



Portsmouth Water – Minority Audience Research

Discussion guide v1.0 – 21/07/2023

Summary of approach

Blue Marble will be conducting 3 mini groups (each consisting of 4 customers), 4 friendship pair depths, and 6 one-to-one depths with Portsmouth Water customers. These interviews and groups will focus on customers with specific needs due to a range of circumstances and conditions – including those who are visually impaired, hearing/speaking impaired, those with a disability requiring high water use, those from diverse religions and cultures, and those with low levels of English language. This discussion guide will be focused on exploring ways to improve the experience and communications with specific customer segments. To do this, we will focus on the following objectives:

1. Understand the specific needs and challenges faced by customers with alternative communications needs.
2. Understand response to key area of the proposed business plan.

About this discussion guide:

We will use the discussion guide flexibly, to structure the conversations and as a prompt for potentially useful lines of questioning rather than as a script for all interviews to follow. Our research team will use their understanding of the research objectives and their expertise of exploring respondents' views to depart from the discussion guide plan where necessary. Moderators will adjust the discussion guide accordingly for mini-groups, depth interviews or friendship pairs.

N.B researcher to adapt probes for relevant customer type i.e. visual impairment, speech/hearing difficulty, low levels of English language etc. Moderator may need to speak via translator. Interpretation time required for those with hearing/speaking impairments (and possible low level English language) may mean fewer questions can be discussed within the time frame. Moderators will prioritise key questions for each section only.

Introduction to Blue Marble and the project (5 mins)

Moderator to introduce themselves and Blue Marble. My name is [____], from Blue Marble Research, an independent market research agency. The aim of the research is to help Portsmouth Water better understand the needs of all types of people and communities and explore how it could improve the way it communicates and supports people.

Blue Marble is an independent market research agency, we abide by Market Research Society code of conduct. Research is confidential, so your name won't appear anywhere in the report or be shared with client. I will be recording the session for internal use and analysis but this will not be shared with anyone.

Respondent introduction/warm-up (5 mins)



- Tell me a bit about you – names, where do you live and who lives in your household? What is a typical day for you?
- *For friendship pairs only:* how do you know each other?

Current challenges and impact on management of household utilities and communication with water companies (10 mins)

- What are life's biggest **challenges and struggles** for you, if any at all? (If none, prompt: if not personally, what are the main challenges of people with/from (fill with condition/circumstance/from the x community)
- And what **impact** does this have on your everyday life?
- Do you receive any help or support from friends, family, charity groups, community groups etc? Who and why?
- What impact do your circumstances have on how you manage your household utilities, if at all?
 - **Probe specifically on communication** – what are the challenges you face relating to communicating; how do you overcome this?
 - What are the communication aids or services that you use, if any, to help you communicate with organisations?
- How, if at all, does being (fill with appropriate circumstance) affect how you communicate or engage with your water company?
- How, if at all, does being (fill with appropriate circumstance) affect the way you use water?

Experiences of utilities, including expectations & perceptions of PW (15 mins)

- **Good experience:** do you have an example of an organisations that understands your particular needs and provides great service. Tell me what they are doing well (*probe use of technology, channel and device e.g. particularly accessible website, use of translation tool*)
- **Bad experiences:** do you have an example of an organisations that communicates poorly with you? Tell me what they are doing badly.

As mentioned earlier, we are running this project on behalf of Portsmouth Water. Portsmouth Water are the company who provide water to your home. They are not the company that take sewage away from your home, they only provide clean water.

- What are your overall impressions of Portsmouth Water and what they are like as a company?
- Do you have any feedback on how Portsmouth Water deal with or communicate with you? Prompt: which channels they use.
- How easy / difficult to communicate with them?
- How well do they meet your needs? Is there anything they can do to improve?
 - The way they communicate with you for regular things like bills.



- The way they communicate with you when you have a problem or a query.
- How, if at all, could they improve the way they communicate with you? *Prompt: Both day to day and during an emergency. Are some channels/devices better suited to certain types of situation?*
- What would be your main concern **in the event of an incident** (for example a supply interruption)?
- What would be your expectations of Portsmouth Water during the incident? *(Prompt: in how they communicate with you, reassure you etc).*

Service needs and PSR

(15 mins)

I'd now like to talk a bit about the services you receive from your water company.

