

**SES Water**

Phase 2 engagement

**December 2017**



## Executive summary

SES Water commissioned Explain to carry out a detailed research programme with domestic customers for phase two of their business plan review. The aim of this phase of research being to test and review SES Water's service commitments, incorporating innovative approaches and co-creation for increased engagement.

The project was split into three strands; one co-creative workshop with domestic customers involving table discussion and interactive exercises, a future customer event with college students involving table discussion and interaction exercises and two community groups involving an informal discussion in relation to SES Water's services.

## Results

Although minor differences in priorities and opinions could be seen across the customer groups represented within this research, overall key themes and agreements have been identified throughout the topics covered, as summarised below;

### Customer priorities

When asked to prioritise service areas the highest priority areas were in relation to the water supply to the household, with respondents selecting for SES Water to prioritise ensuring a reliable supply of water that was of an acceptable quality standard. Respondents saw these key priorities as coming hand in hand as part of the service SES Water provides.

Customer service came out as the lowest priority overall, with respondents showing a complacent attitude towards the service – the majority of respondents had no previous customer service experience with SES Water and no prior issues with their water supply. There was an agreement that if the water supply was reliable and of an acceptable standard, then this would minimise the capacity needed for customer service provisions.

Additional areas of consideration highlighted were 'water meters' and 'education' – with respondents believing these priorities would increase water efficiency for the future.

## Resilience and ensuring future supply

Within the co-creative workshop respondents were asked to rate a series of service scenarios to determine which they would find least acceptable and which they would find most acceptable – these were broken down into areas relating to customer service, water supply and water quality. On the whole respondents were least willing to accept scenarios relating to water quality.

When looking at the scenarios individually the acceptability of scenarios in the water supply category varied dependent on the length of time the interruption took place. With respondents more willing to accept a shorter interruption.

Linking to the respondents' priorities rankings, respondents were most willing to accept scenarios relating to customer service delays – again customers were complacent to these scenarios, with no adverse impact on their day to day life.

Overall feedback highlighted that the scenarios respondents were least willing to accept were predicted to have a negative impact on their daily life, whereas for scenarios respondents were more willing to accept, respondents felt these could be worked around with a reduced impact on the customer.

Across the co-creative workshop and future customer event respondents were surprised to hear that 'dry winters' had an impact on water provisions in the area and admitting to not having thought about the impact of weather on the water supply.

Across groups respondents felt that ensuring the sustainability of the future water resources was not the sole responsibility of SES Water as the water provider, with the customer also playing a vital role in ensuring the future of this precious resource.

Respondents felt SES Water should do more to maintain and invest in the current infrastructure and new technologies to increase water storage and reduce water loss. SES Water were also seen to play a prominent role in changing customer attitudes towards water as a resource – highlighting it is not an unlimited resource and educating customers to adopt water saving behaviours.

Multiple channels were suggested to share information on dry winters and water efficiency, such as on the local news and on social media. Future customers preferred to see interactive information on social media.

When discussing SES Waters role within education, the majority of respondents were unaware that SES Water currently held an education program – but all were in agreement education across future and current customers was vital.

Future customer feedback highlighted a positive experience within SES Waters’ current education program, with suggestions made for these sessions to be made more interactive for an older audience.

## Metering

Overall respondents were accepting of the prospect of having a water meter, with this being suggested as a measure to ensure the resilience of the water supply and encourage customers to adopt water saving behaviours.

In the co-creative workshop, although the majority of customers would support SES Water to supply water meters to their customers, some respondents held negative opinions on the prospect of this being a ‘compulsory’ measure – with these respondents highlighting the customer should have a choice.

In order to promote the adoption of water meters respondents suggested SES Water share information and educate customers further on the issue of ‘dry winters’. Although the key motivation for moving to a meter would be the prospect of the customer saving money on their bill – all respondents agreed this should be evidenced to customers to increase uptake, with customers being able to opt-out if there was a bill increase.

## Customer journeys

When faced with a scenario in which there was an issue with the quality of the water supply within the household, respondents key concerns were how serious the issue was (was the water safe to drink) and how widespread the issue was – with respondents expecting reassurance and clarification upon their first contact with SES Water.

Respondents preferred contact methods were mixed but largely centred upon telephone and online methods, with vulnerable customers preferring telephone contact and future customers preferring online contact. All respondents expected initial contact with SES Water to be quick and easy, getting straight through to a member of staff who was knowledgeable, polite and empathetic.

Within the first point of contact respondents expected to have to provide information to assess the seriousness of the issue and take steps to resolve, if the problem could not be fixed all respondents

expected an engineer to be sent out as a priority – with an appointment made on the first point of contact.

Being kept up to date was key to customers throughout the journey, with the option to register for updates from SES Water and also receive notification prior to the engineer's arrival. Upon resolution of the issue respondents needed to be reassured that the problem had been identified and fixed, with the water safe to consume.

The majority of respondents expected a de-brief from SES Water, such as a letter or report, outlining the issue and the steps taken to resolve.

When considering the needs of vulnerable customers in this scenario, opinions were mixed as to whether SES Water should ensure additional provisions. Those who felt additional provisions were needed suggested direct contact and regular updates for reassurance.

## Supply pipe ownership

Around half of respondents in the co-creative workshop were able to accurately illustrate where supply pipe ownership fell between the customer and SES Water. When faced with the scenario in which SES Water may increase ownership customers opinions were mixed, with many highlighting there would need to be a cost benefit analysis as to whether the bill increase would offset any current charges for household insurance or pipe repair costs.

## Recommendations

Overall respondents had a positive outlook in relation to SES Water and the services they provide, however the majority were unaware of their role in supplying water services and their wider responsibilities in relation to water efficiency and education. SES Water should therefore take steps to promote their services and wider projects to customers.

It's clear that maintaining the supply of reliable and safe drinking water is at the forefront of customers' minds, with respondents highlighting these areas as priority throughout groups and topics. SES Water should therefore ensure their business plan concentrates on the maintenance of the future supply, investing in infrastructure and new technologies and shape resilience strategies on this basis.

SES Water should also raise awareness to the issue of 'dry winters' and educate the wider customer base to adopt water efficient behaviours. The topic achieved a huge amount of buy in following

discussion in the co-creative workshop which demonstrates awareness as a barrier to behaviour change.

In line with the points above, on the whole, respondents were not adverse to the installation of a water meter in order to tackle the water shortage and ultimately save money personally. The only barrier highlighted was where customers thought their bills would be more expensive on a water meter given the size of their household or their children's attitude to water usage.

The key to an ideal customer journey is quick and easy contact, with reassurance and updates throughout the process – SES Water should review their current customer journeys and ensure provisions are in place to allow both telephone and online contact and an opt-in for updates. Surprisingly, even future customers were very keen on telephone contact and thus it is recommended that alternative digital channels support the telephone contact centre rather than look to replace activity in any way. In addition, future customers were keen on the idea of an app to both monitor usage (linking into the findings above) as well as offering an easy to use channel to report an issue and thus this should be explored. Customer effort should be minimised, and concepts like the check valve reviewed considering the large majority of respondents felt that this would be extremely difficult to install.

Respondents from PACE and Caterham foodbank were unaware of SES Waters provisions for vulnerable customers, although they would be useful dependent on the vulnerability. SES Water should therefore do more to promote these services, identifying customers on contact and providing leaflets and other information through third parties such as local authorities and charities

In principle, customers were happy for SES Water to take on responsibility of supply pipes, the only barrier being cost and thus it is suggested further willingness to pay research is conducted in this area.

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## 1.0 Introduction

The project background, chosen methodology and respondent profile can be found in this section.





## Introduction

SES Water is currently in phase two of their business plan review aligned to the next Price Review (PR19). SES are clear that understanding stakeholders and their views is central to its new business plan, not only to deliver a regulatory requirement but also to ensure that they are delivering the right outcome for their stakeholders.

The requirements for phase two of the business review were therefore to test and review key service outcomes relevant to the business plan;

- Reliable supply of drinking water
- Increased resilience network
- High level of customer service
- Reduced impact on the environment

Explain were commissioned for the qualitative aspects of the project which involved three strands of customer engagement; a co-creative workshop, pre-formed community groups and a future customers event.

## Methodology and respondent profile

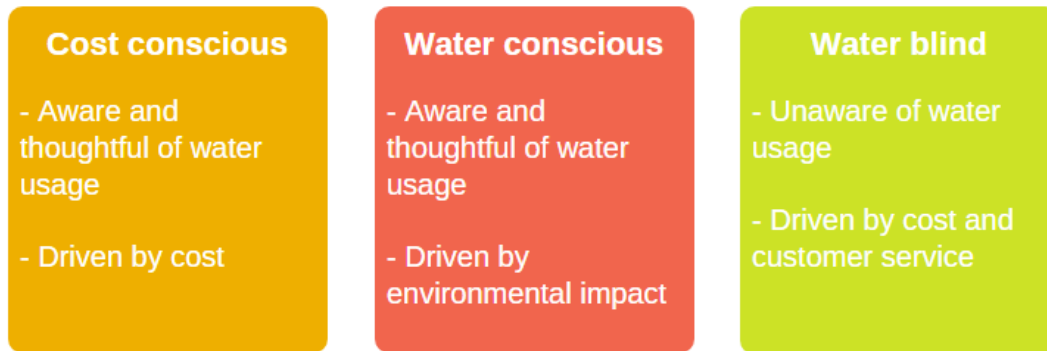
### Co-creative workshop

In light of SES Water's desire to engage further with customers, a co-creative led workshop approach was adopted. This co-creative workshop took place in Redhill at the heart of SES Water's operating area.

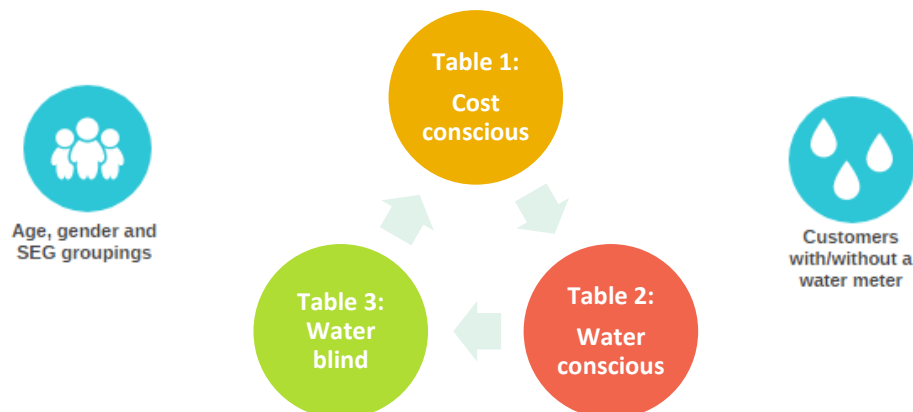
SES Water representatives were also in attendance, presenting information about the topics at hand – enabling uninformed and informed opinions to be gathered.

The workshop included 22 customers in total, split across three tables. This approach allowed for joint introductions and presentations as a room, as well as break-out sessions on each table with interactive exercises to ensure continued engagement.

The profile of respondents invited to each workshop were based upon water attitude profiles identified during phase one of the business review, with respondents split onto tables based on their profile;



Each table contained a mixed representation of gender, age and socio-economic status. Each table also held a mix of metered and unmetered customers;



The workshop lasted approximately three hours, with respondents involved in a mixture of discussions, activities and presentations. Each table was led by an experienced Explain moderator who used a pre-agreed discussion guide to conduct the conversations. As well as delivering key presentations SES Water representatives were in attendance to observe and to answer any queries from customers.

Explain recruited all respondents in attendance using on-street researchers who had a questionnaire of qualifying questions to ensure that respondents fitted the desired profile. The conversations taking place on each table were audio recorded and notes compiled for each session. These notes were then used as the basis of qualitative analysis to identify any relevant themes and distinctions in the findings.

## Future customer event

To gather insight into the changing needs and expectations of SES Water customers, a future customer event was also held to engage with students in the area who were not currently bill payers but could be an SES Water customer in the near future.

19 students aged 16 to 17 were recruited through East Surrey College to attend the event at Bough Beech Education Centre. The day long event included a morning spent touring the education centre with an SES Water representative providing key information in relation SES Water's water treatment processes – Explain representatives were also present noting down any respondent observations and questions.

The afternoon consisted of an interactive workshop style approach, with joint discussions and activities as a room and break-out discussions across two tables – topics covered in the session largely aligned with the customer co-creative workshop, although tailored to a less experienced audience. The session was led by experienced Explain moderators who used a pre-agreed discussion guide to conduct the conversations.

SES Water representatives also provided key presentations in line with the discussions, covering areas of SES Water service commitments – education was key throughout the day due to the limited understanding of the respondents.

The conversations throughout the day were audio recorded where possible and notes compiled for each session. These notes were then used as the basis of qualitative analysis to identify any relevant themes and distinctions in the findings.

## Community groups

Community groups were also used in order to engage with customers in vulnerable circumstances and understand where additional service provisions may be required.

Explain organised attendance at two community sessions by contacting community group representatives – one session took place with elderly customers at PACE in Purley, and another at Caterham foodbank. The pre-agreed discussion guide for these sessions focused primarily on the customer journey experience.

