



BLUE MARBLE

HEALTH VULNERABLE DEPTH DISCUSSION GUIDE MODERATOR GUIDE

Overview

- 60 minute depth with health vulnerable household customers

Prescribed structure for optional vulnerable in-depth interviews

The interview should cover the following. Numbers 5 and 7 are tailored for vulnerable audiences, the rest use the same approach as set out in the Appendix A (Prescribed process for deliberative discussions for household customers):

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Reactions to the pre-task
3. An introduction to the water company
4. Recap on the pre-task information
5. Explore their service needs and experiences of Priority Services and/or social tariffs
6. Temperature check - household finances/cost of living
7. Focus on the proposals in the proposed business plan for services aimed at people with health and financial vulnerabilities
8. Focus on the shorter-term picture (proposed business plan)
9. Explore views on affordability and acceptability
10. Wrap-up including the post-task

BEFORE INTERVIEW

Moderator to know the individual circumstances/vulnerability of respondent

1. Welcome and introductions (3 mins)

Moderator welcome and introduction

- Thank for participating.
- Introduce Blue Marble and explain that we are an independent research agency
- Explain: Confidentiality, GDPR, recording, how data will be used
- Objective for the discussion: to help your water company make important investment decisions.

Respondent introduction/warm-up

- Tell me a bit about you – where do you live and who lives in household?
- Circumstances: working; not working; retired etc.
- What are the biggest challenges in life at the moment?
- How do you manage these challenges?

2. Reactions to the pre-task (2 mins)

Moderator: have pre-read to hand but do not share slides on screen (just glean what matters, what has struck them)

Response to the pre-read

We provided you with some pre-read information to look through before attending this session. We're going to cover some of the topics in depth in due course, but I want to get your first thoughts:

- What surprised you most out of the things you have read?
- Has any of the information you have seen changed your opinion of your water company in any way? If so, in what ways?
- What would you most like to find out more about?
- Is there anything in the material you read which was difficult to understand?

- Which bits?

3. An introduction to the water company (5 mins)

Moderator: not screen sharing / have pre-read to hand

Introduction to the water company Refer to pre-task slides

- Awareness and experience of the water company
 - How much of this is new information for you?
 - What contact do you have with your water company?
 - What associations do you have with your water company?
- Understanding the role of water companies
 - Were there any surprises in terms of what they do as a business?
 - Check awareness of dual providers if relevant e.g.
 - Were you aware that [as appropriate]:
 - your water company provides both your water services and your sewerage services?
 - You have 2 providers - one for water and one for waste?
 - Are your bills for both services separate or combined?

4. Recap on the pre-task information (5 mins)

Moderator: not screen sharing / have pre-read to hand

Refer to pre-task slides on performance

- Thinking about their performance when compared to other water companies, which areas matter most to you?
- Thinking about all the water and wastewater services that your water company provides for you and thinking about your bills:
 - What do you think of the value for money of the service you receive?
 - If so, in what ways are they providing good value?
 - If not, in what ways are they providing poor value?

5. Temperature check – household finances and the cost of living (5 mins)

We're now going to talk about finances and the cost of living.

- How has the cost of living crisis impacted you and your household?
 - How about other people you know?
- Do you feel that things are worsening/improving/remaining stable?
 - If not improving, when do you anticipate the financial situation will start to improve?
- How are you feeling about the financial situation looking into the future:
 - In the next 5 years?
 - In the next 10 years?

6. Service needs & experience of Priority Services and/or social tariffs (5 mins)

I'd now like to talk a bit about your health condition and the services you receive from your water company. From the information you provided, I understand that you have a health condition. Could you please tell me about this and how it affects your day-to-day life?

- How, if at all, does it affect the way you use water?
- How, if at all, does it affect how you communicate or engage with your water company?

- And do you know whether you are on the Priority Services Register at all?

[IF ON PSR]

- What specific services or assistance, if any, do you receive from your water company as a result of being on the Priority Services Register?