- Overall, how do you think Portsmouth Water could improve their customer experience? What would you like to see improved?
- Do you know whether you are on the **Priority Services Register** at all?

For groups/pairs: if some are on PSR: Let's start with those who are on it. Perhaps you can tell the group about what it is, and how you came to be on it? (Prompt with questions below).

Depths/pairs/groups: IF ON PSR

- How did you find out about the PSR? *Prompt: From Portsmouth Water or another source?*
- How did you **sign up** to this? Describe the process.
- 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?

For groups/pairs: if some are not on PSR: What do you make of what you've heard? What services would you like to receive having heard a bit about them? (Prompt with questions below).

Depths/pairs/groups: IF NOT ON PSR

- Were you aware of the Priority Services Register? Would you know how to find out if you were eligible or sign up?
- If needed, clarify what the service is:

The Priority Services Register is a free service for customers who might need extra support, due to their age, health, disabilities etc. It offers a range of services, including assistance with sending bills, home visits, warnings for emergencies and interruptions etc

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

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

SHOW PSR STIMULUS (1)

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

Social tariffs

(15 mins)

- Do you know if you are on a social tariff? (Moderator to explain: this is a specific tariff that reduces customers' water bills. It is offered by water companies to customers that struggle to afford their bills. Anyone who is on Portsmouth Water social tariff is automatically placed onto the Southern Water social tariff too).



For groups/pairs: if some are on Social tariff: If you know about it, can you tell the rest of the group what you know and any experiences you've had? (Prompt with questions below)

Depths/pairs/groups: 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?

For groups/pairs: if some are not on Social tariff: What do you make of what you've heard? What services would you like to receive having heard a bit about them?

Depths/pairs/groups: IF NOT ON SOCIAL TARIFF OR NOT SURE

- If needed, clarify what the service is:

Social tariffs have been developed for customers on low incomes. Those with a household income of less than 21k are eligible for discounted or capped bills.

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

As with the Priority Services Register plans, I'd like to talk you through what your water company is already doing – and what it is planning as part of its social tariffs business plan.

SHOW ST STIMULUS (2)

- What do you think about the work they are doing relating to supporting customers who are struggling financially?
- How, if at all, could this part of their service be improved?

SHOW ST STIMULUS (3)

- Overall, how acceptable do you find their proposed activities?
 - National discount scheme
 - Hardship fund
 - Increase target of customers on a ST
- Identify views on each service and how each could be improved

Business plan

(20 mins)

I'd now like to talk a bit about Portsmouth Water's overall business plan. The plan breaks down all the different areas the water company needs or wants to make. We'll start with how they propose to maintain their service against three important areas:

SHOW BP STIMULUS (4) – moderator walk through each of the 3 areas (supply interruptions, quality and leaks)



NB. For visually impaired group moderator to read stim aloud in small sections at a time (i.e. investment by investment) to discuss in turn, while in the other groups they will be read the entire document and left to digest before discussing as a whole.

- Tell me what you thought of these areas of the plan?
- 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?
- 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?

Now we'll look at the areas where they are planning new investment:

SHOW BP STIMULUS (5) – moderator walk through each of the 3 areas (smart meters, lead and environment)

NB. For visually impaired group moderator to read stim aloud in small sections at a time (i.e. investment by investment) to discuss in turn, while in the other groups they will be read the entire document and left to digest before discussing as a whole.

- Tell me what you thought of these areas of the plan?
- 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?

Note how these plans will impact bills NB bills will go up gradually from 2025 to 2030. The bill prices here are what the bill will be by the time we get to 2030 – and this is shown in today's money...not inflation has been added.

- Overall, how affordable do you think the proposed plans are?
- How are you feeling about the plan?
- How are you feeling about your water company?

Summary

(5 mins)

Those are all the questions I wanted to ask you today.

Before we finish do you have any questions for me? Is there anything else you would like to say in response to today's discussion which you didn't get a chance to?

Thank you very much for taking the time to talk to me, your feedback and answers have been very useful. The recruiter BEAM has your bank details and your incentive payment should arrive within the next fortnight.