Due to the potential vulnerability of the customers in attendance at these sessions, the format for each session was agreed in conjunction with the community representatives. The PACE session involved an

informal discussion with a group of elderly service users, with a PACE representative present – the discussion was led by an experienced Explain moderator who used a pre-agreed discussion guide to conduct the conversation. The conversation was audio recorded and notes compiled. These notes were then used as the basis of qualitative analysis to identify any relevant themes and distinctions in the findings.

The Caterham Foodbank session followed a different format due to this being held during a daytime drop in session. An experienced Explain moderator approached service users individually with the support of foodbank volunteers, with anecdotal feedback also gathered from the volunteers and representatives present. No audio recording was used during this session due to the sensitive nature of conversations, however notes were compiled and used as the basis of qualitative analysis to identify any relevant themes and distinctions in the findings.

## Notes on analysis

Where topics are comparable, results have been presented holistically throughout the report, however current levels of understanding and engagement between groups influenced priorities and opinions so results have also been provided separately where necessary.

In order to illustrate the source of literal comments evidencing in this report, each literal comment has been colour coded based upon the respondent group, as follows;

**Co-creative group – Cost conscious**

**Co-creative group – Water conscious**

**Co-creative group – Water blind**

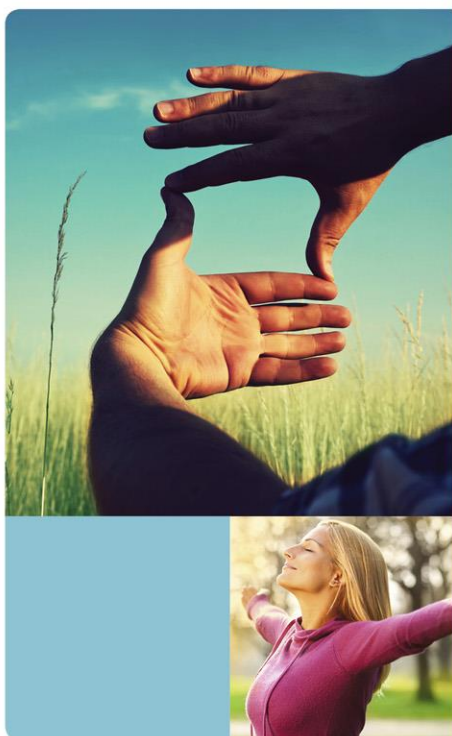
**Future customer**

**Community group**

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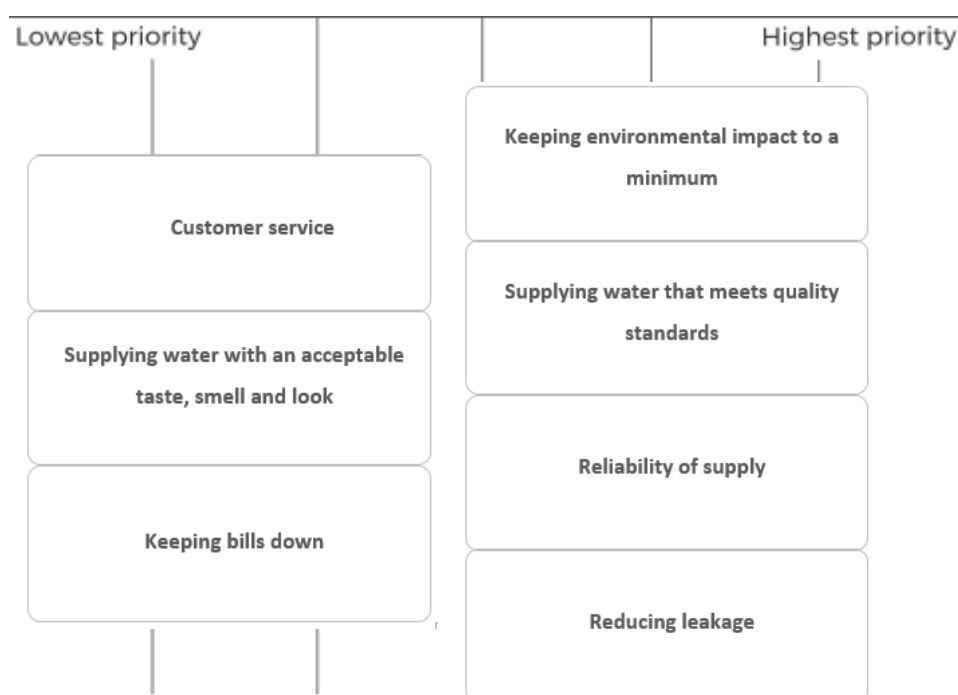
## 2.0 Results

Full results from the research can be found in this section.



## Customer priorities

In order to understand which of SES Water's service outcomes customers found to be most important respondents in the co-creative workshop were asked to sort seven key service outcomes onto a scale from 'highest priority' to 'lowest priority'. In order to increase engagement and make the session more interactive, respondents ranked the outcomes using a sticker exercise onto an A3 scale;



Once each respondent had ranked the service outcomes individually, moderators on each table probed to understand which outcomes had been put as highest and lowest priority and why. Respondents were also provided with blank stickers to write on if they believed there was a priority service outcome missing.

For the purposes of analysis the scale was quantified from 'Lowest priority' in 7<sup>th</sup> position, to 'Highest priority' in 1<sup>st</sup> position.

The exercise was conducted at the start and end of the workshop to enable uninformed and informed priorities to be compared

On the whole, customer priorities were consistent across all three tables at the workshop. The influence of additional information provided by SES Water was minimal. The primary concern for respondents across the co-creative workshop was the reliability of the water supply to their household, and that this

supply was of an acceptable quality standard – with respondents commenting that these two priorities come hand in hand, with one influencing the other.

## Uninformed priorities

In order to gather ‘uninformed’ customer priorities this exercise was first carried out at the start of the co-creative workshop session with no additional information or explanation provided. The table below shows rankings by table and an overall aggregated priority ranking in the last column;

Service outcome	Beginning of session			
	Cost conscious	Water conscious	Water blind	Overall
Keeping bills down	4th	7th	3rd	4th
Keeping environmental impact to a minimum	7th	3rd	6th	7th
Supplying with an acceptable taste, smell and look	2nd	2nd	4th	3rd
Supplying water that meets quality standards	1st	1st	2nd	1st
Reliability of supply	3rd	5th	2nd	2nd
Customer service	5th	5th	7th	5th
Reducing leakage	6th	6th	5th	5th

As outlined in ‘Notes on analysis’ literal comments have been colour coded based upon the respondent group they represent, with colours for the co-creative workshop tables as follows;

Co-creative group – Cost conscious

Co-creative group – Water conscious

Co-creative group – Water blind

'Supplying water that meets quality standards' was consistently a high priority across tables, and the top priority overall – respondents felt this to be a key aspect to the service provided by SES Water, to ensure that the water supply was safe and drinkable. There was also seen to be a link between meeting quality standards and providing water of 'an acceptable taste, smell and look';

- *"When you are buying a service, the key thing you want is quality or value for what you are paying for. For me, that is why it is top"*
- *"Supplying water that meets quality standards – obviously I want my water, to know that it's safe to drink, that's my main priority"*
- *"There's no supply then it doesn't matter. Yeah, but if the water comes out the tap and it's not good quality then it might as well not be there. So, then nothing else matters"*

Across tables 'customer service' was seen as a lower priority, with respondents noting that this was an aspect of the SES Water service that they often did not have a need for. Respondents noted that there had been no issues with their water supply, therefore no need to contact SES Water. Some respondents felt that if the water supplier were of a good quality and reliable then this would mitigate the need to prioritise customer service provisions;

- *"Customer service because if everything else is running smoothly, you wouldn't have to use them as much"*
- *"I put customer service because these other ones are far more important to me because I've never really had to deal with customer services"*
- *"We do it on the internet now so if there's any problems or anything else, rather than hanging on the phones, you just do it. As long as the water comes out you don't really have to speak to anyone"*

One respondent from the Cost conscious table who rated customer service as a higher priority was motivated due to the impact of poor customer service on managing customer accounts and billing;

- *"Because I think when you have got anything from your address, change of direct debit or something like that, if you are paying them for supply, yes, it is great quality but if you are talking to someone that is not managing your account appropriately, it is not great is it then you are going to want to move company"*



'Reducing leakage' was also consistently a lower priority across tables, with respondents stating this was lower when compared against other priorities that affected the quality or reliability of supply;

- *"I put reduce leakage and keeping environmental impact to a minimum. Quality standards come more highly"*
- *"All the time it has been running perfectly, those items get shifted down to low priority, reducing leakage, I mean you can have faults and you can't help that"*

Cost conscious and Water blind respondents also rated 'keeping environmental impact to a minimum' as a lower priority, due to this not impacting on the day to day supply of water. With one water blind respondent feeling this was not an issue for SES Water directly;

- *"I don't think that's their issue. I think their issue, if they've got planning to put a pipe somewhere, but I think the final product that comes out of the tap is more important than what they do elsewhere"*
- *"It makes me sound like a bad person but I thought my priorities were more on good standards and not thinking about that on a daily basis"*

One Water conscious respondent who rated 'keeping environmental impact to a minimum' as a higher priority highlighted the impact SES Water could have as a result of larger building projects changing and expanding the water supply in the area;

- *"There's obviously lots of programs going on with house building so obviously they increase the supply of water which means going to actually get the water so obviously the impact of that could be quite devastating to the environment"*

Water conscious respondents on average rated 'Keeping bills down' as the lowest priority, with some respondents on this table noting that their bill amount remained static and they therefore did not see how it could be influenced or prioritised;

- *"I put all on high apart from keeping bills down because I'm not metered and I can't tell, I just pay the same about each month"*
- *"Keeping bills down was the one I moved down because my bills don't change and there's not a lot I can do"*

A small number of respondents on the Cost conscious and Water conscious table utilised the blank stickers to add additional priorities – although centred upon different service provisions, a common theme between these priorities was the direct impact these would have on customers;

Table	Additional outcome
Cost conscious	Accurate billing and annual account statistics
	Grey water initiatives
	Road repair times kept to a minimum to avoid long journeys and missing family time
Water conscious	Keeping customers informed of price increases
	Advertising new projects

## Informed priorities

At the end of the co-creative workshop this exercise was repeated to gauge whether the additional information provided by SES Water had changed respondents 'informed' opinions on service outcome priorities.

Service outcome	End of session			
	Cost conscious	Water conscious	Water blind	Overall
Keeping bills down	4th	5th	5th	4th
Keeping environmental impact to a minimum	7th	6th	6th	6th
Supplying with an acceptable taste, smell and look	2nd	3rd	4th	3rd
Supplying water that meets quality standards	1st	3rd	1st	1st
Reliability of supply	3rd	3rd	2nd	2nd
Customer service	6th	7th	7th	7th
Reducing leakage	5th	5th	4th	5th

On the whole priorities rankings did not change from the beginning to the end of the session – with 'Supplying water that meets quality standards' remaining the highest priority across the group;

- *“Mine hasn’t really changed much, my high priorities are standards that meet quality, supplying water that has the right taste, reliability, and reducing leakage and these ones are quite low”*

Although minor differences can be seen, with ‘Customer service’ dropping to be the lowest priority overall, and ‘Keeping environmental impact to a minimum’ and ‘Reducing leakage’ both increasing in priority as a result – respondents linked this to considering these priorities in the wider context of infrastructure and future provisions;

- *“Now we’ve been talking about it and just the size of the infrastructure, this, that and the other. I think we’re they’ve got to build new homes they’ve got to build and I think we should be a bit more conscious about, whereas earlier I just thought, that’s alright it’s just water pipes but it’s not just water pipes”*
- *“it’s just around the fact that, you’re using quite a lot of water but the storage of water, the amount of water that we get from the rainfall is not as much as it used to be. So, we need to be more efficient*

The primary change seen from the repetition of the priorities exercise was the increased use of the blank stickers across tables – with the influence of the customer a key theme within the new priorities;

Table	Additional outcome
Water blind	Receiving insurance quotes from SES Water
	Create an emergency service for engineer call outs
	Fit meters to all properties
Cost conscious	Published customer charter for prioritising faults and repairs to customer satisfaction
	Smart meters to reduce consumption and highlight leaks
	Information on how to reduce use
	Education
	Elderly
	Smart meters
Water conscious	Good communication and updates (2 respondents)
	Smart meters (3 respondents)
	Education (3 respondents)
	Guarantee a good service

Across tables water meters and smart meters were added as a new priority, relating to information provided on compulsory metering and many respondents felt this would make bills and water usage fair across the board;

- *“It’s been proven that most people can’t be bothered to do it, so the only way you’re going to get them to take in meters is, if they can do it outside in the roads, it can affect anyone. That way, you will automatically, you don’t have to worry about all that stuff about meters being fitted. They will be fitted and people will save money straight away so it’s a win-win situation”*
- *“I think quite high is compulsory water meters, that’s quite high for me. I just think if everyone is doing it then there’s no grey area, there’s no yes or no it’s a flat one rule for one no exceptions”*

Within the Cost conscious and Water conscious tables ‘education’ was also added as a new priority – with respondents linking this to ensuring water provisions for the future;

- *“I have added education and I have put keeping your bills down. I think they go hand in hand. I put smart meter on because I think that would be a good way of managing people’s bills”*
- *“Just through what I’ve learnt and what I know and I suppose it’s about the environment and it’s trying to make little things make a difference you know you’ve got to start somewhere”*

## Future customer priorities

Due to the future customers limited understanding of SES Water it was not appropriate to ask them to rank service outcomes into priority order, these respondents however were asked what was most important to them about the area they lived in, with moderators probing further to identify priorities linking to water supply.

