

# **United Utilities Sewer Overflows**

**JOB NUMBER: 5136**

**PROJECT:**  
Sewer Overflows Qual Research  
Focus Group

**DISCUSSION GUIDE VERSION: v13**

**DATE:**  
13/08/2021



Kick off meeting	Monday 2nd August
Community discussion guide feedback received	Thursday 5th August
Stimulus materials agreed	Monday 9th August
Amended Community DG to UU	Wednesday 11 <sup>th</sup> August
FG DG to UU	Wednesday 11 <sup>th</sup> August
Recruitment for Community begins	Monday 9th August
Final amends to community guide and stimulus made	Friday 3rd September
Pop up community fieldwork	6th - 10th September
FG DG amended with any learnings from community	Friday 10th September
Focus group recruitment	Friday 10th September
Analysis and Interim top line	Friday 17th September
Focus group fieldwork	w/c 20th September
Analysis and First draft Report	20th Sep - Friday 1st Oct
First draft report submitted	Monday 4th October
Report amends fed back	Wednesday 6th October
Final report	Friday 8th October
Debrief	TBC

## Focus Group - Core Objectives

- Opportunity to engage customers in debate on the options to reduce or manage the frequency and impact of sewage overflows
- Gauge strength of feeling of the topic of sewage overflows and what changes they would like to see
- Which areas are most important? Time taken to realise benefit, cost, environmental benefits, aesthetics etc.
- How compelling are the pros and cons of each option? Which are important and which are they not that bothered about?
- Should we have a blanket approach on all overflows or target specific ones?
- What factors, impacts or causes are most compelling? What can they live with?
- Deep dive on costs, how do they feel about this? Who's responsibility is it?

### Pre-task

Respondents will be given one of the options from the community to champion in the focus group. Their task is to convince the others that their option is the best one to take forward. The aim is to get respondents to fully think through the pros and cons of each of the options.

### Welcome and introduction (5 minutes)

Usual MRS introduction

- Introduce Verve
- What to expect
- Purpose of the research
- Reason for recording
- Reason for observers

### About you - 5 minutes

- Introduce self, how long you've been a UU customer and one thing that you have learned or were surprised by during the community

### Recap of key takeaways from the community - 10 minutes

#### What were the key take-outs from the community according to respondents?

- To start with I want you to shout out some of the issues that you talked about during the community to see what has stuck with you
  - What can you remember? (Moderator to list down on a smart board)
- Why do you think these topics have stuck in your mind?
- Which elements, if any, surprised you the most?
- What do you remember about the possible solutions to these issues?
- Which issues do you feel personally effected by the most?
  - Why those ones?
- Which issues do you think impact where you live the most?
  - Why those ones?
- Which ones do you think impact the environment the most?
  - Why those ones?

From what you learned on the community – who do you hold responsible? Why?

## Topic information – 20 minutes

### Recap of key topic information and assessment of how respondents have or have not changed their views over the course of the community

I'm going to refresh your memory about what you learned in the community

*Moderator to go through shortened version of the stim on the community*

Having spent a week thinking about this issue, I would like you to tell me about how you felt about this subject at the start of the week?

- What did you know about this topic before the community?
- How much did you feel impacted by it? Is it something that you feel affects you personally?
- Was it something on your radar or was this new information?
- Did/do you believe something different to the information that you were shown on the community?
  - Tell us about that
- Did you believe everything that you were shown or are you sceptical about any of it?
  - Tell us about that
- By the end of the week, had you changed your mind about anything at all? If so what and why did you change your mind?
- Had you changed your mind or opinion of UU? If so how? If not, how do you feel about them generally?

## Options – 40 minutes

### Managed debate over the different options to explore the positives and negatives of each option

*(Moderator to remind respondents of the four options)*

On a piece of paper, I would like you to secretly write down which one you think is the best option out of these four.

For your homework, you were given a particular option to champion (which we appreciate may not be the one you would have chosen) – we are now going to see what you've come up with.

*(Moderator to determine who has which option – some will have the same one so allow them to present in pairs)*

- I'm going to give each of you a couple of minutes to state why you think your option is the best one

*(Each Respondent to present back their pre-task and tell the group why they think their option would be the best one to implement )*

We're going to have a short discussion now where I would like you to continue to argue (politely) that your option is better than everyone else's and why the other options are not as good

*Moderator to encourage respondents to discuss the pros and cons of each of the options*

*Probe and encourage discussion on the following:*

- *Time taken to realise benefit*
- *Cost vs benefits*
- *Who will pay and how?*
- *Environmental benefits*
- *Aesthetics*
- *Disruption*
- *Which ones are the most important, which ones are nice to have and which ones are not important?*

I'm going to do a quick vote now to see which option you actually think is the best (you don't need to vote for the one you were given) again write down on your paper and keep it secret for now

*(Moderator to go around each person and ask how they voted and why)*

**MODERATOR: FOR FREQUENCY OF SPILL – PROBE AROUND WHAT LEVELS ARE ACCEPTABLE (e.g. 40,20 etc)**

- Looking at the one that most of you voted for, why do you think that is the preferred option?
  - What is it about it that makes it the most compelling?
  - If we went with the majority vote – what do you think this option would look like in practice?
  - What would be the benefits and what would be the drawbacks? (*probe around why the benefits of this are worth the drawbacks – e.g. constructing big tanks, being sustainable, being disruptive, infrastructure changes etc.*)
  - *What would be their preference? (e.g. constructing tanks vs sustainable solutions)*
  - Would this be an appropriate solution across the whole region or just in some places? If so where and why?
  - What personal cost are you willing to accept to have this option (e.g. pay more money on household bills? Experience disruption through building work? Know that overflows are still happening?)

- What are your thoughts about how this might impact your household costs? Does it feel affordable? Would it be worth the benefits?
- Looking at the least popular one, why do you think that it came last?
  - What is it about it that makes it the least compelling?
  - If we went with the one with least votes – what do you think that would look like in practice?
  - What would be the benefits and what would be the drawbacks? (probe around why the drawbacks are not worth the benefits – e.g. constructing big tanks, being sustainable, being disruptive, infrastructure changes etc)
  - Would this be an appropriate solution in some places but not others? If so where and why?
  - What personal cost are you anticipating with this option (e.g. pay more money on household bills? Experience disruption through building work? Know that over spills are still happening?)
  - What are your thoughts about how this might impact your household costs? Does it feel affordable? Would it be worth the benefits?

*Repeat for other two...*

- What are your overall thoughts on this option?
  - Would this be a good solution even though it's not your first choice?
  - What would it look like in practice?
  - What would be the benefits and what would be the drawbacks? (probe around why the drawbacks are not worth the benefits – e.g. constructing big tanks, being sustainable, being disruptive, infrastructure changes etc)
  - Would this be an appropriate solution in some places but not others? If so where and why?
  - What personal cost are you anticipating with this option (e.g. pay more money on household bills? Experience disruption through building work? Know that over spills are still happening?)
  - What are your thoughts about how this might impact your household costs? Does it feel affordable? Would it be worth the benefits?
- Overall, what are your priorities? (*Probe how important it would be to stop all over spills vs more prudent approaches*)
- What are you less concerned about?

### Summing up and final questions – 10 minutes

Now that we've talked about sewer overflows, we going to briefly discuss United Utilities and then we're going to see if there are any further questions from the observers

- From everything you have learned over the last week, how do you feel about United Utilities?
  - Are they doing enough to protect your homes and the environment?
  - If not what else should they be doing?
- Is there any information you have learned about UU that you think should be communicated more to customers? Why that?
- What do you hope UU will do more of in the future? Why is that important?

Final questions – thank and close

