

**9174\_ United Utilities Social Tariff Research**  
**Follow up Depth Discussion Guide (30 mins)**  
**Version 1**



<b>(I) Introduction</b>	<b>7 mins</b>
<b>Brief explanation of the purpose of the research</b>	<p><i>Moderator to explain the nature of the research.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I work for a company called DJS Research, we are an independent market research company and today we are working on behalf of United Utilities.</li> <li>• Following on from your participation in an online survey about United Utilities’ plans for social tariffs for customers in the period 2025-2030, we would like to conduct some follow up research with customers to understand more about your current circumstances, and your associated opinions and attitudes towards social tariffs for water customers.</li> <li>• <i>Moderator to reassure respondents about confidentiality / GDPR compliance.</i></li> <li>• Feedback will be summarised into a report along with other research, we won’t pass names/specific details of who we have spoken to back to our client.</li> <li>• There are no right and wrong answers; we are just interested in your views, opinions and ideas.</li> <li>• Brief explanation about audio/video recording information – we may use anonymised quotes &amp;/or video clips in our report to illustrate the research findings for our client, but these will not be attributed to you personally.</li> </ul>
<b>Introductions</b>	<p><i>Moderator to invite respondent(s) to introduce themselves.</i></p> <p><i>I’d first of all like to spend some time understanding more about you...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell me a bit about yourself; who you live with; working status; hobbies</li> <li>• What are your main concerns in life at the moment?</li> <li>• How are you feeling about your household finances currently [MODERATOR: refer to response from quant in relation to affordability of water bills, e.g. in the survey you took part in you mentioned that you [never/sometimes/often struggle] to afford your water bills. Is that still the case?] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How has your outlook of your finances changed over the past 6 to 12 months or so? Better? Worse? How so?</li> <li>○ [IF CUSTOMER HAS CONCERNS] Which bills or expenses are of most concern/have impacted you most? What impact has this had on your household?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How do you feel about your bills going forward? Why?</li> </ul>