When asked to list three things they liked most about the area they lived in, the following themes were most common;



Future customers found it difficult to relate to the services provided by SES Water, although when probed further about features relating to water, respondents mentioned local lakes and reservoirs they would visit in the summer months – although none had any particular attachment to these areas;

- *“Yeah, I have the River Eden near my house, I walk my dog over there”*
- *“There’s Godstone Reservoir that you can go swimming in in the summer, and Ryegate...it’s like a massive quarry and it’s really clear water and everyone goes there in summer, there’s really high rocks and everyone jumps off them”*

When asked what they thought about the water supply in the area, many respondents had not thought about this previously. When thinking about the taste and quality of the water in their area, most respondents stated they would add to tap water before drinking it – with an indication of complacency across the group as to the supply of water in the area;

- *“Water is water to me”*
- *“It’s water”*

- *"I normally have juice but water is water, it's not that it tastes bad"*

Although a small number of respondents who drank the tap water directly liked the taste;

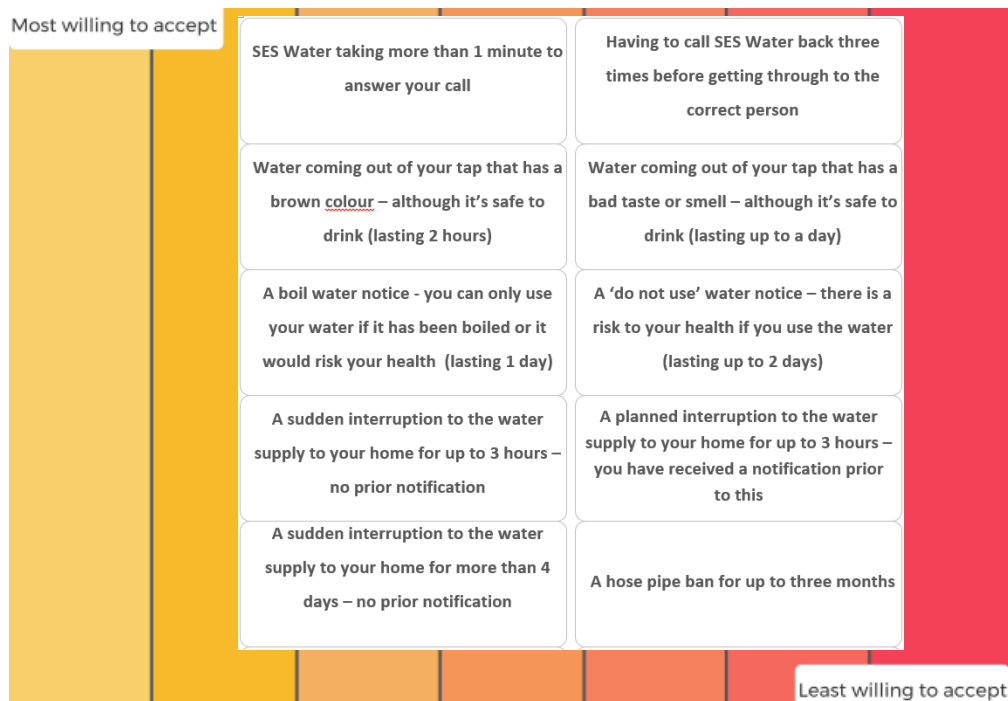
- *"It's pretty good"*
- *"It's really crisp"*

## Resilience and ensuring future supply

### Resilience

In order to gather insight into which areas customers would expect SES Water to be most resilient, respondents in the co-creative workshop were provided with 10 service issue scenarios relating to customer service, water quality and water supply.

Respondents used a sticker exercise with an A3 scale to illustrate which service issues they would be 'most willing to accept' to 'least willing to accept'.



Once each respondent had ranked the service issues individually, moderators on each table probed to understand which scenarios they were most willing and least willing to accept and why.

For the purposes of analysis the scale was quantified from 'least willing to accept' with a score of 1, to 'most willing to accept' with a score of 7. Based on the scores given scenarios were ranked from 1 to 10, with the scenario in 1<sup>st</sup> position the most acceptable and the scenario in 10<sup>th</sup> position the least acceptable.

Area of risk				
	Cost conscious	Water conscious	Water blind	Overall
<b>customer services</b>				
SES Water taking more than 1 minute to answer your call	1st	1st	1st	1st
Having to call SES Water back three times before getting through to the correct person	4th	4th	5th	4th
<b>water quality</b>				
Water coming out of your tap that has a brown colour – although it's safe to drink (lasting two hours)	7th	9th	6th	7th
Water coming out of your tap that has a bad taste or smell – although it's safe to drink (lasting up to one day)	8th	10th	8th	8th
A boil water notice - you can only use your water if it has been boiled or it would risk your health (lasting one day)	7th	9th	5th	6th
A 'do not use' water notice – there is a risk to your health if you use the water (lasting up to two days)	9th	6th	9th	9th
<b>water supply</b>				
A sudden interruption to the water supply to your home for up to 3 hours – no prior notification	5th	5th	7th	5th
A planned interruption to the water supply to your home for up to 3 hours – you have received a notification prior to this	2nd	2nd	3rd	2nd
A sudden interruption to the water supply to your home for more than four days – no prior notification	10th	7th	10th	10th
A hosepipe ban for up to three months	3rd	3rd	3rd	3rd

Overall respondents were least willing to accept scenarios relating to the water quality, although looking at the individual scenarios 'a sudden interruption to the water supply to your home for more than 4 days – no prior notification' was the scenario respondents were least willing to accept.



When commenting on their rankings, respondents across tables had approached scenarios relating to water supply and water quality in a holistic manner, hypothesising they would create similar issues;

- *“A do not use the water notice risk to your health, a boil water notice, water coming out of your tap that has a bad taste or smell, water coming out of the tap that is a brown colour, sudden interruption to water for more than four days with no prior notification – so I wouldn’t accept any of them, these would be an inconvenience but obviously I’m not willing to accept them”*
- *“I’ve lumped some together actually, do not use, sudden interruption for four days, boiling water or water with a bad taste or smell”*

Scenarios relating to water quality were seen to be unacceptable to respondents due to the potential risk to health for household customers. Some respondents also stated they would prefer to have no water supply than one that could potentially be harmful;

- *“The health ones for me are the ones that are not acceptable”*
- *“The issues to your health if you use water for two days”*
- *“It risks your health because I think that actually that is even worse because at least the one below you can’t even consume it where it is bad for your health but I do not know how they notify you if you have not received that notification and you consume that water”*
- *“I would rather them cut my water off than telling me it is not safe to consume in that kind of sense. With children, sometimes you can’t monitor them, I would rather nothing come out my tap”*

Looking at the scenarios individually, ‘a sudden interruption to the water supply to your home for more than 4 days – no prior notification’ was the scenario respondents were least willing to accept. Respondents referenced the impact on daily life, with this scenario being least acceptable due to the length of impact and the lack of notification;

- *“I just think, the four day one, four days is a long time to not have any water and not plan, and two days is a long time because if you can’t drink it, you can’t drink it, it’s the same thing, two days – four days, both without notice even with notice, is still bad”*
- *“When it is four days that definitely impacts on not your quality of life that is a bit drastic but it would affect what I would do on a day to day basis but if it was two or three hours you could get over it”*

The water supply interruption with prior notification was seen to be more acceptable for respondents due to the preparation time and reduced length of the interruption. Many respondents felt they would be able to prepare adequately for such a scenario;

- *“Planned interruption of water supply of up to three hours. If they tell you then you can make a plan, but if they just shut it and you turn the tap on and nothing happens and your boiler is still going, your washing machine is still going then you don’t know what damage it could do if there’s no water coming in. So, as long as they tell us I wouldn’t have a problem”*

Some respondents also stated they would be more willing to accept a supply interruption if SES Water were able to provide additional provisions, such as bottled water or reimbursement;

- *“I’d be willing to accept it if we got free water, a free bottle of water or something, or provisions were made, I know they have it where they have free crates of water where you can go and collect bottles of water, as long as they’re putting something in place because it would get right in my face if I had to go and buy water”*
- *“I think if you’re going to go without water for four days you can just go to the shop and buy water for drinking, washing and then SES can reimburse costs and stuff so to me I’d rather not have the supply than have it brown or smelling or things like that”*
- *“Retrospectively when you do stuff like that they normally put out water houses and water stops. So, I think you could say no I am not going to accept that but there will be safeguards in place”*

A smaller number of respondents also stated that the time of day in which an interruption took place would impact upon its acceptability, for example if an interruption were to take place when customers were likely to be showering or cooking, compared to during the day when the customer may be at work;

- *“If it was daytime and I said fine, in the evening obviously that’s when it’s worse or in the morning, but the middle of the day, no one tends to shower you know the kids are not going to bed so”*
- *“Three hours is not that long, most of us would probably be at work, three hours is not that long”*

Scenarios relating to customer service were overall perceived as more acceptable, with 'SES Water taking more than 1 minute to answer your call' rated as the most acceptable across tables. In keeping with the priorities section, respondents had minimal contact with SES Water so did not perceive this to be an issue. Respondents noted that this scenario although an annoyance would not impact upon daily life, unlike the water quality and supply scenarios;

- *"Yeah, so far I've never had to call them, I've never had a problem that I've had to contact them for anything"*
- *"On the scale of everything that's on here, it's not really that, it's just your time, whereas them taking the water away or the fact that you've got to do something to the water before you can use it"*
- *"Rather wait five minutes and deal with the customer efficiently"*

'A hose pipe ban for up to three months' also sat on the more acceptable end of the scale when compared with other scenarios. Again respondents did not feel this would have a direct impact on daily life and was less important than the water supply coming into the household. With some respondents already equipped with water butts and other water collection devices for such a scenario;

- *"Because it's not really going to affect my daily life, if I can't use my hosepipe then I'd use my water butt or you can use bath water, if you've got to ring through yes it's annoying but it's not going to affect my showering and having a cup of tea, and even three hours I can get round three hours, so it's a bit annoying but nothing major"*
- *"Well I've got a water butt and if it came to it then the plants would just have to die wouldn't they really, you know it's not that important"*
- *"I'd much rather the supply was focused on clean water and it functioning, coming to my house and I'd be happy to go with that for three months, although that is a long time and it would ruin the garden. It's not ideal"*
- *"Because it is just not the end of the world, it really isn't, things will survive but grass has natural roots to go down by water like anything in your garden will be fine. Like I am saying your garden will survive, so I think it is more important for people to have something to consume rather than to keep yourself clean"*

## Dry winters

The dry winters challenge was discussed in the co-creative workshop and future customer event and the topic was introduced by showing respondents key images which eluded to a dry winter and asking what words they would use to describe the scenes –the following words were used to describe the scene across groups;



Across the co-creative workshop and future customer event respondents were unsure from first glance what the images related to, but after some thought respondents became aware that the images related to winter. Following this respondents stated they may also relate to 'water', rather than a lack of water.

Respondents across groups were surprised to hear that 'dry winters' had an impact on water provisions in the area and admitted to not having thought about the impact of weather on the water supply. Across groups respondents considered the UK to be quite a rainy country;

- *"I think it is really interesting and I don't think that is well known. I think people would have the opposite perception"*
- *"Yeah, it's a natural resource isn't it you know, you don't realise that there's a limit to how much you can take of a natural resource, and I think that's quite shocking to discover we have a dry winter and as you say you take it for granted don't you"*
- *"The dependency on the rain in winter, I didn't realise how much they depended on it"*

Respondents in the co-creative workshop also felt combatting 'dry winters' was not the sole responsibility of SES Water, but part of a wider national issue. With some hypothesising this may be linked to an increasing population putting a strain on water resources;

- *"I've often thought that if we don't get enough rain then we won't have enough water, but also, it's building more houses more demand"*
- *"Just about being water stressed, I mean I think it is down to utility companies to talk to the government and force the issue. It is not just water, it is gas, electricity, it is everything. We have expanded too much in the South East by taking out and not putting anything back in"*

## Combatting dry winters

Within the co-creative workshop and future customer event respondents were asked what SES Water could do to reduce the impact of dry winters.

