

9683

**Water blend comms**

**Focus Group Discussion Guide (1.75 hours)**

**(CONTROL GROUP – 8 participants)**

For moderators, throughout bear in mind the eight key BehSci ‘levers’ when considering responses and when probing:

- Messenger
- Losses
- Gains
- Social norms
- Saliency
- Affect
- Expectation
- Transparency

<b>(I) Introduction</b>	<b>10 mins</b>
<p><b>Brief explanation of the purpose of the research</b></p>	<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>• Our client is looking to understand what people think about the water that United Utilities brings to your home.</li> </ul> <p><i>Moderator to reassure respondents about confidentiality / GDPR compliance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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 (as appropriate) – 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 your personally.</li> <li>• Introduce any client observers</li> </ul>
<p><b>Introductions</b></p>	<p><i>Moderator to invite respondent(s) to introduce themselves;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First, let's do some introductions! I'm (<b>MODERATOR NAME</b>) from DJS Research and I'll be leading tonight's discussion.</li> <li>• Introduce any client observers</li> <li>• Please could you now introduce yourselves, giving your name, who you live with, are you on a water meter.</li> <li>• Experiences of dealing with United Utilities in the last 1-2 years</li> </ul>

<b>(II) Experience of water quality/blend</b>	<b>10 mins</b>
---	----------------

<b>How does this affect the water in your taps?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you drink your tap water at home? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Do you process it in any way, for instance, chill it, carbonate it, filter it?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How important is the taste of your tap water to you? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Why?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• [If any Health Vulnerable in attendance] How does this impact upon how you manage any health conditions you may have?</li> <li>• Do you like the water from your tap? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ What tastes/qualities does it have? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Positive/negative</li> <li>▪ [Moderator: keep ear out for mentions of water source and water hardness]</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Who is familiar with hardness and softness in water? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ What impact can hard or soft water have on your experience when using and drinking water in the home? (Spontaneous)</li> <li>◦ [If not already covered] Is your own water is hard or soft?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How important would you say it is that you know where your water is sourced from? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ What different qualities can water from different sources have?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
---	--

<b>What do you know about how your water gets to you?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In a few words, where does the water in your tap come from and how does water get to your door. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ What are the different places water can come from?</li> <li>◦ Where does it go along this journey?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Give quick overview of this process. <b>SHOW SLIDE 1</b></li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <h3 style="text-align: center; background-color: #1a4d3d; color: white; padding: 5px;">The water cycle: getting water to you</h3> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; text-align: center;"> <div> <p><b>They collect it:</b> More than 90% of the water we supply each year comes from rivers and reservoirs. The rest comes from groundwater via aquifers.</p> </div> <div> <p><b>They treat it:</b> Water is first treated at a Water Treatment Works to ensure it meets drinking water standards.</p> </div> <div> <p><b>They deliver it:</b> It is then transferred through a network of pipes and mains straight to your home or business.</p> </div> </div> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Water in:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Catchment → Water treatment works → Pumping station → Household property (Metered/Non-Metered) → Commercial property (Metered)</p> </div>
---	---

<b>(III) Variable and permanent supply changes</b>	<b>25 mins</b>
--	----------------

<b>Introduce variable blending</b>	[Moderator pass out variable change letter]
------------------------------------	---

In front of you, you have a mocked-up letter that might be sent by United Utilities. I want you to imagine that you have received this letter yourself.

I would like you to give the letter a full read through. After which, I will have a few questions for you.

*[Allow a minute for participants to read through letter]*

• If United Utilities contacted you like this to say that your water might change, what would you think?

• Why?

• What would be going through your mind?

• *[Refer back to concerns noted in the first part of this section] Does this letter help reassure you about [note each concern in turn]?*

• What concerns might you have?

• What might it mean for the drinkability of the water itself?

• *[Reassure that the water will remain high quality and safe to drink]*

• Would it matter if your water was becoming harder or softer?

