Elsewhere (thank and close)

1.3 Means of contact and issue resolution questions

Q5. Could you confirm how you had contact with [Water Company] on this occasion on [insert date]?

Q6. Is the matter now fully resolved?

Participants had no issues answering these questions. Participants even clearly stated the means of contact before the list was read out and the option stated was found in the list with the exact labelling.

“It is clear what is being asked. There is no ambiguity.”

Participants had no issues answering the question about the issue being resolved either.

“Direct question and direct answer.”

Action:

- No action required.

1.4 Scoring question

Q7. Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your recent experience with [Water Company]? Please use a scale of 0-10, where 0 = extremely dissatisfied, 5 = neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 10 = extremely satisfied.

Feedback:

Participants found the question text easy to understand. They felt that wording ‘how satisfied or dissatisfied’ gives clear options to answer.

“Sometimes people are timid to answer, and if you say you can express being dissatisfied it’s good. Most people can understand a 0-10 scale, but you must deal with the general public, so you have to make it clear. The more explicit you are the better it is for people. Explaining the 0, 5, and 10 is good.”

One participant started giving the reason for the score at this question and suggested it would have been helpful to be told that they can elaborate on the reason for the score at the next question.

Action:

- Add a note to interviewer briefing pack and mention to interviewers during briefing meetings: If participants want to give the reason they can let them know this is possible at the next question.

1.5 Follow up questions on the score

Q8. What causes you to give that score?

Feedback:

Participants had no issue answering this question and liked the openness of it. One participant remarked that the question was good and allowed them to expand on the issue the business had whilst dealing with the water company.

“If I had a problem, I would say it. It gives an opportunity for people to voice their opinion.”

One participant remarked that they would have liked the open end question to be more specific and ask about particular things like the call handling, management of enquiry, and call closure.

Action:

- No action required. Participants are at liberty to add as much or as little information for the reason behind their score. Additionally, interviewers are well trained and will be able to help the participants get all their points across.

1.6 Conclusion

The survey was generally well received and participants found it very straight forward. Interviews were found to take between 4-10 minutes to complete.

“A survey like this is great because it’s quick, efficient, and simple to answer. I would have little objection to taking part in a survey like this. Longer surveys with longer answers I am reluctant to do. Keeping the survey to short and sweet is good. Great length. I was surprised at how short it was”

“The survey suited its purpose and asked relevant questions.”

Some participants expressed their wishes for the survey to include some other areas as well.

“Sometimes a person goes above and beyond and stands out and it’s whether you can mention that person in the survey. For instance, I did a survey for my local garage, and they asked if there was anyone I would like to mention that stood out or went above and beyond their work. It allowed for me to give some praise to the person I spoke to. I thought it was really nice to see an option to mention the person that helped me. It made me think the company was trying to look after their staff.”

“The survey hasn’t covered any online access. In my experience, once I’ve set up after the phone call I would go online. The website is very accessible. Many companies ask you to go through their website or to find answers on their website when you call. Water companies direct you to their website. I could be useful to also ask about other experiences, like going online.”

Action:

- No action required. Majority of participants agreed this survey is efficient and it is suited for its purpose. Asking participants about additional elements such as nominating a contact and online experience are outside the scope for this research at this time.

BCEIWS Non-Contact Questionnaire Cognitive Testing Report



3631 PR24 Business Customer Experience in Wales – Non-Contact Cognitive Interviews Report

February 2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objectives

Cognitive testing for the business customer in Wales non-contact survey was conducted to ensure accessibility and comprehensibility of the questionnaire.

Cognitive interviews involve taking a participant through the survey to probe for levels of comprehension, ease of progression and response to the questionnaire.

Findings from these interviews will help fine tune the details of the questionnaire in order to create a final version that will be used during fieldwork.

1.2 Methodology

The five interviews took place between 9th and 16th of February 2024.

The prescribed methodology for this survey is Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). Therefore, the methodology of the cognitive interviews reflected this. All interviews took place in a CATI format and were undertaken through Accent's Telephone Unit.

Interviewers used cognitive probes to assess certain questions while inviting participants to comment at any point on anything they found unclear. The interviews lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes.

Example of cognitive probes used:

- Is it clear what you are being asked?
- Is the language clear or unclear?
- How could things be made clearer to you and others answering the survey?
- How easy/difficult is it for you to answer these questions?

1.3 Sample

Recruitment was carried out internally by Accent's Telephone Unit.