### The role of the customer

From the suggestions provided across the groups there was a consensus that SES Waters' primary action should be to inform the customer and promote water efficiency;

- *"You can't put it all on the company like we have a responsibility to use it wisely like when you are washing up or brushing your teeth like don't keep the tap running, like maybe have a quick shower instead of a bath. I do think there are things they can do but everyone also needs to take responsibility. I don't think we can blame it all on them"*

None of the respondents were aware of the issues faced by SES Water due to 'dry winters' and therefore a key suggestion to combatting dry winters was to ensure that customers were aware of the issue. Respondents in the co-creative workshop suggested informing customers during periods of dry winter, providing information on low water levels and highlighting the impact 'in the moment' – such as displaying current water levels on the news and through TV adverts;

- *"What about like TV adverts, I'm always seeing like electrical ones and gas but don't think I've ever seen"*
- *"I think yeah, if people could see where we've had a really hot winter, sorry hot summer, and you see the news and they go out to like all the different reservoirs and say this is where it used to be and this is where it is now. They should do stuff like that in the winter and make people more aware of dry winters"*

Within the future customer event suggestions were also made to have this information in the news, on the radio and on the bill, however when asked to vote for the best method of reducing the impact of dry winters, the majority of respondents placed social media in the top three. Respondents felt it would catch more customers' attention through the use of pictures and videos. Social media was also suggested by one respondent in the co-creative workshop;

- *“You could always advertise on social media, like Facebook or Amazon or EBay or something like that because it's probably more likely you'll get people”*

Across the co-creative and future customer event respondents were clear that combatting dry winters was not just about influencing customer behaviour during a period of draught, but changing customer attitudes as a whole.

Within the future customer event respondents made suggestions as to how customers could reduce their individual impact, such as reducing water use, having a shorter shower and using water from the garden. Across both groups there was an agreement that customers would need to be persuaded to reduce water use. Within the co-creative workshop various incentives were put forward, such as free water saving devices and money off water efficiency devices;

- *“I think they were doing that at one point where they were sending little home packages like a sprinkler thing or shower to reduce the water coming out”*
- *“What I am saying is all humans like something back, a valid little incentive”*
- *“They could offer incentives if like you changed your washing machine or dishwasher and you bought one that was using like a third of the water that it was using before, so giving incentives, perhaps they had a deal with Hoover or with the manufacturer”*

Within the co-creative workshop respondents predicted that the introduction of water meters would also have a positive impact on dry winters, helping to reduce customer use. Linking to the promotion of water meters, respondents felt customers would be incentivised to have a meter and reduce their water use if this led to a reduction on their water bill;

- *“I think nobody likes doing something for nothing so maybe, we spoke about the metering to encourage people to use less, what about some sort of incentive, I know there's a cost there but as a customer people always want something, they could use less. Something to encourage you to use less”*
- *“And what then if you put everybody on a meter. They might not use as much water up then, I'm on a meter”*

- *“Maybe every house should be on a water meter because it would make them think about the water they use if they’re paying for it, so if everyone had a meter”*

### Investment and infrastructure

Across both groups respondents suggested more could be done to increase water storage, however this was not just seen to be SES Water’s responsibility. Respondents felt SES Water could also encourage customers to store and use rain water in the household. Respondents in the co-creative workshop also felt the government would have a role in promoting the use of greywater systems;

- *“Like the government had with recycling bins and that, you could roll out water butts although that is not going to solve all these issues but people could use that to water the garden”*
- *“Water storage, so when we do have a wet winter we can keep hold of some of that”*
- *“Collect it in a tank then run the toilet off a rainwater system”*

Suggestions were also made for SES Water to invest in new technologies to reduce water loss and find new water sources, when probed for specific examples a small number of respondents within the co-creative and future customer event also suggested investment in new technologies, such as salination of sea water, to increase the resource available;

- *“I think there should be investment in technology and to find some kind of solution rather than relying on everybody using less water”*
- *“You can get new systems now they pump salt through it and then it breaks down and softens and cleans the water”*

Within the co-creative workshop suggestions were also made to maintain the existing infrastructure and stop leaks within the supply;

- *“The whole thing is you get infrastructure but you have to look after it and it costs so much money. So, if they are losing leakage that is a part of the problem, it is so much money but as they can do a new system and sliding a pipe inside a pipe, it would stop the leak”*
- *“Try to stop the leaks. Huge loss, the pipes leaking. If they stop the leaks it would go back down”*



Co-creative workshop respondents highlighted that other organisations such as the government and house builders should also be responsible for investing in water storage and grey water systems for newer properties;

- *“I think just building more infrastructure, so water storage but also, more water filtration systems so that they don’t overload where they’ve built 40,000 houses”*
- *“Yeah, if they build new houses then they should work with the builder to maybe get back the tanks that go underneath the building stuff like that, so you’ve got a bit of storage there. If they’re building a new estate or things like that then they should have to talk to the water companies to see if they can add storage”*

## Education

The topic of education was discussion in more detail following on from the topic of ‘dry winters’ in which respondents had highlighted that wider education with current customers and future customers was vital in changing attitudes to water and improving water efficiency for the future.

There were mixed opinions as to whether education on water efficiency would be most effective with children (future customers) or adults (current customers), however all agreed that SES Water had a role in education all, children and adults.

Some respondents in the co-creative workshop felt that education with younger children would be more effective, encouraging them to adopt water efficient behaviours from an early age;

- *“There is probably an element as well in going to schools because I think sometimes children are less set in their ways and take it on board and if you teach someone from a young age, it then becomes a habit”*

Other respondents in the co-creative workshop felt that adult education was most effective in influencing children’s behaviour towards water as a resource;

- *“Educating children I suppose is something we didn’t think about but I think it’s adults as well, unless the parents are aware of it as well”*
- *“Yeah, it’s educating the adults because then it’s at the end of the day the children picks up what you do”*



When probed as to how adults could be educated by SES Water, respondents suggested providing information in the workplace or to new home owners;

- *“Their houses have been built, give their packs, give them information, give them leaflets and make these new build houses fully aware that they are consuming and how much are they are consuming”*
- *“Could you do the education in like offices as well?”*

Respondents in both the co-creative workshop and future customer event were made aware of SES Waters’ current role in education and the Bough Beech Education Centre. Within the co-creative workshop, no Water blind respondents were aware of their role in education, however a small number of respondents on the Water conscious and Cost conscious table had previous experience with a water education program;

- *“My daughter did it when she was in primary school and she came back with all this information in regards to filtering and it does this and it does that. We are not running the water when we brush our teeth anymore and she still does it to this day”*
- *“I remember when I was at school we went round a reservoir years and years ago and they took you out”*

### **Bough Beech Education Centre**

The future customer event was held within the Bough Beech Education Centre, respondents were therefore asked to provide further feedback on the education program they had experienced and how it could be made more effective in the future. Respondent feedback was largely positive, with the tour being the highlight of the day;

- *“I don’t think there’s really much you could do to improve it because it’s not really something you’re able to improve, there’s not much we could get involved in doing, it’s not really a manual thing it’s more done by the machines”*

Respondents enjoyed being out of the classroom but felt there could be more interactive activities within the tour to keep children and young adults engaged – such as taking water samples and handling equipment.

Respondents were all in agreement that the education centre should be used for secondary school and college aged people, with some respondents feeling that education would be more effective with this audience due to their increased understanding;

- *“I feel like it should be more for secondary ages children because I came here when I was younger but I don’t remember anything, I just remember walking around”*
- *“It’s harder to understand when you’re that age”*

Future customers were also asked to comment on the prospect of a new education centre being built within the SES Water supply area – all agreed this would be useful to allow more children to attend events. When asked to comment on where the centre should be built, one table suggested in the centre of the supply area in Redhill, while the other table suggested somewhere further West so as to have broader reach.

## Metering

Although the topic of metering came up naturally in wider conversations throughout the three strands of research, respondents at the co-creative workshop had a more detailed discussion in regards to metering.

Respondents in the co-creative workshop were provided with a sheet of 'key facts' relating to water meters and water usage in the SES Water supply area. When probed as to which facts surprised them or stood out most, across all tables two key facts were most prominent;

**In SES Water's area each person uses an average of 160 litres of water per day, which equates to almost two bath tubs and is higher than the national average.**

The response to this fact was mixed, with some respondents believing their usage would be lower, and other's believing it may be more. Questions were also posed as to how this average was calculated, and why the SES Water supply area was higher;

- *"I don't think I use that much"*
- *"I thought it was more"*
- *"That doesn't sound a lot to me"*
- *"Yeah, that sounds like an awful lot. I might fill up the kettle 3 or 4 times and I might have a quick shower or bath"*
- *"...when you think between people at work through the day etc. I think it's quite surprising"*
- *"What is interesting is that our area is higher than the national average, so why are we higher, if we find out why we are and then try and change it and see what it is that others are doing differently"*

**SES guarantee that domestic customers will not pay more for their water supply for the first two years as a result of having a meter installed and then customers can choose to have their meter removed free of charge up to the end of the two-year period**

None of the respondents at the co-creative workshop were aware of the option to remove the meter within two years, with this being seen as a positive initiative to encourage customers to try a water meter;

- *"I never knew that"*
- *"I would try it, now that I know you can actually remove it on the two-year option. Then yeah I would definitely give it a go"*
- *"If we have a meter in, we can have it taken out, I didn't realise that was an option. I thought once you had it would be very difficult to move"*

- *“That one about the two years, because you’re basically saying for the next two years you’ll have a water meter, you’re not paying anymore so at the end of it you can have it taken away so you’re basically saying you can keep it for two years and then I guess at the end of it they calculate whether you’ve used less and that’s really, I didn’t know that”*

A mixture of metered and non-metered customers were represented across each table. For some Water blind respondents who did not have a meter this was due to complacency and not having actively sought out a meter;

- *“I think it’s fair. You pay for what you use. If it comes to a point where more people are on a meter, I happen to think that then, those people who aren’t on a meter will be paying more”*
- *“I’d like to have one”*

For non-metered respondents on the Cost conscious table, a small number of respondents stated they would not want to be on a meter due to the higher volume of water being used by children in the household;

- *“No not at the moment and I have got two sons that live at home who use an awful lot of water. So, no not at the moment. If I was on my own I might and I might get out the habit of leaving the taps running, it is generally the hot water tap”*
- *“I don’t and I have no intention to get one, I have two daughters who have water fights all through summer. For how many baths of water we go through a day”*

For respondents who were currently on a meter, the majority had not chosen to have this put in place, with the meter being present when they moved in. Although one Water blind respondent and another Cost conscious respondent had opted to have a water meter fitted in order to reduce their bill;

- *“Yeah, so I chose to have it because I live on my own and I don’t use that much water. So, for me I felt it would be more cost effective to have the meter than to pay the standard rate”*
- *“No, they just came along and changed it. They sent me a letter saying you have got the option of having a water meter or staying on the mains and I filled the letter in and said I wanted to stay and posted it. The next day, that afternoon I had a water meter, I phoned up and they said we are putting it in anyway”*
- *“Yes, I did. I rung up”*
- *“No we didn’t it was already installed when we moved into our property, it was already installed, so I’ve not seen that added benefit because I don’t know any different so I don’t know if we’re saving money, I don’t know if I’m excessively using water”*

Overall feedback from metered respondents was positive, with many stating they had seen a reduction in their bill, even if this was only by a small amount. Some also noted that they were more aware of their water usage as a result of being on a meter;

- *"I must say since I have had a water meter, I do look after how much water I use. I water the garden and I have it on for 30 or 40 minutes and that is it but I do wash the cars that is two buckets of water and that is it"*
- *"Well, because my bills have gone down to half"*
- *"Yeah, I pay less than I would have done"*
- *"It's so much cheaper"*

## Compulsory metering

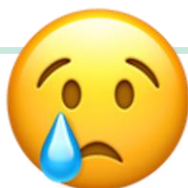
After the introduction of metering and the key facts, respondents in the co-creative workshop were presented with the scenario of SES Water implementing compulsory metering for domestic customers.

Each respondent was asked to draw an emoji to illustrate their reaction to compulsory metering – respondent reactions are summarised on the next page;

### Upset/Sad/Disappointed

Cost conscious – 1 respondent

Water blind – 2 respondents



### Confused/Uncertain

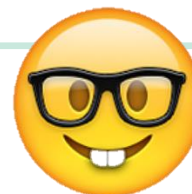
Cost conscious – 1 respondent

Water conscious – 3 respondents



### Interested

Water conscious – 1 respondent

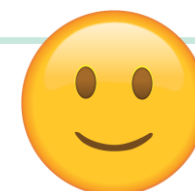


### Happy/Smiley

Cost conscious – 1 respondent

Water blind – 3 respondents

Water conscious – 1 respondent



### Angry/Grumpy

Cost conscious – 3 respondents

Water blind – 1 respondent



### Shocked

Cost conscious – 1 respondent



### Indifferent

Water blind – 2 respondents



### Happy & worried

Cost conscious – 1 respondent



### Love

Water conscious – 1 respondent

Across the group respondents reactions were mixed, although respondents on the Cost conscious table perceived compulsory metering more negatively, stating they would be 'angry' 'upset', 'shocked' and 'confused';

- *"I think I would be very angry and upset about it not so much because I am on a meter but we have all got to move forward and that"*
- *"I put angry because I would be wondering about my house and how much water I would be using and thinking no, no"*

The Water conscious table viewed compulsory water metering in a more positive light, with 50% of the table (3 respondents) 'uncertain', while the rest of the table had positive emoji's such as 'interested', 'happy' and 'love';

- *"I think it's interesting"*
- *"I love the idea"*
- *"Sort of in-between, sort of crying, sort of happy"*

A small number of respondents on the Water blind table felt 'indifferent' towards the idea of compulsory metering;

- *"Because I think it's something I would probably like to do because I can't be bothered with actually sending it out. Like nobodies made me do it, so if someone said I have to do it, I can see that coming, it's going to go that way at some point. If someone said I had to do it, fair enough just get on with it and do it"*
- *"Indifferent, I'm not really that fussed either way. We're not on a meter. Contacting SES to put a meter in, I'm not that fussed"*

The lack of choice and 'compulsory' nature of the scenario was a sticking point for some respondents, even though they agreed water meters would help reduce the wastage of water;

- *"Shocked, I don't like change sometimes. So, if they told me that I have to have it, I probably would not want it even more if that makes sense but agreeing with X and looking at the bigger picture, if it is going to help yourself to keep your bills down and the environment, it is just the way it is going"*
- *"Sad face, I think if I had the choice that's why, if somebody told me I had to have one I'd feel a bit sad"*
- *"Disappointed really, because it's good to have a choice. The company itself is water, like gas you have competition, electricity you have competition. Whereas water, one company supplies"*

*and that's it. If you were told by them you have to have it then I think as X said, you'd rather have a choice and make your own decisions rather than them saying you have to have it"*

## Promotion of smart meters

Having been presented with the facts on water meters and the scenario of compulsory metering, respondents in the co-creative workshop were then probed as to what SES Water could do to promote water metering to its customers.

