Portsmouth Water – Smart Meter Hypercare Research

Discussion guide v2.0 – 07/07/2023

Summary of approach

Blue Marble will be conducting 8 online focus groups and 15 depth interviews with Portsmouth Water customers on the topic of introducing smart meters, and what services and support customers need alongside smart meter roll out.

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 also adjust the discussion guide accordingly for focus groups vs one-on-one depth interviews.

Introduction to Blue Marble and the project:

Moderator to introduce themselves and Blue Marble. My name is [_____], from Blue Marble Research, an independent market research agency. We are conducting this research on behalf of Portsmouth Water, who would like your input into how to make the introduction of smart meters for water as smooth and positive a customer experience as possible.

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.

- Reminder of data protection – this session is being audio/video recorded but everything you say will remain confidential and we only use these for internal research purposes.

Introduction – Background and Respondent's Life Circumstances (c.5 mins)

- To get things started, I wanted to start with some introductions/find out a little bit about you.
    - Where do you live?
    - Who do you live with?
    - Occupation?

FOR PSR/**WATERSURE** DEPTHS: Thanks for letting me get to know you a bit better. I understand that you are registered on the PSR/**Watersure** list – I was wondering if you could tell me a little more about the reason for this?

Experiences of utilities, including expectations and perceptions of Portsmouth Water (5 mins)

I want to talk about customer service, specifically from utility providers. Have a think about what excellent customer service looks like from a utility provider to you.

- What does it look like? Explain what you'd expect from them if they were providing excellent customer service.
- Do you have any examples to share of a time you've received excellent customer service from a utility provider?
- **FOR DEPTHS: We talked about your specific circumstances earlier, can you recall a time where a company responded particularly well to accommodate your situation?**
- Do you have an example to share of a time you've been disappointed by the level of service you've received from a utility provider?

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?
- What are your expectations of Portsmouth Water as your water provider?
- Is there anything they can do to improve overall?
- Do you have any feedback on how Portsmouth Water deal with or communicate with you? e.g. in relation to bills [PROMPT IF NECESSARY]

Communication preferences for Portsmouth Water

We will now discuss your general communications preferences (5 mins)

- What types of communication do you expect to receive from Portsmouth Water?
- Do you expect to receive letters, emails, SMS, phone calls or a mix of all three? Prompt: if a mix of channels, what sort of messages would you expect from each channel?
- How often have you visited the Portsmouth Water website in the past year?
- If you had a question for Portsmouth Water, what would you do first? (Prompt: Call, online search, email, contact on social media or other)

- To what extent do you expect/would you like to receive help and advice on dept management?

Perceptions of water usage and understanding of the water system (5 mins)

- To what extent do you think that people use more water than they need? Do you think that you could/should cut down your water consumption?
- To what extent do you think that water supply is an issue in your area?

Perceptions of smart meters (for energy and water) (25 mins)

Like other water companies in the UK, Portsmouth Water submits a business plan every 5 years as part of a 25-year forecast. As part of their business plan, they are planning on rolling out smart meters into 50% of properties in the region by 2030. The roll out of smart meters is compulsory.

- What do you think about smart meters for water? Do you have any reservations or concerns about smart meters?
- Do you have an energy smart meter? What has been the impact/experience of having this?
- What impact do you think smart meters might have on your water consumption?
- What impact do you think smart meters might have on your water bill?

I'm now going to share with you some details about water use and smart water meters.
Moderator to share on screen each individual statement in turn, read it out and ask the questions below. The order of stim is randomised per group/depth.

1. As a region, the Southeast must extract less water from sensitive environments, such as the rare chalk stream we are lucky enough to have in our area.
Pure, clear, constant water from underground chalk aquifers and springs, flowing across flinty gravel beds, make chalk streams a perfect sources of clean water – and ideal for lots of wild creatures to breed and thrive. The majority of the world's chalk streams are found in England.
To reduce abstraction from natural environments, Portsmouth Water wish to enable customers to make small habitual changes to reduce the amount of water they use. Smart meters can make people aware of how much water is being used in their household, empower customers to take control of their usage, and see the results of their efforts.

2. Climate change and population changes are reducing the amount of water naturally available. Portsmouth Water wish to enable customers to make small habitual changes to reduce the amount of water they use. Smart meters can make people aware of how much water is being used in their household,

empower customers to take control of their usage, and see the results of their efforts.