Best efforts were used to capture a mixture of:

- Company size
- Industry

For a precise breakdown please see *Table 1: Sample breakdown* below

Participants were offered a £30 incentive for completing the cognitive interview.

Table 66: Sample breakdown

Factor	Characteristic	Number achieved
Company Size	Sole trader	1
	Small (10-49 employees)	3
	Medium (50-250)	1
Industry	Hotels and catering	1
	Real estate activities	1
	Education	1
	Arts & Entertainment	1
	Professional services	1

1 FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1.2 Introduction

Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is from Accent, an independent research agency. We are conducting a survey on behalf of Ofwat, the economic regulator for the water sector in England and Wales. Ofwat would like to understand customer's experience with their water company and I'd like to ask you a few questions about your water company.

This information will be used to help Ofwat understand how your water company is performing and will take around 5 minutes to complete.

Accent abides by data protection laws at all times, and your responses will be treated in the strictest confidence. You can find out more information about Ofwat's surveys and what is done with the information collected in the Privacy Notice on Ofwat's website.

Please note that this call may be monitored or recorded for training purposes.

IF NECESSARY:

You have been selected at random from [WATER COMPANY]'s customer database, shared with us at Ofwat's instruction.

Ofwat's privacy policy can be accessed using this link:
www.ofwat.gov.uk/privacy-policy

Can I confirm that you are happy to participate in the survey?

Feedback:

Participants had no issue understanding the purpose of the research.

1.3 Water company questions

Q1. Please can I just check which water company supplies fresh/drinking water to your business/site?

Q2. Please tell us the beginning of your postcode at that site. So if your full postcode is CF64 1BN please just tell us CF64 1. (This will be used to check who supplies your water and wastewater services). Based on your postcode area, I believe your water supply company should be [Fresh Water Company]. Is that correct?

Q1A. Please can I just check which water company supplies wastewater/sewerage services to your business/site?

Q2A. Please tell us the beginning of your postcode at that site. So if your full postcode is CF64 1BN please just tell us CF64 1. (This will be used to check who supplies your water and wastewater services). Based on your postcode area, I believe your wastewater supply company should be [Waste Water Company]. Is that correct?

Feedback:

Most participants expressed no difficulties with these questions and found them straightforward to answer.

One participant commented that it was strange to ask separate questions about water and wastewater as they had not heard of businesses having separate water and wastewater suppliers.

"I have never come across a situation where a different water company provided the wastewater service."

Action:

- No action required. In some locations fresh water and sewage services are supplied by two different providers.

1.4 Ranking question

Q3. Still thinking from the perspective of your business/site, I would now like you to think about your experience of [Fresh Water Company].

Taking everything into account how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with [Fresh Water Company]? Please use a scale of 0-10 ,where 0 is extremely dissatisfied, 5 is neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 10 is extremely satisfied.

Feedback:

Most participants remarked that this question was clear, easy to understand and required no changes.

"I know what you mean, how satisfied are you with the service."

One participant felt that this question was too generic and could encourage low scores. They suggested adding a separate question asking participants to rate the value for money of water company services.

"In my option it would invite a low score because of people's perception of the cost and paying for utilities."

Another participant noted that it could be helpful if the question referenced different aspects of a water company's service such as supply or communications to make clear what is meant by the phrasing 'taking everything into account'. They commented that many people have little contact with their water company and so may not be familiar with the services they offer. This participant requested separating this question into one asking about the general service of a water company and another enquiring about satisfaction in resolving an issue.

Action:

- No action required. This question seeks an overall view of the water company.

1.5 Open ended question

Q4. What causes you to give that score? / Why did you give that score?

Feedback:

Two wordings for this question have been trialled with the participants. Participants had no issues with understanding and responding to the open ended question (either wording) and considered the wording to be clear. Participants felt they could have commented on anything they felt relevant at this question.

"The question invites full dialog."

One participant hesitated in answering the question and required probes from the interviewer to explain their initial, brief answer.

Action:

- No action required. Even if participant hesitate in answering the question interviews are able to probe for an answer.

1.6 Fresh water and waste water questions

Q5. As far as you are aware, has your business experienced any issues with your fresh/drinking water supply in the last 3 months?

Q6. And has your business experienced any issues with your wastewater/sewerage services in the last 3 months?

Feedback:

Participants offered more feedback on these questions compared to previous questions although they were easily understood by all.

The majority of participants questioned the three month time frame, seeing this as too short. They suggested asking about the last twelve months, with one suggesting an even longer timescale in addition, as well as about the last three months. One participant felt that the short timescale might be an attempt to boost scores as issues were more likely to be reported with a longer timescale.