Respondents on the Water conscious and Cost conscious tables suggested that introducing 'smart' water meters would encourage uptake with customers, while respondents on the Water blind table agreed this would be an encouragement when triggered by the moderator. The primary advantage of having a smart meter would be to monitor water usage in the household, with Cost conscious respondents suggesting they would use this to monitor leaks in the pipework and Water conscious respondents highlighting this would educate customers on the water use of different household appliances;

- *"But if you get a smart meter, you can monitor the water if you have got a leak at night, you will know you never used that much water at night"*
- *"With smart stuff now, you have got 24-hour apps on your phone, you can see what is going on. If you are using 200-300 litres at night, hang on I have got a problem, I have got to get a plumber, what has gone wrong"*
- *"That would be a good idea so we're not worried about how much we're using, how much it's costing. At the moment we might be paying a bit more on a meter but actually"*
- *"...yeah a smart meter that's what it is, so is there something that you could use that would quantify how much water you're using so you could, you know like my washing machine put on a, or like educate to say, I don't know how much water goes through my machine, I haven't a clue but I'd like to know"*

Across tables a key customer concern was the monetary impact of having a water meter installed, whether this would reduce or increase the bill. Respondents therefore suggested promoting the assurance that a water meter would save money, illustrating this on a bill for customers to easily digest;

- *"If it was cheaper like if you were on a meter and you saved X amount and put that on your bill rather than having to go on online and figure it out, they could put it on your bill, that may encourage some people"*
- *"You could even install the meter and send them two bills"*



- *“I think that guaranteeing that you won’t pay more over two years is definitely something that would motivate me to do it”*

Linking to the incentive of money saving, respondents also suggested incentivising customers with vouchers or reductions based on reduced water usage;

- *“Cashback if you use less”*
- *“You could also do like maybe vouchers off when the next time you buy a new washing machine and you get like 50% off or something”*

Relating to previous topics on ‘dry winters’ and water efficiency, some respondents also suggested incorporating key facts from these topics to highlight the strain on water resources in the area;

- *“I think us being water stressed because I don’t think people would realise that”*
- *“I think that if you can make people aware of how much they use and that they could save money and they’re more conscious of what they’re using”*

For Water blind customers the key to promoting water metering was to make the process easy for the customer;

- *“Yeah, just in terms of what’s fair. You pay for what you use. I think that’s pretty fair and if we all did that, you’d think about what you use more. To me, the only reason that puts you off is just the administration of it all and the hassle. That’s it really”*
- *“Just want it to be easy”*
- *“Take all the admin all the fuss, take all the inconvenience from you. So, if they can do it while you’re not even in”*

## Key statement

Following on from the table discussion on water meters, each table was asked to create one paragraph for SES Water to use in the promotion of water meters, with moderators probing as to key messages and wording that would be most effective with customers. All tables highlighted the customers' ability to influence their water usage and bills, with Water conscious and Cost conscious respondents also highlighting water efficiency.

Both the Water blind and Cost conscious tables promoted a 'free home visit' to provide further assistance to customers.

### Water blind

Did you know this area has higher than average water consumption - \*80%\* save money on a water meter. If we don't save you \*20%\* during a trial, we'll offer you a free home visit.

#### Key points

- Money will be saved
- Meter can be taken away
- It's 'hassle free'

### Cost conscious

We need your support - help us to help you, let's work together – it's a team effort. Water is a precious resource let's protect the environment, help the water shortage. Here is where you can learn to be more water efficient. We are giving you a smart meter to help you manage and spot a leak, we'll offer you a free home visit.

#### Key points

- Cash back
- Support packages
- Happy to hear customer ideas

- You can have water audit at the same time to help
- Highlight anything else being done in the community
- Positive wording

### Water conscious

Water meters, we will cap your prices for two years. If your bills are higher you have a choice, you can come off the meter. You can't lose. We'll provide better rates for families and OAPs. You can control your bills. We'll help you make water efficient choices and teach you how to improve. Monthly prize draw for all water meter customers.

### Key points

- Incentives
- Key facts on water usage for context - diagrams and pictures

When discussing the language and approach in the promotion of water meters, there were differences across tables, with some respondents focusing on the personal benefits of a water meter and others focusing on a joint approach to improve water efficiency and the environment;

- *"I think it needs to be personal because, that sounded bad for the environment if they said I have to go on a meter because we use more than average, I'd think it's not really my issue"*
- *"It is a team effort, it is a precious resource that we have got to jointly work together. It will help towards to the planet and it will help towards your bill hopefully"*
- *"I think if they were going to do it as a local company, they show what they are doing in the local community, stuff like that. I think they need to also make it clear that it is happening to everyone that is with them because if you think that it is just your street, you are going to be avoiding it"*

Water blind respondents were also keen to highlight the option to have the meter removed if the customer did not feel they were benefitting financially;

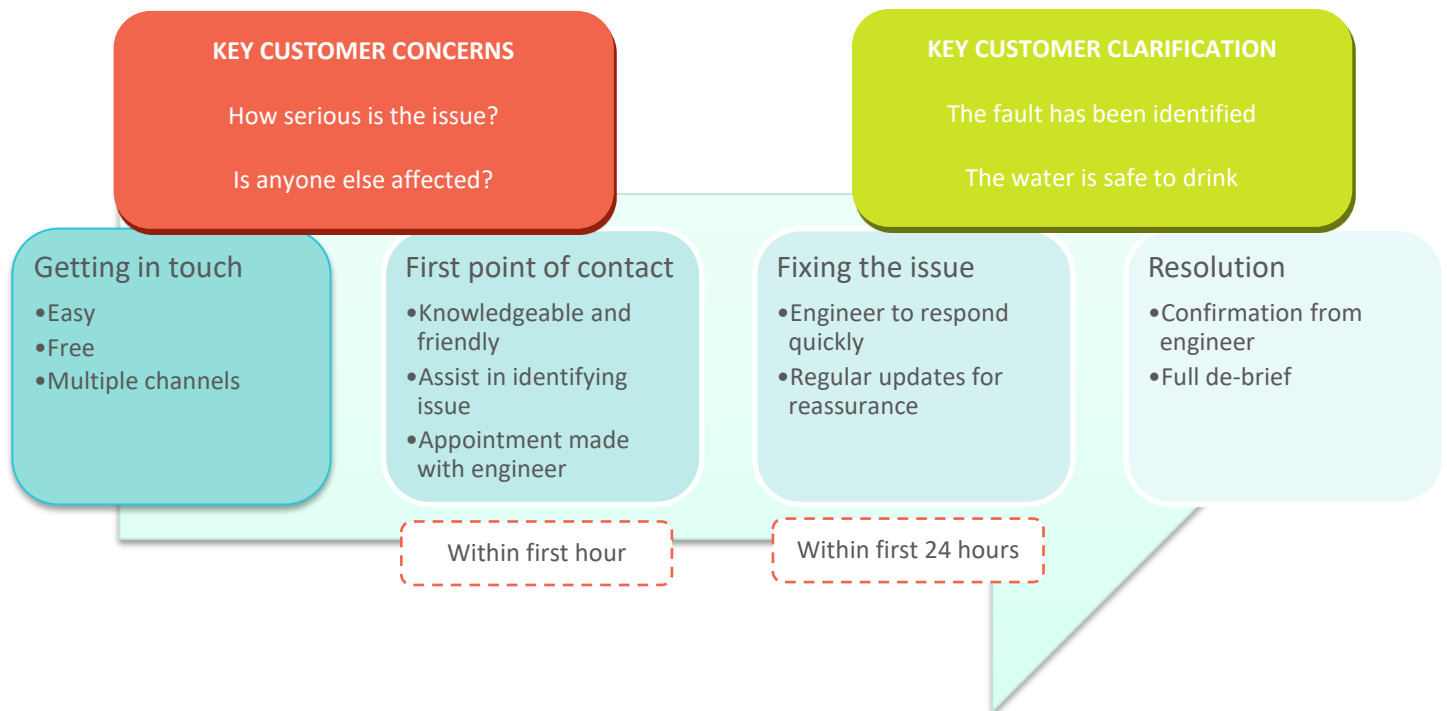
- *“The main thing is that you can have it taken away”*
- *“I think you’ve got to have a free trial”*
- *“The one thing Alison touched back on about on their website they do boxes where you can buy stuff but she also said you can contact them and they can come out and have a one on one in your home. If they were going to install a meter on that day, they could go in and go through everything with you”*

Respondents on the Water conscious table also highlighted the need to offer further education along with the water meter, such as key facts or water saving decides to encourage customer behavioural change;

- *“You’ve got to offer something, I’m not being funny there’s a lot of people I know that are just not educated to go wow look at this stuff, I mean my daughter you know, if I gave her that she’d go I don’t want to use it, you’ve got to educate”*
- *“Just you know key facts to try and make people aware of what they’re using as in, because I don’t think people understand, because you know they might, 160 litres, even I think if they put it in you know or they did it like two bath tubs a day I think that would be better than saying 160 litres”*

## Customer journeys

Across all three strands of the research customers were provided with a service fault scenario and asked to comment on and recreate the current customer journey – this resulted in the identification of key features which could be incorporated into the ‘ideal’ customer journey;



Within the co-creative workshop and the PACE community group respondents were guided to create an ideal customer journey using the current SES Water customer journey as a guideline, with moderators probing respondents to adapt this to meet their needs. In comparison, the future customers were instructed to ‘tear up’ the current customer journey and re-design this to meet their needs as future customers.

Although future customers were asked to re-invent the current customer journey, key similarities can be seen across the groups in terms of the contact methods used and the key steps within the ‘ideal’ customer journey, as detailed below.

## Getting in touch

To start the customer journey, all respondents were asked to comment on how they would expect to get in touch with SES Water if they identified a fault in the water supply. Across the groups there was an expectation that more than one contact method would be available, these included telephone and online methods.

Although preferences between a telephone or an online contact method varied from respondent to respondent, there was a consensus that the contact method used would be easy to use and provide a quick response from SES Water;

- *“If it’s something with your water you want to speak to someone quickly don’t you”*
- *“If you email you have to wait for a reply, it’s not instant, and if it’s evening well, I like to speak to someone”*
- *“I think with something like this, if I knew the information was going to be easy to find online. I’d go online”*

Respondents in the PACE group highlighted previous negative contact experiences in which they experienced prolonged waiting times and difficulty getting through to an adviser. Talk Talk was highlighted as a particularly poor example of customer service, due to only being able to make contact online;

- *“Then when you ring back they put you on hold and say we’ve got a terribly long queue and it is all very off putting” (PACE)*
- *“Because you can’t get through to them, if you have a problem” (PACE)*

### Telephone contact

Respondents in the co-creative workshop and PACE group also highlighted telephone contact should be free of charge for the customer. With customer service staff based locally or within the UK;

- *“I would want it to be free”*
- *“It should be a free number”*

Respondents in the PACE group preferred to contact SES Water via telephone as they found this to be the quickest and easiest way to get in touch. There was a desire to speak directly to a person without an automated service; this preference was also shared by some co-creative workshop respondents;

- *“Particularly when you’ve got another human being on the end of the telephone” (PACE)*
- *“You’re talking to an actual person not a machine”*

Respondents in the PACE group highlighted that the majority of elderly customers would not use an online contact method and therefore options should be provided for contact by other means;

- *“They often advise you to go online don’t they. They say don’t ring us go online. There are several people, I live in a residents block and there are a lot of people that don’t have a computer” (PACE)*
- *“But honestly the majority of older people would not have those facilities, or want to use them” (PACE)*

Respondents within the co-creative workshop and future customer event were also clear they did not wish to be passed between staff when making contact via telephone. Future customer and some co-creative workshop customers were happy to go through an initial automated service or message in order to speak to the correct person first time – in comparison PACE respondents preferred to be put through to a member of staff straight away;

- *“The problem with it sometimes is that you go on the phone and then you go through data protection and they go oh okay, I will put you through instead of saying the person they are going to pass you through to. They are asking the same things again and you are just wasting time. If it is an inside call pass through, you have gone through the initial steps, you don’t need to keep going through them”*
- *“I was going to say you could have it. Let’s just say it is something to do with water and they know it is an issue. That could be the first thing you hear when you ring and actually hold onto the line”*
- *“When they put you on hold and the music plays then you press this button or that button and it is irritating” (PACE)*

### Online methods

Within the future customer workshop there was a preference for online methods, such as instant webchat. Respondents in the co-creative workshop also suggested webchat or social media as an additional contact method. Again respondents felt online methods would be easy to use and result in an instant reply from SES Water;

- *“I know you can do it when you have instant chat, I would do that”*

Respondents within the future customer event highlighted they would often contact service providers and other companies, such as a mobile provider and delivery services, using mobile apps. All were in agreement that an SES Water app would be a suitable method for future customers to get in contact with SES Water to report a problem. Suggestions were also made for this app to include additional features, such as smart meter tracking and live updates.

