

Sewer Flooding Experience Discussion Guide: May 2021

Research objectives

- Bring to life customer stories of sewer flooding and the practical and emotional impact this has had on their lives
 - Specifically, the impact it has had on their wellbeing
- Understand:
 - Awareness of how such flooding is caused and how that makes them feel
 - If there has been any behaviour change as a result of the sewer flooding
 - Including if they have shared advice or information with others
- Capture customer awareness of the environmental impact of 'not for flushing' material and the impact it can have in creating blockages
- Elicit customer views on whether expect or support UU in recharging customers responsible, or take enforcement action in extreme cases?
- Understand what kind of future messaging might be impactful and help to create further behaviour change across the UU region

Research timings

- Commission and setup meeting Thursday 29th April
- Recruitment screener to UU Friday 30th April
- Screener signed off Tuesday 4th May
- Discussion guide delivered to UU Wednesday 5th May
- Recruitment begins Thursday 6th May
- Discussion guide signed off Tuesday 11th May
- Fieldwork Wednesday 12th May
- Analysis and reporting Thursday 13th – Monday 17th May
- Draft report delivered EOP Monday 17th May
- Final report and debrief Wednesday 19th May
- Debrief TBC Wednesday 19th May onwards

PRETASK

Customers to find a picture/pictures that sums up their overall experience of sewer flooding—. This could be a picture of the actual impact the flooding had on them or an image that represents how they feel about the experience.

Customers also briefed to come prepared with their story to cover:

- When they were first aware of a problem?
- What actually happened?
- What was the immediate impact on them?
- What they did/whom they contacted?
- The response they received?
- Any ongoing impact through to resolution?

Welcome and introduction (2 minutes)

- Welcome, introduction to Verve and interviewer
- Outline MRS code of conduct and anonymity
- Audio and video recording of session, anonymised footage to be used internally by Verve and United Utilities only, footage will never be shown publicly
- Why we're doing this research:
 - We're here today to talk about the impact of sewer flooding
 - Today we'll be discussing your experiences and also awareness of why sewer flooding can happen
- The session will last up to 90 minutes, and should be fast paced and interactive
- Because we're using Zoom I want to make sure that only one person talks at once, so I'll ask people by name to speak, and if you have a point you would like to make, please put your hand up
- If we are going off topic or repeating the same points over – I will interrupt you – please don't be offended – we have a lot to get through
- Moderator using two screens
- Any questions?

About you (5 minutes)

- I'd just like to go around and get everybody to introduce themselves – please keep your introduction to about 30 seconds each as there is lots to talk about
- Please tell us:
 - Your first name
 - What area you live in
 - A little bit about your family and your home (e.g. who's at home, hobbies etc)
 - 30 seconds!

Icebreaker session (5 minutes)

- And just to get things moving before we start on the topic of sewer flooding, we wanted to kick off the conversation on a different note
- What are people looking forward to in the coming months as lockdowns are lifting and the weather is improving?
- What do you hope to be doing and what have you missed?

Pictures and stories 30 minutes

- I'd now like to go round everybody here and talk about their experience of sewer flooding. We've got around 4 or 5 minutes for each individual.
- *Participant to share picture*
- Reminder to cover:
 - Where and when the sewer flooding occurred
 - When they were first aware of a problem
 - What actually happened
 - What was the immediate impact on them and their family/other occupants
 - What they did/whom they contacted
 - The response they received
 - Any ongoing impact through to resolution
 - Understanding of the cause
- *Moderator to use laddering questions to understand impact, consequences and emotional factors*

- E.g. ‘and what was that important’, ‘and how did that make you feel’, ‘and what happened as a consequence’ etc
- Moderator to elicit emotional reactions and well as the practicalities throughout and probe on:
 - Where and when the sewer flooding occurred – current or older property, how long ago
 - When they were first aware of a problem – how and where did they find the problem
 - What actually happened – locations, internal, external etc
 - What was the immediate impact on them – how did it affect them, their family, their home, their possessions
 - What they did/whom they contacted – immediate reaction, investigation, information gathering, expected cost impact
 - The response they received – how helpful, how fast, what action was taken, information given on the cause of the flooding, actual cost impact
 - Any ongoing impact through to resolution – what impact did the flooding have both practically and emotionally on them and their family
 - Time to resolution, overall satisfaction with resolution
 - Understanding of the cause – did they find out, whom did they ‘blame’, how did they feel when they knew what the cause was?
 - If a victim of repeat flooding, what has the ongoing impact been? Practical and emotional

Change in behaviour – 10 minutes

- You have all had an experience of flooding – we would now like to think about what you have learned as a result
 - What do you know now that you didn’t know before?
 - Do you think you are doing anything differently as a result? Probe for changes in behaviour
 - Do you talk to people about your experience – do you tell them about the causes – what do you say?
 - What do you think has been the biggest change for you and how you behave since you experienced this flooding?

Causes of flooding – 10 minutes

- What does everybody feel about the causes of sewer flooding? (*deliberately vague to see what emerges in terms of overall knowledge and perceived blame*)
- Do you think people generally understand the causes of sewer flooding? Why? Why not?
- Do you have any questions about the causes of sewer flooding? Is there anything you are unclear on?
- Moderator to provide a brief overview on the main causes of sewer flooding
- How does this information impact on your views of the causes of sewer flooding? Does it make you think differently at all?
- How do people feel about:
 - People flushing things that they shouldn’t?
 - The issue they experienced possibly being caused by themselves or people living nearby?
 - Why do you think people might flush things that they shouldn’t?
 - Awareness?
 - Ignorance?
 - Not caring?
- What do you feel United Utilities should do where people continue to flush non-flushable materials and put fats/oils down the sink/drain? *Spontaneous then prompt:*
 - Should action be taken by UU against those that are identified as continually contributing to blockages?
 - Would you support UU doing this due to the cost of unblocking?

- What kind of action?
 - Fines?
 - Legal action?
 - Why? Why not?
- Would you support UU in doing this to prevent sewer flooding happening to others?
- What kind of action?
 - Fines?
 - Legal action?
 - Why? Why not?

Environmental impact – 10 minutes

- Has anybody thought about the environmental impact of flushing the wrong things/putting fats/oils down the sink/drain?
- What impacts do you think this might have?
 - What information have you seen on the environmental impact?
 - Has it made you think differently in any way? Changed your behaviour?
- How do you feel about the environmental impacts of flushing/pouring?
- Who is responsible for minimising the environmental impacts of flushing/pouring?
- What would you like to see done about minimising the environmental impacts of flushing/pouring?
 - *Probe on comms campaigns, action from UU (what kind of action), other idea for raising awareness of the impacts*

Communications – 15 minutes

- *Moderator to present the 'Stop the Block' communications*
- Has anybody seen this material before? Where did you see it?
- Did the material make you think at all about the causes of sewer flooding? Did it make you change your behaviour as a result?
 - Why? Why not?
 - Is there anything that could be changed or improved about this messaging?
- What kind of campaigns or messaging might help to further reduce the number of people flushing the wrong things/putting fats/oils down the sink/drain?
 - Is there anything we have heard today in everything we've talked about that is interesting or different and that might help to change behaviours?
 - What kinds of messaging might get people to think more about what they flush/pour?
 - What kinds of places would you put these messages? *If not mentioned probe on local Facebook/NextDoor groups*
- Is there anything else that UU should be thinking about/considering in terms of helping to reduce incidences of sewer flooding and the environmental impact of people flushing/pouring?
- Is there anything else that you'd like to tell us that you think is relevant or that we haven't covered this evening?

THANKS AND CLOSE