<b>(II) Re-cap on social tariffs</b>	<b>8 mins</b>
<b>Re-cap on social tariffs</b>	<p>Thank you for your responses so far. I'd now like to move on to talk about social tariffs and cross-subsidies. In your own words, could you briefly tell me a bit about your understanding of what social tariffs and cross-subsidies are? (MODERATOR: If necessary, stress that there are no right or wrong answers)</p> <p><b>MODERATOR, IF REQUIRED, READ OUT:</b></p> <p>All major water companies in England and Wales have schemes to give lower bills to some customers who might otherwise struggle to pay. These are called social tariff schemes. In line with Government rules these schemes are mostly funded by charging other households a bit more on their bills.</p> <p>This is what's also known as a cross-subsidy. There are a number of examples of cross subsidies in day-to-day life. For example, concessionary tickets for children or pensioners to attractions (e.g. the cinema, theme parks etc.). Another example is the price of a stamp which is the same within the UK whatever distance the letter or parcel travels. At different points in our lives, we are all likely to have helped fund cross-subsidies, and to have received help from them.</p> <p>Generally speaking, to what extent do you support the principle of social tariffs and cross-subsidies? Are there any areas / aspects of life where you think social tariffs are not appropriate? (PROBE ON WHAT ANY WHY). And, any areas where you think social tariffs and cross-subsidies are particularly beneficial? (PROBE ON WHAT AND WHY)</p> <p>Before you took part in the survey on behalf of United Utilities, were you aware of the support available to customers who are struggling to pay their bills? IF SO: what were you aware of? How did you become aware of it?</p> <p>I'd now like to spend a minute or so going over some of the information you were presented with in the online survey you completed.</p> <p><b>MODERATOR: If conducting over Zoom/Teams show slide. If conducting over the phone read out info on slide.</b></p> <p>MODERATOR: Show or read out from slide (examples of support schemes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [IF UNAWARE OF SCHEMES PRIOR TO TAKING SURVEY] Thinking back, how did you feel when you took the survey and learned about these schemes for the first time?</li> <li>• [IF AWARE OF SCHEMES PRIOR TO TAKING SURVEY] How did you first become aware of these support schemes?</li> <li>• Having reviewed this information again, what is the first word that comes to mind when you think of these support schemes?</li> <li>• How do you feel about the social tariff that is currently in place for United Utilities?</li> <li>• What, if any, changes would you make to these support schemes? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ REPEAT FOR EACH CHANGE MENTIONED: What impact do you think this change would have? Why is this change important to you? How would these changes make you feel? Why?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• IF NOT MENTIONED PROMPT ON: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Number of customers supported (is it too many, not enough or about right?). Why?</li> <li>○ Eligibility criteria (does it include the right people? Are there any groups that are</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>included but shouldn't be? Any groups that aren't included but should be?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Amount contributed by United Utilities shareholders (is it too much, not enough or about right?). Why?</li> <li>○ Amount paid by customers (is it too much, not enough or about right?). Why?</li> <li>○ Level of support for customers in receipt of social tariffs (is it too much, not enough or about right?). Why?</li> <li>○ IF NOT ON SUPPORT SCHEME [CHECK SAMPLE]: If your circumstances changed in the future and you were eligible for one of these support schemes, would you apply? Why/why not?</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To what extent do you support or oppose United Utilities including a charge in bills to contribute towards supporting customers through social tariffs? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Why do you say that? (PROBE FULLY)</li> <li>○ IF DON'T FULLY SUPPORT: what, if anything, would make you more supportive of a social tariff on your water bill? (PROBE ON: communication / information / detail on who is supported / safeguards in place to avoid abuse of the scheme(s) etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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<b>(III) Social tariffs 2025-2030</b>	<b>12 mins</b>
<b>Social tariffs 2025-2030</b>	<p>Still thinking about social tariffs, I'd like to spend some time now thinking about United Utilities' future plans for supporting customers who are struggling to afford their water bills through a social tariff.</p> <p><b>MODERATOR: For next section refer to WtP figure from sample</b></p> <p>When responding to the survey, you said you [IF WtP is £0: would not be willing to contribute to the social tariff] / [IF WtP =&gt; £0.01: would be willing to contribute WtP amount from sample per month to the social tariff]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>IF WTP is £0:</b> why wouldn't you be willing to contribute anything to the social tariff? PROBE ON: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ To what extent do your own financial circumstances affect your response?</li> <li>○ Are there any circumstances in which you would be willing to contribute? IF SO; What/when?</li> <li>○ IF MENTIONED CHANGES TO SCHEMES EARLIER: Before we talked about changes that you suggested United Utilities could make to their support schemes for vulnerable customers. If United Utilities made these changes, would it change the amount you are willing to contribute towards the social tariff? IF YES: by how much?</li> <li>○ More generally, is there anything that United Utilities could do that would encourage you to contribute extra towards the social tariff? IF YES: by how much? PROBE FULLY BEFORE MOVNG ON. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ IF NOT MENTIONED PROMPT ON: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The quality of service United Utilities provides (e.g. water quality, customer service etc)</li> <li>● Extent to which customers trust United Utilities to administer these support schemes / spend the money well.</li> <li>● Knowledge levels of social tariff schemes / what bills contribute towards.</li> <li>● The level of investment United Utilities' shareholders contribute towards social tariff schemes.</li> <li>● Eligibility criteria of the social tariff schemes.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>IF WTP is =&gt;£0.01:</b> why would you be willing to contribute up to <b>WtP amount from sample</b> per month to the social tariff? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Do you support the principle of social tariffs generally? IF SO; why do you support social tariffs in principle? Any circumstances which haven't been mentioned previously when you wouldn't be willing to contribute? (MODERATOR PROBE FULLY)</li> <li>○ To what extent do your own financial circumstances affect your response?</li> <li>○ IF MENTIONED CHANGES TO SCHEMES EARLIER: Before we talked about some changes that you suggested United Utilities could make to their support schemes for vulnerable customers. If United Utilities made these changes, would it change the amount you are willing to contribute towards the social tariff? IF YES: by how much?</li> <li>○ More generally, is there anything that United Utilities could do that would encourage you to contribute extra towards the social tariff scheme? IF YES: by how much? PROBE FULLY BEFORE MOVNG ON. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ IF NOT MENTIONED PROMPT ON: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of service United Utilities provides (e.g. water quality, customer service etc)</li> <li>• Extent to which customers trust United Utilities to administer these support schemes / spend the money well.</li> <li>• Knowledge levels of social tariff schemes / what bills contribute towards.</li> <li>• The level of investment United Utilities' shareholders contribute towards social tariff schemes.</li> <li>• Eligibility criteria of the social tariff schemes.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>As a customer, how important is it for you to know / be aware of the amount you are contributing to social tariffs in your water bills? Please answer on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is not important at all and 5 is extremely important?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Why do you say that?</li> </ul> <p>What else, if anything, would you like to hear / know from United Utilities in relation to social tariffs? Where / how should they deliver this information?</p>
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<b>(IV) Experience and perceptions of water supplier.</b>	<b>5 mins</b>
<b>Experience and perceptions of water supplier</b>	<p>For the final section, I'd like to spend a bit of time talking about your experience and perception of United Utilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your main expectations of United Utilities as your water provider? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ IF NEEDED: e.g., Service, reliability, value for money, environment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How do you get news/information about the work United Utilities is doing? How often do you get this? Is this enough or would you like to hear more/less?</li> <li>• What experience do you have of them?</li> <li>• Is there anything about the service United Utilities provides that you would like to see them improve?</li> <li>• How would you describe your relationship with United Utilities?</li> <li>• Do you feel like a valued customer of United Utilities? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Why/why not?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• What words would you use to describe how you feel about United Utilities?</li> <li>• And how would you rate the value for money you receive for your water services provided by United Utilities? Please do this on a scale from 1-10 with 1 being the lowest value for money and 10 the highest. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Why did you give this rating?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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**Any final questions**

**Thank & Close. Remind participant they will receive their 'thank you' for taking part within 1 working week (£35 giftpay voucher to be sent via email)**