## First point of contact

On the first point of contact, the key outcome required across all respondents was reassurance from SES Water, even if the problem could not be solved immediately. Customer service staff were therefore expected to be helpful, knowledgeable and friendly;

- *“Someone being calm and pleasant, polite and courteous”*
- *“I would want to be reassured”*
- *“Knowledgeable as well”*
- *“Reassure that something will be done” (PACE)*

Respondents in the PACE group highlighted their previous positive experiences when contacting organisations such as John Lewis and Waitrose – for these respondents the key to a positive contact experience was dealing directly with a person, being listened too and giving clear explanations;

- *“They treat you like a person and they explain more” (PACE)*
- *“SAGA you get in touch with them and you speak to somebody all the way through” (PACE)*
- *“I think BT is very good, very charming and gracious” (PACE)*

One respondent within the PACE group also stated they had experienced customer contact with SES Water in relation to a fault, the respondent found the customer service over the phone to be a positive experience due to the employees attitude;

- *“She was reassuring and friendly and I could hear” (PACE)*

Respondents in the co-creative workshop also highlighted the need to know whether the water was safe to use until the issue was resolved;

- *“I think the thing they have to tell you is whether you should keep the water on that’s the first thing”*



- *“...if it just tastes funny then I would probably be happy for them to come the next day, as long as I can have a bath in it and I can boil it”*

In addition to SES Water providing information and reassurance to the customer during the first point of contact, respondents also expected the customer to provide additional information to SES Water and conduct their own checks to try and clarify the cause of the fault;

- *“That goes through a problem-solving process first. So, if they say to you, why have you had your washing machine on, is it connected to this particular thing because sometimes if your machine is connected to a separate pipe that could sometimes shoot up and give you that different taste. Just problem solving first before they then call someone out that is then going to cost them money”*
- *“Yeah, or you know go through some checks, have you done this, have you done that, because sometimes it may not be your water”*

If the issue could not be resolved on the first point of contact through the customers own checks then respondents expected an engineer to be sent to the address. Respondents expected the appointment to be booked on the first point of contact. Future customers also highlighted the need for SES Water to be flexible around the customers’ availability;

- *“Well when you ring up to say it’s not working that’s when you would book it”*

## Fixing the issue

Respondents expected an engineer to be available ‘immediately’ – although the perception of immediacy varied between respondents, with some respondents stating this would be within hours and others within a day;

- *“They send someone round straight away”*
- *“Yeah, an immediate response”*
- *“To get it sorted within 24 hours”*

Having booked an appointment with an engineer, respondents also expected to be able to opt in to updates via text or phone call on the progress with resolving the issue, and on the status of the engineer – with a notification before their arrival;

- *"I think it would be really good if you could then sort of say like, leave your mobile number if you want regular updates or like it's fixed so you don't have to keep calling back"*
- *"Like within half an hour, they text you saying oh an engineer will be with you within half an hour"*
- *"Yes, I would rather they called first and said they are coming" (PACE)*

When looking back on previous customer service experiences, respondents in the PACE group highlighted the need for appointment times to be kept – with one respondent referencing good customer service experiences with British Gas;

- *"They make an appointment they keep the appointment. They phone when they arrive. Yeah they're good" (PACE)*

Upon arrival respondents expected the engineer to carry out any necessary tests of water and equipment until the source of the problem was identified and the issue ultimately resolved – a small number of Water blind respondents in the co-creative workshop stated they would expect the engineer to stay until the issue was identified.

- *"I think in my scenario the engineer is already there, he's done that and tested it and it hasn't made a difference within 20 minutes or whatever, he'll be moving onto whatever the next part is. I'm not but they would be trained to go from one thing to the next, to the next, so whatever the next thing is because in my scenario the engineer is still in my house"*
- *"Test the water"*

Again respondents expected to be kept up to date and reassured throughout the process until resolution;

- *"If there is an issue for them to inform you on how and when it is going to be resolved"*
- *"I think you probably want to be updated, like even if it's going to take a week to fix, just to message every day to say we've done this or we've done that, just to let you know"*

Within the co-creative workshop respondents were also asked to comment on the current use of a check valve, fitted by the customer to try and resolve the issue prior to engineer visit. Overall perceptions of the check valve were negative, with the majority of respondents stating they would not be happy to fit the valve themselves;

- *"No, but I would get frightened not knowing which connection was water"*

- *“Unplugging it at the back, that would just be a nightmare for me”*

This was also seen to add to the time taken to resolve the issue – although Water conscious respondents stated they would be happy to have a go at fitting the check valve if it were to come within a day;

- *“How long would that take, a couple of days?”*

Some respondents stated they were happy to have the check valve fitted if this were done by SES Water as part of the resolution process, for example by the engineer;

- *“I think it should be fitted by the guy that is testing the water, personally. Not that I am saying I would have difficulty doing it”*

A number of respondents also highlighted that customers who were elderly may not be able to complete this step themselves;

- *“Would they know who they are sending that too? Because if that turned up at a 90-year old’s lady’s house, how is she going to have the ability to pull out a washing machine. Like I think that is slightly ridiculous”*
- *“No I don’t think, I think it would frighten some old people”*

## Resolution

Once the issue had been resolved respondents across groups expected some form of update or confirmation from SES Water, whether this be via text, telephone, email or post.

Future customers expected a detailed written report, outlining the problem identified, the steps taken to fix the issue now and future prevention – some future customers expected this to be provided on the day directly from the engineer. Co-creative workshop respondents also expected SES Water to provide confirmation of the fault and resolution, either through email, telephone or letter, while PACE respondents preferred to receive confirmation via letter;

- *“It doesn’t really matter what other things I’ve had, so even if I had email updates, I’d definitely want a call just to say, it’s all sorted, this is what the problem was and this is what we’ve done to fix it”*
- *“I’d expect a letter or something from them”*
- *“Or in paper as they call it, I want a paper reply” (PACE)*

A number of customers across groups also expected SES Water to provide a follow up contact to ensure the customer was satisfied the issue had been resolved in full;

- *“Well I would want them to phone me back”*
- *“Yeah, so you have rung and then they give you a callback to say it has all been resolved. Can you check that your water is resolved?”*
- *“I think if an engineer came out and tested the water and told you it was ok, I would want them to come out say, a week later”*

## Provisions for vulnerable customers

### During a service fault

Within the co-creative and PACE groups respondents were also asked to comment on service provision considerations for vulnerable customers.

Within the co-creative workshop some respondents stated they did not feel it was necessary to provide any additional services to vulnerable customers during a fault or service issue;

- *“I don’t agree, I think everybody should be treated the same. If for example, a single person phoned up on the same day a person with a child or a vulnerable person. Go to the vulnerable person or the person with the child and then the single person. Everyone is treated the same”*
- *“No, because everybody needs clean, drinkable, water. So, it shouldn’t make any difference. It doesn’t matter if you’ve got a young child, an elderly person. Whether you’re single, married, young, old, whatever”*

For co-creative respondents who did feel additional service provision were needed for vulnerable customers, expectations as to the provisions SES Water should make were mixed, such as prioritization for shorter timescales, more updates and an alternative water source;

- *“I think they should be prioritized. I think if you are elderly or have young children then you should be prioritized over someone like me”*
- *“Just, if they’re in touch with charities, then charities in the local area like that they can help”*
- *“I think their response should be more immediate”*
- *“If you’ve got a vulnerable customer, so whether that’s an elderly person, I think that they need to offer some alternative. So, if you’re worried about drinking the water then they’re vulnerable then say, ok, we’ll send you out a 10L bottle of water so”*

- *Maybe telling them the name of the engineer, so they know who to expect at the door”*

### Additional customer service provisions

Within the pre-formed community groups with PACE and Caterham foodbank, respondents were asked to provide feedback on the additional service provisions for vulnerable customers – such as alternative communication formats, additional security such as passwords, and payment plans.

Respondents in the PACE group did not immediately identify themselves as requiring any additional services from SES Water.

Within the co-creative workshop one respondent also suggested an additional service which SES Water currently provides – a nominated person to contact;

- *“I think maybe, a nominated person, so if you’ve got an elderly person, you can ring their son or daughter”*

In regards to the financial services available to vulnerable customers, this was the main focus of conversation within the Caterham foodbank group – with customers and organisation volunteers providing feedback on the existing provisions and providing suggestions for improvement going forward.

Respondents in the PACE group had not experienced any previous difficulties in paying their bills, so did not feel these services were relevant to them, however a small number of respondents in this group stated they would be happy to contact SES Water directly if they did require financial assistance;

- *“See if there is any discount for people who are on a limited income” (PACE)*
- *“If you don’t ask you don’t get” (PACE)*

One PACE group respondent had experienced difficulty in paying an increased bill for an annual boiler service, and highlighted the positive experience on being offered financial help when informing the customer service staff member that they may face difficulty paying their bill;

- *“I have my boiler serviced and I said to them. It had gone up the annual service charge. I said to them I don’t think I can afford that and they said would you like a discount and it was quite a substantial amount of money. It was a bit of a surprise, I said I don’t think I can afford it and they said what about a discount. They went straight into it” (PACE)*

Of the Caterham Foodbank respondents who were customers of SES Water, all were currently on a payment plan with SES Water – although they were unable to provide the specific name of the payment plan, it appeared all had a payment card to top-up each month. All respondents were happy with the current set up on their payment plan.

Respondents stated they had set up their payment plan directly with SES Water or through their housing provider – all had experienced direct contact with SES Water customer services at some point during this process, and highlighted that the experience was positive, with staff empathetic and helpful.

The Caterham foodbank respondents had not actively sought the payment plans from SES Water, but had instead been notified of their availability through third parties, such as housing providers and support workers.

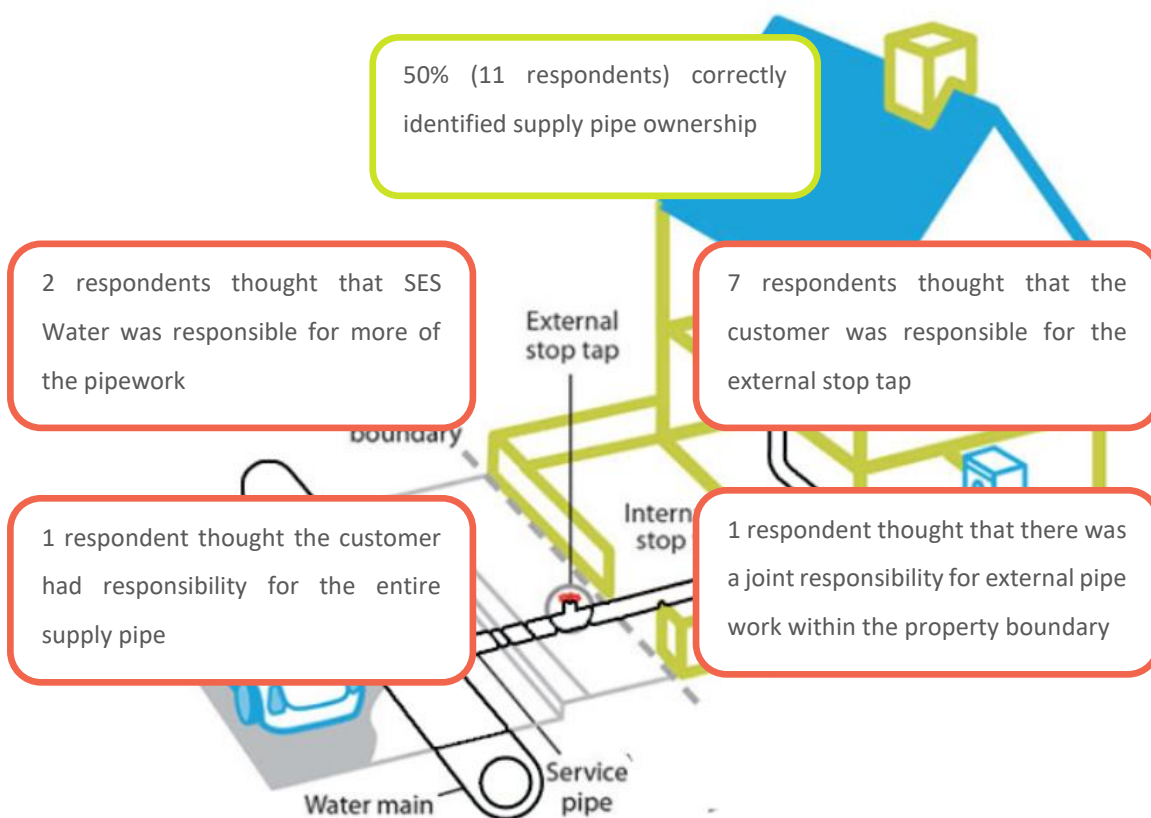
Respondents who volunteered for Caterham foodbank highlighted the key role third party organisations, such as local authorities and charities, played in ensuring vulnerable customers were provided with the additional support they needed. Volunteers stated that many service users faced embarrassment and anxiety when admitting they needed additional help, and accessing additional services through organisations and charities they were familiar with would combat these barriers.

