

<b>Client</b> – United Utilities
<b>Project name</b> – Bespoke PCs Testing
<b>Project number</b> – 4564
<b>Date</b> – 25/07/23
<b>Trinity McQueen contact</b> – Gabe/Alice/Simon

## Online focus group discussion guide – 60 minutes

### Research objectives:

To explore, evaluate and optimise United Utilities' proposed bespoke performance commitments:

- Ensuring that participants understand the backdrop of how performance commitments are set and the difference between common and bespoke ones.
- Establishing the levels of support for the chosen bespoke performance commitments and whether they chime with what customers want and expect to see
- Identify any improvements that can be made to the language and description of the PCs to make them more impactful and meaningful

- **MODERATOR NOTE:** Ensure the participant is thinking about their business rather than themselves personally throughout the discussion.

## 1. Introduction and warm up

5 mins

### Moderator to explain...

- Introduce self and topic
- Explain MRS code of conduct. Ensure confidentiality. Stress no right / wrong answers.
- Session to last 60 minutes
- Topic is around water in your area, both now and in the future
- Mention viewing clients
- Permission to audio record? Any questions?

### I'd like us to start first with a short introduction.

- Please can you tell me your name, where you live, and a bit about your business and what it does

## 2. Revisiting the pre-task - understanding audience concerns & priorities

10 mins

**MODERATOR:** As you know we are here to talk about your water, and your water and wastewater provider and how they prioritise their activities. You all did a task on this recently. Let's review this now.

### MODERATOR TO NOTE ANY DIFFERENCES IN RESPONSE ACCORDING TO DIFFERENT CUSTOMER SEGMENTS

- Firstly, is the topic of water and wastewater something you have ever given much thought to in the past?
  - Why/ why not?
- So what do you know about water and wastewater suppliers?
  - What do water and wastewater companies do?
  - What are they responsible for?
  - What are they **not** responsible for?

- Do you know who delivers your services?
  - Who is it? How long have they been your provider?
- What are the different ways in which your business uses water?
  - Does this change at all over time? Does demand shift at all?
- What are your expectations of water and wastewater suppliers?
  
- What you think their main priorities should be?
  - Why do you think this is?
- What challenges do you think water and wastewater companies face?
- Is there anything specific to the North West which makes it different to other parts of the country?
  - PROBE: local issues / concerns for their area
- How do you think people's water and wastewater needs might change over the next few years and beyond?
- And what difference, or impact would this make to the service water and wastewater companies need to deliver?

### 3. Background to performance commitments

10 mins

**Moderator:** *Since April 2017, businesses, charities, and public sector organisations in England have been able to change the company providing their water and sewerage retail services (as they are able to with their energy) or negotiate a better deal with their existing service provider.*

*Because the market is competitive, you have a choice of different providers. These retailers provide bills, customer services and read any water meters at this site. However, United Utilities still manage the water and waste water network, and work to ensure the quality and continuity of your water supply and sewerage services - so your business is still a beneficiary of these services. That means if you were a customer of a different retailer, your business would only need to contact United Utilities if there was an urgent service issue (e.g., something that was a public health issue such as internal sewer flooding or poor water quality)*

**We want to spend the rest of the session today talking about United Utilities specifically...**

- What comes to mind when thinking about United Utilities? PROBE FULLY
  - What do you know about them?
  - Do you tend to hear good things about them, bad things, or not much at all?
- Does anyone have any experience with dealing with them?
  - What for? **PROBE:** if service issue/other, resolution

**Moderator:** *We're going to discuss the activities that United Utilities undertakes and prioritise. Before we do so we need to mention how water companies are regulated. An organisation called Ofwat regulates all water companies in England and Wales. They set and enforce rules about how water companies operate. I'm now going to take you through a quick summary of how Ofwat set "performance commitments" for water companies like United Utilities.*

**SHARE STIMULUS P2-9, READING SLOWLY, STOPPING TO CLARIFY ANY POINTS**

**Moderator:** *After reaching end of stimulus...*

- Is it clear who United Utilities are and who they serve?
- Is it clear how the regulator (Ofwat) sets performance commitments for all water companies?
- Do you understand the differences between the 'common' performance commitments and the 'bespoke' performance commitments?

**Moderator:** I want to focus on these 'common performance commitments' for a moment...

- What do you think about these?
  - Were there any you didn't understand?
  - Which ones were they?
  - What did you not understand?
- Are these what you would expect to see?
- Were any a surprise? PROBE: breadth of water company operations
- Any gaps in these 'common performance commitments'?
  - Would you expect United Utilities to set their own targets on these performance areas?
- Which of these would you say should be high priority?
  - Are there any that you feel should be lower priority?