Where appropriate probe whether they receive different priority services:

- Accessible bills or literature (large print, disc, braille communications, read-out bills, text relay, alternative language documents)
- Advanced warnings of supply interruptions;
- Password if water company employee needs to call at individuals property / identity check to ensure person at door is genuine water company employee.
- Nominated contact – relative, friend, or carer to be contacted about bill or water emergency.
- Help with reading water meter.
- Emergency water supply - if have no water and cannot get to a collection point or need it for medical reasons.

[FOR EACH PRIORITY SERVICE THEY RECEIVE]

- What are your impressions of this service?
- How, if at all, are they helpful or unhelpful?
- What, if anything, could be improved about the service you receive?
- What additional specific services or assistance, if any, would you like to receive from your water company?

[IF NOT ON PSR OR UNSURE]

- What support, if any, do you receive when it comes to communicating or engaging with your water company?
- Who provides this support? (probe: family, friends, carer, charities etc.)
- How, if at all, does this help?
- What other support would you like?
- What specific services or assistance, if any, would you like to receive from your **water company** to help with the issues you mentioned related to your health condition?

And do you know if you are on a social tariff at all? (if necessary: this is a specific tariff that reduces customers' water bills. It is offered by water companies to customers that struggle to afford their bills.)

[IF ON SOCIAL TARIFF]

- What are your impressions of your water company's social tariff?
- How, if at all, is it helpful or unhelpful?
- What additional financial support, if any, would you like to receive from your water company?

[IF NOT ON SOCIAL TARIFF OR NOT SURE]

- What financial support, if any, would you like to see from your energy company?
- Why?

7. Focus on the proposals in the proposed business plan for services aimed at people with health and financial vulnerabilities (15 mins)

I'd like to talk a bit more about the Priority Services Register and what your water company is planning as part of its plans

SHOW PSR SLIDES FROM PRE-READ

- What do you think about the work they are doing relating to supporting customers on the PSR register?
- Identify whether, and if so how this part of their service could be improved
- Overall, how acceptable do you find their proposed activities?
- How do you feel about their performance in this area (show performance slide)

SHOW ST and AFFORDABILITY SLIDES FROM PRE-READ

ST slide

- What do you think about the work they are doing relating to supporting customers who are struggling financially?
- Identify whether, and if so how this part of their service could be improved

Affordability slide

- How do you feel about the proposed plans to expand affordability services
 - Do they feel too ambitious/not ambitious enough/about right?
- Generally, do you challenge this part of the plan, or do you accept it?
 - If challenge: what would you like to see changed?
- Overall, how acceptable do you find their proposed activities and performance?

8. Response to 1-page business plan (5 mins)

Moderator: share screen – plan on a page

*NB Moderators to have the deliberative event pack to hand to answer any specific questions
If necessary explain that we are particularly interested on their views on the particular aspects of the plan covered already and we haven't got the time to talk about everything they are proposing.*

I'd now like to talk a bit about the overall plan that was in the pre-read pack. These are just proposals at this stage – but they show all the different investments the water company needs or wants to make.

Recap that some elements are required by law; some elements have performance targets attached to them; other parts have greater discretion where customer preferences will impact what the final plan is.

- Tell me what you thought of the overall plan overall?

We will talk about the cost of the plan in a little while...but for now what are your thoughts on the types of investments they've headlined here?

- Did any investments interest you particularly? Why?
- Do any of these areas of investment have particular relevance to you and your household? Why is that?
- Are there any that you are unhappy about – or find unacceptable? Why is that?

Affordability and Acceptability – 5 minutes

Moderator: keep sharing screen – plan on a page. Highlighting the green panel (overall bill impact)

- Overall, how affordable do you think the proposed plans are?
- Response to the individual investment bill impacts over the 2025-30 period – any that are surprising or confusing?
- How are you feeling about the plan?
- How are you feeling about your water company?

Wrap up and post-task – 10 minutes

Thank you very much for all of your input so far. We really appreciate your time and engagement. To round things up, we'd like you to complete a short questionnaire about some of the things we have discussed today – and specifically about how the proposed business plan could affect your bill.

Assist with survey as appropriate.