Volunteers at Caterham foodbank were unaware of the additional services available through SES Water, but stated the financial assistance would be useful to many service users.

The organisation currently promotes a number of third party programs and additional services, with volunteers stating they would often hand out additional information in the form of leaflets.

## Supply pipe ownership

Respondent awareness of the current supply pipe ownership between the customer and SES Water was tested using a colouring exercise in the co-creative workshop – with respondents asked to colour which parts of the pipe they thought were the customers responsibility, and which were SES Water's responsibility;



Awareness of current supply ownership was mixed across tables, with 50% of respondents on each table correctly identifying current ownership. Once supply ownership was clarified some respondents still held queries as to how customers would be aware of this and the practicalities of this level of customer responsibility;

- *"How would you know though that's the thing, how would you know"*
- *"So they actually own the pipes so it might be like a really old pipe, the pipe might be 100 years old so you know why really, if it bursts, if it's in your own home I understand but if it's actually outside I don't agree with that"*
- *"I didn't know about the bit on the driveway, I understood if I did anything on my driveway I'd have to tell them and pay them for the privilege, same with British Gas"*

- *“Well, yeah, I mean it makes sense that it’s not but until it came into the house I didn’t think it was my responsibility, but like I said, I don’t know where that external stock tap is”*

A number of respondents appeared to be aware of the customer responsibility up to the street boundary due to information and communication relating to insurance policies for the water supply pipes;

- *“Well like X said I know there is insurance for it and its choice isn’t it, some are risk takers, some aren’t”*
- *“I pay £6 a year to have that covered through the water board, yeah £6 a year”*
- *“I often get a letter from the company and it says to take out insurance because if there’s a leak outside the house, I’m responsible for it”*

When probed as to whether they felt the current ownership split were suitable, respondents across each table highlighted the impact of newer and older housing on the likelihood of supply pipe maintenance being required;

- *“I think it should be on how modern your house is because if you’ve got pipes that are 100 years old how can you, that’s a bit unfair if you are responsible for them”*
- *“And you’ve got to replace your external pipes so in a way, they should help you because it would be them that fitted it originally, anyway”*

When posed with a scenario in which SES Water would increase their ownership passed the street boundary up to the property, respondents’ views were mixed – with some finding this to be positive to ensure pipes were maintained;

- *“See I’d like that”*
- *“But surely if it is outside the boundary of your house, wouldn’t everyone prefer to have the water company do it because that is what they are good at as opposed to if it our responsibility. Not trying to be funny but someone could pay a proper builder to do it or someone who is not as trained”*



The majority of respondents were unsure as to how they would feel about an increased responsibility on SES Water's behalf, stating that the acceptability would be dependent upon the financial impact of this. In order for respondents to be happy with the increased ownership, the cost would need to be lower than the financial impact on housing or other property insurance;

- *"Depends what a little bit more means"*
- *"Like an insurance policy, I wouldn't expect it to be more than a tenner a month"*
- *"It depends, increase by how much? So, if it's going to cost me an extra £50 to insure it, and It's only going to go up £25 then that makes sense. It depends how much, it's relative isn't it. How much is it going to increase my home insurance and how much is it going to increase my water bill"*

In addition to queries relating to the financial impact of pipe ownership, a small number of respondents had additional questions, such as SES Water's motivation for increasing ownership and the implications dependent on existing insurance policies and buildings of multiple occupancy;

- *"Another thing is, sorry I don't know if you live in a house but what if you live in a flat or a maisonette"*
- *"Yeah, like why they feel the need to come over and take ownership of pipes"*
- *"So if it was covered by your house insurance you wouldn't want them to take that responsibility up to your property boundary?"*

## Key piece of advice

Throughout the co-creative workshop a broad range of topics were covered, in order to determine where customers felt SES Water's focus should lie at the end of the co-creative workshop respondents were asked to write on a post-it note one key piece of advice they would give to SES Water for their future services and customer relationship. The majority of advice centred upon the influence SES Water could have on the customer and their behaviour, influencing this through water meters and education. The advice given can be grouped into the following key themes;

### Water meters

(7 respondents)

Advertise and encourage customers to take up water meters, or even roll out as compulsory, to save water and save customers money

### Smart meters

(6 respondents)

Introduce smart water meters into households – highlight the benefits to the customer and promoting reduced water usage

Don't be afraid to upset customers and introduce compulsory metering

Everyone to have a meter - fair for all

Smart home

Roll out indoor smart meters to show the customer the amount of use and impact on a precious resource

### Education

(5 respondents)

Wider education in schools and with the general public. Highlighting to customers their water usage and how money can be saved, with water a limited resource

Educate on water usage and make water meters compulsory

More education in schools and to the public

### Invest in infrastructure

(2 respondents)

Use profits to invest in infrastructure and new technologies, such as grey water systems and salutation

Majority of company profits to be used to fund infrastructure

### Fix leaks

(2 respondents)

Fix and stop leaks in the supply

Stop the leaks

### Know your customer

(1 respondent)

Provide the best service and be open and honest with the customer

Know your customer, provide best service for most efficient service and always be open, honest and up from with the customer as per dealing and prioritising etc

### Communication

(1 respondent)

Communicate to customers to reduce water use

Communication on reduced use

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### 3.0 Conclusions and recommendations

Key conclusions and recommendations can be found in this section.



## Conclusions

Customers viewed SES Water in a positive light, although they often did not give consideration to the services they provide or the impact customers may have on water supply provisions.

The current and future customer has a clear expectation for the delivery of a reliable and acceptable supply of water, with minimal interruption. Although respondents did not rate customer service as a priority, when considering the ideal customer journey, respondents expected a quick resolution with experienced contact staff.

Respondents were not adverse to the prospect of a water meter, and when provided with additional information on 'dry winters' and water efficiency viewed water meters as playing a key role in adapting customer behaviours.

Throughout the groups respondents were surprised by the role SES Water plays outside of providing their domestic water supply, with respondents highlighting the need for SES Water to promote their additional services and projects to customers.

## Recommendations

Overall respondents had a positive outlook in relation to SES Water and the services they provide, however the majority were unaware of their role in supplying water services and their wider responsibilities in relation to water efficiency and education. SES Water should therefore take steps to promote their services and wider projects to customers.

It's clear that maintaining the supply of reliable and safe drinking water is at the forefront of customers' minds, with respondents highlighting these areas as priority throughout groups and topics. SES Water should therefore ensure their business plan concentrates on the maintenance of the future supply, investing in infrastructure and new technologies and shape resilience strategies on this basis.

SES Water should also raise awareness to the issue of 'dry winters' and educate the wider customer base to adopt water efficient behaviours. The topic achieved a huge amount of buy in following discussion in the co-creative workshop which demonstrates awareness as a barrier to behaviour change. Ideas for implementation include:

- Providing real time information in the moment such as current levels on the local news
- Providing interactive videos on social media to reach out to future customers

- Going ahead with compulsory water metering pitching this as a "team effort" and promoting the possible bill reductions as a result
- Using incentives, water saving kits and home water audits to persuade buy in
- Looking for new ways to recycle water e.g. grey water systems, providing customers with water butt
- Focussing on innovations such as salutation sea water
- Tackle leakage
- Work with government, developers and other partners to establish how water efficiency measures can be built into new properties
- Continue with Bough Beech education programme and expand to secondary school children, increasing the interactivity of the tour for this group, consider opening another site given future customer buy in to the idea
- Look to reach out to key employers to push out the water efficiency measure

In line with the points above, on the whole, respondents were not adverse to the installation of a water meter in order to tackle the water shortage and ultimately save money personally. The only barrier highlighted was where customers thought their bills would be more expensive on a water meter given the size of their household or their children's attitude to water usage.

Respondents suggested a number of ways to gain buy in from the wider population which could be rolled out including:

- Offering smart meters as an added incentive
- Demonstrating actual monetary savings for a typical household
- Retaining the option to revert back if savings aren't made
- Offering incentives or prize draws for participation in the programme
- Ensuring the process of installation is low effort on the behalf of the customer
- Sharing key facts around dry winters, water stress and the above average use of water in the area
- Providing advice and products to help customers save water and money once they have the water meter installed

The key to an ideal customer journey is quick and easy contact, with reassurance and updates throughout the process – SES Water should review their current customer journeys and ensure provisions are in place to allow both telephone and online contact and an opt-in for updates. Surprisingly, even future customers were very keen on telephone contact and thus it is recommended

that alternative digital channels support the telephone contact centre rather than look to replace activity in any way. In addition, future customers were keen on the idea of an app to both monitor usage (linking into the findings above) as well as offering an easy to use channel to report an issue and thus this should be explored. Customer effort should be minimised, and concepts like the check valve reviewed considering the large majority of respondents felt that this would be extremely difficult to install.

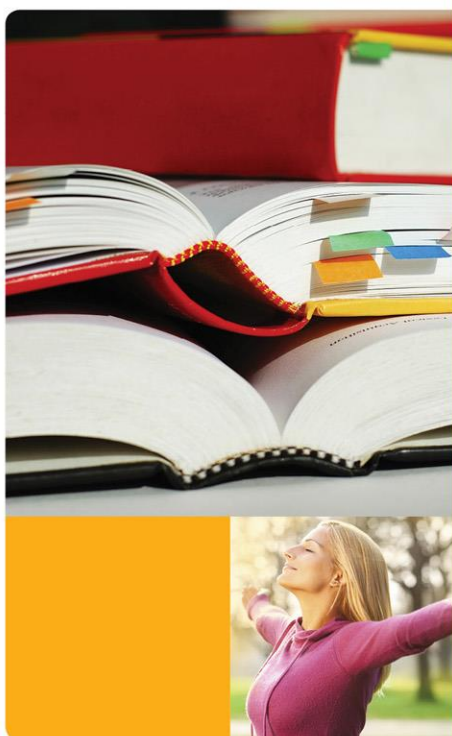
Respondents from PACE and Caterham foodbank were unaware of SES Waters provisions for vulnerable customers, although they would be useful dependent on the vulnerability. SES Water should therefore do more to promote these services, identifying customers on contact and providing leaflets and other information through third parties such as local authorities and charities

In principle, customers were happy for SES Water to take on responsibility of supply pipes, the only barrier being cost and thus it is suggested further willingness to pay research is conducted in this area.

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## 4.0 Appendices

Discussion guides are held within this section.





# Appendix 1 – Co-creative workshop discussion guide

## SES Water

### Co-creative workshop

### Discussion and activity guide v2

#### Arrival 18:15-18:30

- Meet & greet respondents
- Refreshments

#### 18.30 - Introduction (10 minutes)

#### SES Water introductory talk (using three images)

*SES Water representative to introduce the evening;*

*I'd like to thank everyone for coming along today. My name is X from SES Water...*

*We also have Explain here with us today, they're a market research agency based in Newcastle, and we've asked them to come along today to run this workshop on our behalf, to gather impartial feedback from our customers. So, what we'll be doing here today is talking about SES Water through different discussions and activities. We're wanting to gather your thoughts and opinions on different aspects of the service they provide, and hopefully you'll also learn something new today too.*

*I'll now pass onto Explain...*

#### **EXPLAIN MODERATOR TO THE ROOM:**

Just before we begin I need to let you know Explain work to the Market Research Society Code of Conduct - this means that everything you say throughout the day will be completely anonymous. And we're only interested today in what is said, and not who said it.

Before can I just check that everyone is happy for us to record your discussions today? This will allow us to listen back to the recordings, type up your quotes and use these for our analysis.

So we've started with an introduction to SES Water, we're now going to move onto our first activity.

### 18.40 - Discussion 1 – Priorities (15 minutes)

#### Explain moderator to room:

To get us started today we'd like to get to know a bit more about you as customers and what's of most importance to you. In front of you there's a sheet with a scale from 'highest priority' to 'lowest priority' and a set of stickers listing different aspects of the service SES Water provides you with;

- Keeping bills down
- Keeping environmental impact to a minimum
- Supplying with an acceptable taste, smell and look
- Supplying water that meets quality standards
- Reliability of supply
- Customer service
- Reducing leakage

We'd like you to rank these factors from those that you think should be SES Water's highest priority, to those you think should be the lowest. You'll also find you have a couple of blank stickers, so if you think there's a factor missing from these options if you could write this on a stick and add this to your priority ranking. We'll give you a few minutes to do this and then we'll have a discussion around our tables

#### Per table:

- So, what has everyone put as their top priority for SES Water?
  - Probe: why have you picked this? Does anyone else agree that this is the highest priority? Anyone disagree?
    - Why?
- What about the lowest priority, what have people put down?
  - Probe: why have you picked this? Does anyone else agree that this is the lowest priority? Anyone disagree?
    - Why?