#### 4. Bespoke PC evaluation

30 mins

**MODERATOR:** We're going to discuss some bespoke performance commitments which United Utilities may propose to Ofwat, who will determine whether they will be used in the future to monitor performance. These are designed to address customer priorities specific to the North West region.

I am going to share these on my screen and as I do please take some notes on each one. You'll be holding up your notes for each one so please all write down:

- A score / 10 – based on whether this feels important to you, and you feel it should be a priority for United Utilities – with 10 being the most important and 1 being of least importance (this will allow us to rank the Performance Commitments by score on an individual basis and as a group)
- Any other initial impressions you might have

We'll discuss them all one by one then compare and contrast them all at the end

#### SHARE RANDOMISED STIMULUS ON THE BESPOKE PCs P10-18, READING SLOWLY, STOPPING TO CLARIFY ANY POINTS

**Moderator:** So to recap UU has 7 bespoke performance commitments which they may propose. Before we dig into them in detail, thinking overall...

#### SHARE P19 – SUMMARY OF ALL PCS SHOWN

- Are these bespoke PCs what you would expect to see?
  - Why/ why not?
- Is there anything obvious missing, when considering all of the common and bespoke performance commitments you have seen so far?
  - What are the gaps? PROBE

**Moderator:** I now want to get your honest views on each one. The first (next) one is (READ).

<b>ONCE ALL HAVE MADE A NOTE ON EACH OPTION INDEPENDENTLY</b>	
<p><b>SPONTANEOUS REACTIONS / Individual evaluation</b></p> <p><b>MODERATOR:</b> Before we chat them all through can you all hold up your paper and tell me 1 by 1 what you scored and why</p> <p><b>Ask all</b></p>	<p>Moderator to note</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Body language / TOV /reaction</li> <li>• Language used / if reword in own words</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was this performance commitment about? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What do you understand by it?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Do you think this is important? Why? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How relevant is it to you personally? Why?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Would you expect United Utilities to focus on this? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Can you understand <i>why</i> United Utilities would choose to focus on this issue?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How much of a priority do you feel it should be? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What difference do you think it would make?</li> <li>○ PROBE: For customers OR for the environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What sort of benefits would it bring?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Could anything be done to improve it? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How could the commitment be made more meaningful or impactful to customers? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Why do you say that?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Is this a performance commitment that ultimately, you would support United Utilities in adopting? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Why/ why not?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any stories prompted</li> </ul>
<b>TOPIC SPECIFIC PROBES</b>	
<p>Water Without Worry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PROBE: Is this specific enough? What would your expectations be here?</li> </ul> <p>Community group affordability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PROBE: which sorts of businesses or organisations do you feel this should be, beyond the examples listed?</li> </ul> <p>Windermere</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Moderator to note differences in perception according to region</b></li> </ul> <p>Climate Change Mitigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PROBE: UU current target is ‘net zero’ by 2050...do you know what this means?</li> <li>• PROBE: How do you feel about United Utilities looking to decrease their carbon emissions?</li> <li>• PROBE: Should reducing ‘operational’ or ‘embodied’ emissions be more of a priority? Or both?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Overall</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there anything missing from these proposed common AND bespoke Performance Commitments? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ PROBE: Customer service / experience</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

**You’ve now seen all the bespoke PCs. Please could you all write down your top 4 bespoke performance commitments in order, with 1 being the bespoke performance commitment you feel is most important.**

**Once you’ve all done that, I’ll go through them 1 by 1 and I want you to tell me if it is in your top 4. Then I’ll recap...**

**MODERATOR TO ASK THE BELOW QUESTIONS FOR EACH PERFORMANCE COMMITMENT**

- Can you tell me why you’ve put this in your top 4?
- For the PCs you haven’t put in your top 4, can you tell me why not?

## 5. Recap & conclusion

5 mins

- How, if at all, have your perceptions of UU and what they do changed tonight?
  - Has anything you have heard surprised you?
  
  - To what extent do you feel you understood the issue and the information presented to you?
    - Why/ why not?
  - And how important do you think it is that United Utilities ask for customer's views on these sorts of issues?
    - Why/ why not?
  
- What is your one piece of advice for United Utilities when they consider their bespoke Performance Commitments and how they could best be optimised?

**Thank for taking part**