• *[If any Health Vulnerable in attendance] Are there any concerns you would have specifically in relation to managing any health conditions?*

• If you received a letter like this one, what do you think you'd do? If anything?

• (P) Speak to friends and family? Social media? Research online? Contact United Utilities? Something else? *[If any Health Vulnerable in attendance, medical professional or information source]*

• Why?

- From reading the letter, what would you say is the key message (or messages) of the letter for the household receiving it?
  - How easy is it to understand?
    - What's easy/less easy?
- Reading the letter, what benefits might you expect in regard to...
  - ...the water supply in your area?
    - *[If struggling]* Would you expect to see any impact on water supply resilience?
  - ...your own personal home water supply?
    - *[If any Health Vulnerable in attendance] Manage any health conditions you may have*
  - And, what drawbacks?
    - *[If any Health Vulnerable in attendance] Manage any health conditions you may have*
  - To what extent do you believe that the benefits and drawbacks represent an acceptable trade-off for your household?

• I'd like you to complete the following sentence, "after reading this letter I feel [xxx]"

• Why do you say that?

• *[If annoyed or upset] Is it something that you would want to speak to United Utilities about? Would you speak to friends/family/social media about it?*

- How do you find the language and tone of the letter?
  - Why do you say that?

Before we go on, does everyone feel confident that they know what a temporary or variable blend change is?

*[IF needed: moderator to read the below to make sure that everyone is up to speed]*

All tap water comes as a blend of different water sources that makes up the specific flavour, hardness and chemical characteristics of a particular area's water. Usually, this remains very consistent. However, in some cases water companies may need to temporarily change the water source blend that people in an area receive.

Some people may notice a change in the taste of their water (tea and coffee may taste slightly different, or the way soap lathers may change), however, the drinking water will still always meet all water quality standards required by the Drinking Water Inspectorate and is safe to drink and use as normal.

Looking at the document in front of you, to what extent is it important to you that it is signed by **[Cycle order in groups: Chief Scientific Officer/ Chief Executive Officer]**?

Why?

What does this title mean to you? What does it suggest?

Does it matter who it's signed by?

- How do you feel seeing that it is signed by **[Chief Scientific Officer/ Chief Executive Officer]**?
  - Seeing that it's signed by **[Chief Scientific Officer/ Chief Executive Officer]**, what benefits, if any, do you expect to receive from this letter being signed by them instead of someone else?
    - Does this change with seniority? How about technical knowledge?
  - Would you prefer to receive a letter from this individual, the **[Pick alternative: Chief Scientific Officer/ Chief Executive Officer], or the Chief Engineer?**
    - Why?
- From what you've read and from what you may know more widely about the water network, why do you think that United Utilities might change the source of an area's water supply?
    - *[Prompt for reasons]*
    - Reasons for changing the source of an area's water supply include:
      - **Main reason:** during dry weather incidents when we need to protect water resources in certain areas, so use alternatives which may involve supplementing with water from treatments works that process from groundwater sources or during maintenance activity
      - **Others:**
        - Resilience to climate change/rainfall
        - Resilience to population growth
        - Maintenance work on existing pipes/infrastructure
        - Having to take treatment works offline to do maintenance work
        - Closing down treatment works

Which, if any, of these would you believe to be an acceptable reason for changing the source of an area's water supply?