"I thought, particularly with water, a 12-month experience would be more relevant."

"The more I think, a twelve-month period would be a much better question"

Action:

- No action required. This question is to check if businesses are aware of operational interruptions to their service recently rather than the overall experience with the water company.

1.7 Business demographics

Q7. How does your organisation mainly use water at its premises?

Feedback:

The majority of participants struggled to answer this question without clarification or help from the interviewer.

Some participants felt this question was irrelevant to them as they thought the water company knows what type of business they run.

One participant commented that this question did not feel relevant for them as a landlord. Another landlord participant could have chosen two options equally as they had a tenant who ran a café on one of their sites.

One participant was confused by the work 'normal domestic use' but the examples in the brackets were able to clarify the meaning for him. Conversely, other participants chose domestic use straight away as it was clear to them that's the only purpose for water at their sites.

One participant noted that this question was easy to answer and praised the options for containing sufficient information.

Action:

- Add additional detail to the code referring to manufacturing process to include cafes and restaurants to avoid any confusion with domestic use as per example below:
 - For the manufacturing process which is essential to the running of your organisation (e.g. to power machinery, agricultural production, food production in a restaurant/cafe etc.)
- Introduce a text box to the 'None of the above' option so participants can add a reason if they feel that the water usage at their premises does not fit in any of the categories listed.

Q8. How many sites in the UK does your organisation operate from?

Feedback:

One participant felt that this question was of limited relevance to them as a landlord.

That being said, the majority of participants experienced no issues with this question, finding it easy to answer.

Action:

- No action required. This is a really clear business sizing question that has been used across numerous surveys without any issues. The question asks for an exact number of location the businesses operate from and participants have the option to select 'Prefer not to say' should they find this question of limited relevance.

Q9. How many employees does your organisation have in the UK?

Feedback:

A few participants were uncertain when answering this question because of their employment of part-time staff, with one participant providing two different answers because of this issue. Another participant requested guidance on whether to include part-time employees in their answer to this question.

A few participants noted that at their organisations it is not only employees who are using water on the premises. They wished to understand whether water users more generally should be considered for this question as well as employees.

"There are 15 trustees, but there aren't 15 people using the water supply."

One participant believed that this question was unclear for participants who are landlords as they could answer that they are sole traders or take account of their tenants and include them in the total. They suggested that if the number of tenants is required then this should be asked specifically.

One participant could not answer this question as they explained that they have no employees, only volunteers. They requested an option for organisations run by volunteers. Similarly, another participant remarked that they have trustees rather than employees.

One participant commented that the bands of employee numbers were very wide and suggested altering them so that they increase by one hundred for each option e.g. 101-200 and 201-300.

Action:

- No action required. This is a standard business sizing question with standard numbers for employee bands so businesses can be categorised into size based on the number of employees.
- Interviewers are really experienced and are able to guide participants to the right answer should they struggle with this question. However, in depth notes will be added to the interviewers briefing pack around part time staff for the business sizing question so interviewers can better support participants should they have any queries regarding the number of employees.

Q10. Which of the following best defines the core activity of your organisation?

Feedback:

One participant requested re-wording this question to 'which industry would your business be in?'

One participant felt that it was unnecessary to read out the list of sectors.

One participant suggested breaking down the category for landlords to allow them to specify whether they are a domestic or retail landlord.

One participant found this question challenging to answer as they believed that there was an option missing for social enterprises.

Action:

- No action required. This is a general question that has not presented any issues in past surveys, however a note will be included in the interviewer briefing pack so interviewers can better support participants should they have any difficulties understanding the question.
- If participants have difficulties placing their business in one of the categories listed have the option to say 'Other' and to specify their industry or any details relating to their trade.

1.8 Overall

The majority of participants reported that the survey was straightforward and easy to answer. Interviews were found to take between five to six minutes to complete.

One participant felt that the survey was very generic and did not seek detailed information. Additionally, some other participants suggested asking more targeted questions looking at customers' experience of billing, water supply, metering and/or customer service. One participant queried if the purpose of the questionnaire was about identifying issues that water companies should be working on.

"It's that issue of giving your satisfaction, but then there are different aspects, like supply, dealing with issues, and even billing and customer support."

Conversely, one participant praised the design of the survey for being broad and felt that avoiding being overly specific was the only way to carry out this research with a wide range of customers.

Action:

- No action required. Asking participants about how water companies are dealing with different aspects such as resolving issues, billing and customer service is outside the scope of the research at this time.