3. Portsmouth Water customers use around 10% more water than the rest of the country. Portsmouth Water wish to enable customers to make small habitual changes to reduce the amount of water they use. Smart meters can make people aware of how much water is being used in their household, empower customers to take control of their usage, and see the results of their efforts.

4. Smart meters share real-time data (up to 1 day delay) and personalised water use. As such, smart meters make it quicker and easier to detect leaks within the water network as we can see continuous water flow through data.

5. Smart water meters is a new technology, installed in the ground and unlike the smart meters many customers will be familiar with from their energy supplier.

6. There is no cost to customers to have a smart meter installed.

- To what extent, if at all, does this information change how you feel about smart meters?
- To what extent, if at all, does this information make you feel that a mandatory smart meter roll out is necessary?
- To what extent, if at all, does this change your view on the impact of smart meters on your water consumption?
- To what extent, if at all, does this change your view on the impact of smart meters on your water bill?

Smart meter bills/water rates (10 mins)

Smart meters allow customers to observe their water use and therefore to be able to take advantage of different water rates promoted by Portsmouth Water.

I'm now going to show you two examples of options for differing water rates (or tariffs) for your feedback.

Moderator to share on screen below in turn. The order of stim is randomised per group/depth.

1. Higher rates during peak times and lower rates at other times of the day/year to reduce strains on the network and potential supply issues.
2. Rates based on volume used that reward customers who use water responsibly and penalise excessive use.
   o For example, a household would be charged a low rate for a certain usage in a day, and then a higher rate for water above that).

(Note: Vulnerable customers and those on PSR would be excluded from any rate variables, and there would also be consideration for larger households).

- What do you make of this idea? How do you feel about this?
- What, if any, concerns do you have about this idea?
- What, if anything, do you like you about this idea?

Stop sharing

Customer needs, expectations, and preferences across the customer journey 30 mins total)

We have asked you to participate in this research because Portsmouth Water wants to understand customer needs, expectations, and preferences for smart meter services at three stages of the customer journey: pre-installation; the day of installation; and post-installation.

- Would you expect to hear about smart meters in the post, email, SMS or phone call?

In relation to installations (10 mins)

Now I'd like you to imagine PW are installing a water meter outside your property:

- How would you expect them to tell you, and how much notice would you like to be given? (Prompt: a month before, a week before)
- How much interaction would you expect with the installer? For example, would you expect the engineer to knock the door before they start work and after they have finished?

Now imagine we are installing a water meter inside your property:

- How would you expect to be given an appointment date and time? Would you prefer to choose your own online or on the phone? Or be sent one which you can change?

In both scenarios:

- How would you like to receive details on how your smart meter works and how to access your online account? Prompt: leaflets from the engineer at installation, emails afterwards, a phone call from a customer services agent
- Would you expect to hear from Portsmouth Water again to check that your smart meter is working as expected? If yes, how would you expect to receive this contact?

In relation to Smart Meter data: (20 mins)

- How often would you like to receive notifications/updates regarding your smart meter? You will have most likely 22 readings per day – how many of those do you want to be made aware of, if any?
  (Prompt, hourly usage, daily usage, weekly usage)
- Would you prefer to log in online to view your data to an online account, or use an app to view your water usage?
- How do you feel about receiving mobile phone notifications on an app for your smart meter?
- How often, if at all, would you like to receive emails about your water usage
- How often, if at all, would you like to receive SMS messages about your water usage?
- To what extent do you expect/would you like to receive water saving tips and advice to reduce your water usage? In what format? (Prompt: messages/information/website videos/emails).

I'm now going to show you the types of notifications you could receive, and ask for your feedback on them.

Moderator to show the following notifications in turn and ask for feedback on how useful or important customers think they might be. The order of stim is randomised per group/depth. Once they have all been discussed briefly in turn, they will all be shown together.

You have used 150 litres of water today
You have used 160 litres of water today, this is about the same as 2 full baths
You are one of the most water efficient households in your area, well done!
Use water wisely, your household uses 2X more water than average for your area
We are experiencing high levels of water demand in your area right now, please use water wisely.

In response to each individual notification stim shown in turn:

- How does that notification make you feel? What would you reaction be?
- To what extent, if at all, would you find it useful or important?

In response to all stim shown together at the end:

- Which of these notifications do you find most useful or important and which do you find least useful or important?

Stop sharing

End: (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 IThoughts has your bank details and your incentive payment should arrive within the next fortnight.