	<p style="text-align: center;">• Why</p>
<p><b>Introduce permanent changes</b></p>	<p><i>[Moderator pass out permanent change letter]</i></p> <p>In front of you, you have a second mocked-up letter that might be sent by United Utilities. Again, I want you to imagine that you have received this letter yourself.</p> <p>As before, I would like you to give the letter a full read through. After which, I will have a few more questions for you.</p> <p><i>[Allow a minute for participants to read through letter]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• So, again, from reading the letter, what would you say is the key message (or messages) of this letter for the household receiving it?       <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the message here differ from the previous letter?</li> <li>• How easy is it to understand?</li> <li>• What's easy/less easy?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If United Utilities contacted you like this to say that your water might change what would you think?       <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Why?</li> <li>○ What concerns might you have?           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>[If any Health Vulnerable in attendance] Are there any concerns you would have specifically in relation to managing any health conditions you may have?</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Are these concerns different to the previous letter</li> <li>○ Would it matter if your water was becoming harder or softer?</li> <li>○ What might it mean for the drinkability of the water itself?           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>[Reassure that the water will remain high quality and safe to drink]</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• If you received a letter like this one, what do you think you'd do? If anything?       <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>(P) Speak to friends and family? Social media? Research online? Contact United Utilities? Something else?</i></li> <li>• Why?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Reading the letter, what benefits might you expect in regard to...       <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ the water supply in your area?           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>[If struggling] Would you expect to see any impact on water supply resilience?</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>○ ...your own personal home water supply?</li> <li>○ <i>[If any Health Vulnerable in attendance] Manage any health conditions you may have?</i></li> <li>○ And, what drawbacks?           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>[If any Health Vulnerable in attendance] Manage any health conditions you may have?</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>To what extent do you believe that the benefits and drawbacks represent an acceptable trade-off for your household?</i></p> </li> <li>• I'd like you to complete the following sentence, "after reading this letter I feel [xxx]"       <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Why do you say that?</li> <li>○ <i>[If annoyed or upset] Is it something that you would want to speak to United Utilities about?</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• How do you find the language and tone of the letter?       <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Why do you say that?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Importance of communication about blend change**

In the scenario that United Utilities were to change the source of the water (For example, from a reservoir source to a aquifer for a short period of time) that supplies your home...

• Would you care about such a change occurring? Would you want to be notified about this change?

• If no, why is that?

• Would this differ depending on whether it's a variable or permanent change?

• If yes, what would you want to know?

• [PROBE ON: old source, new source / reasons why / benefits and drawbacks / what to expect or do (any differences in how to use or clean appliances etc) / cost savings etc]

- How would you prefer to be notified?
- Would you want to be notified every time it happened?

• What worries or concerns might you have about this process?

• [Spontaneous]

- Would this differ depending on whether it's a variable or permanent change?
- PROBE: is only their source being changed or is this a relatively run of the mill undertaking for the company?
- PROBE: Would they feel as though they are losing out on anything by experiencing this change?
- PROBE: Is it at all reassuring to know that this change would happen to all properties in your local area, not just *your* household?

• Do you think that, if this happened to your household, you'd feel motivated to speak to anyone or look for more information?

• Who would you speak to?

• Why?

• Where would you look for more information?

- (P) Google, Ofwat, UU website, call UU, elsewhere
- Why would you choose this source?
- What information would you be looking for?

• Do you think you would contact or consider contacting United Utilities about it?

• What would lead you to contact United Utilities?

• Would you be looking for more information, to make a complaint, or something else?

- Would this differ depending on whether it's a variable or permanent change?

• Is there any information you could be provided with that would prevent the need to contact/consider contacting United Utilities?

- Do either of the letters in front of you contain that sort of information?
- What's still missing?

<p><b>Reaction to the content</b></p>	<p><b>MODERATOR: THROUGHOUT COMMS REVIEWS, PROMPTS ARE DESIGNED TO ELICIT SOME DISCUSSION AND THOUGHTS RELATING TO THE BEHAVIOURAL PRINCIPLES COVERED DURING THE BRIEFING – SEE SLIDE</b></p> <p>I now want you to break out into two groups of four. In your groups I want you, together, to review the letter informing the household of a <b>[permanent / variable – vary order across control groups]</b> change and, at the end of it, one representative from each group will give feedback on each of the following.</p> <p><i>[Moderator: cycle different title and signature options across the groups]</i></p> <p><b>Group one</b>, you’re going to be discussing whether you feel that the letter is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to find the important information or difficult?</li> <li>• Clear or unclear?</li> <li>• Informative or lacking detail?</li> </ul> <p><b>Group two</b>, you’re going to be discussing whether you feel that the letter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes a good case for the changes or fails to do this?</li> <li>• Is reassuring or concerning?</li> <li>• Feels trustworthy or untrustworthy?</li> </ul> <p>For each of these, I want to get a sense of why you feel this is the case, so be sure to have your reasons and any examples to hand for when we come back together to share our thoughts.</p> <p>If you are the nominated representative for your group, please write down the thoughts from your group on the pad of paper in front of you.</p> <p>You have 15 minutes.</p> <p><i>[Moderator to cycle between groups to oversee/guide conversations]</i></p> <p><i>[Give the groups 15 minutes to run through the materials together]</i></p> <p><i>[Bring back as one group and probe on feedback and reasons/examples]</i></p>
<p><b>Suggested improvements</b></p>	<p>I now want you to break out into your same two groups of four again.</p> <p>This time I want you, as a group, to improve the letter, based on the feedback we’ve just heard.</p> <p>There should be pens, post-it notes and highlighters in front of you, so feel free to scribble over it!</p> <p><b>Group one</b>, you’re going to be discussing how you would make the letter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to find the important information</li> <li>• Clearer</li> <li>• More informative</li> </ul> <p><b>Group two</b>, you’re going to be discussing how you would make the letter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a better case for the changes</li> <li>• Be more reassuring</li> <li>• Feels more trustworthy</li> </ul> <p>Again, you have 15 minutes.</p> <p><i>[Moderator to cycle between groups to oversee/guide conversations]</i></p> <p><i>[Give the groups 15 minutes to run through the materials together]</i></p> <p><i>[Bring back as one group and probe on feedback and reasons/examples]</i></p>

<b>Follow-up</b>	<p>Now that we've made our improvements to the letter, does anyone have any other thoughts or recommendations as to how we could improve it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If you received a letter like this one, what do you think you'd do? If anything? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (P) Speak to friends and family? Social media? Research online? Contact United Utilities? Something else?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Why?</p>
------------------	--

<b>(V) Second comms review</b>	<b>20 mins</b>
<b>Suggested improvements</b>	<p><i>[Collect in all materials and hand out second letter/email]</i></p> <p>In front of you, there is a now the second printed document that, again, could form the basis of an email or postal letter, informing you that your property will be subject to a <b>[permanent / variable]</b> change in your water supply blend.</p> <p>I now want you to break out into your same two groups of four again.</p> <p>Again, I want you, as a group, to <i>improve</i> the letter, in the same way as you did before.</p> <p>As a reminder...</p> <p><b>Group one</b>, you're going to be discussing how you would make the letter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to find the important information</li> <li>• Clearer</li> <li>• More informative</li> </ul> <p><b>Group two</b>, you're going to be discussing how you would make the letter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a better case for the changes</li> <li>• Be more reassuring</li> <li>• Feels more trustworthy</li> </ul> <p>This time you have, you have 10 minutes.</p> <p><i>[Give the groups 10 minutes to run through the materials together then bring back as one group]</i></p> <p><i>[Probe on feedback and reasons/examples]</i></p>
<b>Follow-up</b>	<p>Now that we've made our improvements to the letter, does anyone have any other thoughts or recommendations as to how we could improve it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If you received a letter like this one, what do you think you'd do? If anything? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (P) Speak to friends and family? Social media? Research online? Contact United Utilities? Something else?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Why?</p> <p>Are there any other ways you would be interested in receiving communications from United Utilities on this subject, other than what we have looked at today?</p> <p>PROBE ON: social media, UI webpage, SMS, local newspaper</p>

<b>(VI) Sum up</b>	<b>5 mins</b>
--------------------	---------------



<b>Final thoughts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To what extent, if at all, has your view of United Utilities changed as a result of seeing these letters?</li><li>• Are there any final thoughts or questions you have about water blend changes that you would like to put to United Utilities?</li></ul>
-----------------------	--

**Any final questions from the clients/observers**

**Thank & Close**