## 18.55 - Resilience (20 minutes)

### Explain moderator to room:

We would now like to find out what is most important to you in terms of how resilient SES Water are in providing your water supply.

We have a list of potential events relating to customer service, water quality and water supply and we'd like you to put these events onto a scale from those you would be least acceptable, to those you find more acceptable.

This is what the scale looks like. On the left in the red area is where you would put the things you would be least prepared to accept and on the right is the yellow area where you would put the things that you're most willing to accept.

There are seven columns that you can put things in - some events can go in the same column, but what we do ask is that you do not put all of them in the same one. By putting an event in the 'most willing to accept' you're not saying you'd be happy for it to happen.

Here are the events that we'd like you to put onto the scale;

### Customer service

1. SES Water taking more than 1 minute to answer your call
2. Having to call SES Water back three times before getting through to the correct person

### Water quality

3. Water coming out of your tap that has a brown colour – although it's safe to drink (lasting 2 hours)
4. Water coming out of your tap that has a bad taste or smell – although it's safe to drink (lasting up to a day)
5. A boil water notice - you can only use your water if it has been boiled or it would risk your health (lasting 1 day)
6. A 'do not use' water notice – there is a risk to your health if you use the water (lasting up to 2 days)

### Water supply

7. A sudden interruption to the water supply to your home for up to 3 hours – no prior notification
8. A planned interruption to the water supply to your home for up to 3 hours – you have received a notification prior to this
9. A sudden interruption to the water supply to your home for more than 4 days – no prior notification
10. A hose pipe ban for up to three months

So individually if you could place each event on the scale from 'least willing to accept' to 'most willing to accept' and we'll have a discussion on each table afterwards

### **Per table:**

So thinking about where you have placed each event on the scale;

- Which event or events have you put as 'Least willing to accept'? (Ask each respondent in turn)
  - Why have you put this as least willing to accept?
    - Compared to the other events?
  - Does anyone else on the table agree?
- Which event or events have you put as 'Most willing to accept'? (Ask each respondent in turn)
  - Why have you put this as most willing to accept?
    - Compared to the other events?
  - Does anyone else on the table agree?

## **19.15 - Discussion 2 – Dry winters (35 minutes)**

**Session introduced by SES Water - Share some images of "Winter" weather, the common factor being that none of them show rain**

- What do these images show? What is the common factor across them all? (Moderator and SES Water to probe to get respondents to make the link)

**SES Water to clarify what the images show and how this links to the Dry Winters challenge.**

**On each table:**

- So first of all, what do you think about the information we've just seen?
  - Probe: was there anything on there that surprised you?
- What do you think SES Water can do to lessen the impact of dry winters?

**\*Moderators to write responses on flipchart**

- Probe: What can SES do? What can SES encourage others to do? How can SES raise awareness of the issue?

**SES Water to clarify what they do in relation to dry winters, including water efficiency and education.**

**On each table:**

- **Moderator to reference flipchart responses**
  - So what did we write down that SES Water currently do?
  - What do SES Water do in addition to your suggestions?
  - Do we think there's anything missing that SES Water could be doing?
- Were you aware of SES Waters work in education?
- Do you think SES Water are doing enough in the education sector?
  - Probe: should they broaden their education program?
    - Bill payers
    - Future customers

**19.45 - Metering (25 minutes)**

We now want to talk a little bit more about water meters. When a customer is on a meter they pay for the water they use and so typically metered customers use less water.

**\*moderator hand out 'key facts' cards and read out;**

- Metering is a key way for water companies to meet their commitments around reducing customer usage. This is especially important for SES Water that has one of the highest levels of usage in the country, and a growing population.

- In SES Water’s area each person uses an average of 160 litres of water per day, which equates to almost two bath tubs and is higher than the national average.
- The main benefit for bill payers is the ability to control their bill, thereby saving money – on both their water and energy bills
- All homes have a right to have a water meter fitted for free (where practical)
- About half of homes have a meter and all new homes have to have a meter fitted
- SES guarantee that domestic customers will not pay more for their water supply for the first two years as a result of having a meter installed; customers can choose to have their meter removed free of charge up to the end of the two year period
- Every meter application will be entered into our monthly competition to win £50 in high street shopping vouchers
  
- Is there anything in these ‘key facts’ that surprises you about water meters or water usage in the area?

*Respondents who are on a water meter*

- Did you choose to have a water meter?
  - If yes, what encouraged you to apply for a water meter? Are you happy with the outcome? Why/Why not?
  - If no - are you happy that you have a water meter? Why / why not? Has any of the information we have gone through influenced your perceptions?

*Respondents who are not on a water meter*

- How would you feel about having a water meter? Would any of this information encourage you to get a water meter? What? Why?
  
- Currently around 50% of the properties in SES Water’s supply area are metered but increasing the number of metered properties largely relies on convincing customers of the benefits to them so that they apply for one. This becomes more challenging as the pool of unmetered properties gets smaller and water is already comparatively cheap. The main benefit for bill payers is the ability to control their bill, thereby saving money. Metering is an important part of the company's strategy to enable them to manage demand for water as we have discussed earlier this evening.
  - What can SES Water do to encourage people to have water meters installed?

- If SES Water were to notify you that you were going to have a water meter installed (compulsory), how would you feel about this?
- [All respondents to draw an emoji to describe their feelings and each asked to present this to the group and describe their reaction/emotions]
- What could SES Water do to make a compulsory meter a positive experience for all customers? Unprompted then probe - Would a meter be more appealing if:
  - You were offered a smart water meter that allowed you to monitor your usage better and control your bill?
- What are the key facts, messages or incentives that would make you feel positive about getting a compulsory water meter?
  - I'd like us to work together to come up with a paragraph of information that you think would promote meters and highlight the key benefits to customers
    - Probe: What facts do you want to mention? What words do you want to include? Is there any incentives you can offer that would appeal?

### 20.15 - Break – 20 minutes

### 20.35 - Discussion 3 – customer journeys (25 minutes)

**Explain moderator to the room:** We now want to move onto talk about customer service and how SES Water can surpass your expectations in this area.

We are going to focus on one “customer journey” which SES Water will now explain to you.

- I want you to imagine that you're in your home and you turn on the tap in your kitchen to get a drink of what, and you find that the water doesn't taste right – it could have a chemical or metal taste to it. So you decide to get in touch with SES Water to tell them about the issue. We are now going to draw your ideal customer journey. Let's think about:
  - How you want to get in touch? Why?
  - What you would want to happen on first contact? What do you expect the person you deal with initially to do on the first contact? What action do you expect to be taken on the first contact?
  - One action that can be taken is that SES Water could send a check valve [moderator to hand these out]. How would you want this to be provided? How soon would you expect to receive it? Would you be clear what to do with this?
  - The check valve resolves your problem. What happens next? Do you make contact? Do you expect SES Water to make contact? How?

- The check valve didn't resolve your problem. What happens next? Do you make contact? Do you expect SES Water to make contact? How?
- What do you expect SES Water to do now? They can send an inspector out – is this the right thing to do? How would you want to arrange that? When would you want them to come? What kind of timeslot would you want? How long would you expect to wait before the inspector came out? Would you expect any other communication whilst waiting for the inspector?
- What communication would you expect after the inspector has visited? Report? What would this look like? How would you receive it?

**\*A3 paper on each table and coloured markers for moderator to draw flow chart and write key points based on feedback**

- Would your expectations of the service from SES Water change if a vulnerable customer were to go through this journey? E.g someone who is elderly, has limited mobility, a household with young children
  - If no – why?
  - If yes – what would you expect to be different?
    - Probe: additional contact? Shorter timeframes? Extra support?

## 21.00 - Supply pipe ownership exercise (15 minutes)

**Explain moderator to room:**

We're now going to move onto an exercise relating to supply pipe ownership. So you have a diagram in front of you showing a household and the water pipe leading from the house to the street. I'd like you to use the coloured pens to identify what part of the pipe you think is your responsibility and what part you think is SES Waters responsibility;

- Colour the pipe in green where you think it's your responsibility, for example if there was a leak or the pipe needed replacing
- Colour the pipe in red where you think it's SES Water's responsibility

**\*Moderator to show diagram of correct pipe ownership**

- So how does this diagram compare to where you thought the pipe ownership was up to?



- Did you think SES Water was responsible for the more/less of the pipe?
- SES Water could in the future decide to take ownership up to the boundary of your house, then from the point it enters the home that would be your responsibility. Your water bill would increase as a result of this – although this would also mean that SES Water would take more responsibility for fixing leaks and maintaining these sections of the pipe - how would you feel about this?
  - Probe: positive or negative thoughts, or indifferent. Cost/benefit of change?

### 21.15 - Priorities repeated (10 minutes)

#### Explain moderator to room:

For our final exercise of the night, I'd now like you to once again rank the key factors in front of you - from those that you think should be SES Water's highest priority, to those you think should be the lowest. It doesn't matter whether the way you would rank these factors is the exact same or has changed completely, just stick your stickers where you think they should go.

Once again you also have blank stickers, so feel free to use this if you think there's anything missing – these don't have to match the first exercise either.

We'll give you a few minutes to do this and then we'll have a discussion around our tables

#### Per table:

- Have any of your rankings changed since the start of the session?
  - If rankings haven't changed – why have you kept these the same?
  - If rankings have changed:
    - Which factors have moved?
    - Have they moved to a higher or lower priority?
    - Why? Probe: SES Water presentations? Group conversation? Others options?

### (If time) Headline piece of advice

#### **Moderator to room;**

As you leave the room tonight it would be great if you provide a final piece of feedback in the form of a 'headline piece of advice' for SES Water. This could be anything based on the types of topics we've run through tonight – if you could give just one piece of advice what we would be?

If you could write this down on a post it note and stick it on the wall as you leave tonight.

### 21:30 - Close (5 minutes)

#### **Explain moderator to the room:**

Thank you all for time today, we will be using the feedback and opinions gathered here tonight to feed back to SES Water and inform their decisions making going forward, such as how they communicate to customers about dry winters and how they could approach their metering programme going forward,

The only thing left to do before you go is to give you your incentives. Each of the moderators have your incentives on their tables and we'll just need you to sign to say that you have received them. Can you also complete this sheet to let us know if you would be happy to take part in future research?

## Appendix 2 – Future customer discussion guide

### SES Water

### Future customers

### Discussion and activity guide v2

#### Arrival 9:40-10:00

- Meet & greet respondents
- Refreshments
- Run through of agenda for the day
- Introduce Explain and role as well as MRS Code of Conduct

*Explain work to the Market Research Society Code of Conduct - this means that everything you say throughout the day will be completely anonymous. And we're only interested today in what is said, and not who said it.*

*Throughout the day we will be taking notes and also recording some of the conversations during activities. This will allow us to listen back to the recordings, type up your quotes and use these for our analysis. Can I just check that everyone is happy for us to record your discussions today?*

- **Warm up activity** – respondents write any initial questions on post it notes and stick to wall

#### Tour 10:00-12:15 (Water treatment site, reservoir and dam)

**Moderators to accompany tour – noting down key questions, areas of concern/interest – interactions between respondents and SES Water guide**

#### 12:15 – 12:45 Lunch

## 12:45 – 13:15 Your area

### Moderator to open session

I hope you enjoyed this morning's tour and learnt some more about SES Water. This afternoon's session is going to be based around a series of discussions and activities so we can capture your thoughts and options.

First of all, I'd like you to think about what you like about living in this area. So is this could be a physical thing, it could be a feeling, it could be a bit of scenery or building. You have some post-it notes in front of you, I'd like you to write down three things that you like about living here – if you put one point on each post it note and stick this to the wall.

\*As respondents stick post-it notes moderators to group into themes

Looking at the things you like about the area, I can see that we have some common themes in X.

- So, looking at the post it notes, what things would you like to take with you if you were to move somewhere else?
  - Probe; why would you want to take these with you?
- And what about the water in your area, is there anything you particularly like about it or would want to keep if you moved?
  - Prompt; do you like the taste of the water from the tap?
  - Prompt; what about any rivers, lakes or reservoirs that you visit near you?

## 13.15 – 13:45 The environment

- We now want to talk to you about the environment. First of all:
  - How important is the environment to you? How does the importance of the environment affect your day to day behaviour (e.g. choices such as travel, buying products, etc)?
  - How important is it to you that SES Water looks after the environment? Why?
  - How do you think SES Water can help look after the environment? What kind of impact do you think SES Water have on the environment?

**SES Water representative to explain to the room how the organisation impacts on the environment, focusing on the fact that water is a precious natural resource that we can't make any more of and**

the water cycle means if we use it faster than it is replenished that is unsustainable and will damage the environment.

- How do you think SES Water can make sure we have enough water for years to come considering we can't "make" anymore? (Moderator to flipchart ideas)
  - Probe: Things SES Water can do as well as things customers can be encouraged to do

**Activity:** Respondents to stick 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> sticker next to their top three ideas

### 13.45 – 14:15 Dry winters

Session introduced by SES Water - Share some images of "Winter" weather, the common factor being that none of them show rain.

- What do these images show? What is the common factor across them all? (Moderator and SES Water to probe to get respondents to make the link)

SES Water to clarify what the images show and how this links to the Dry Winters challenge. Also link back to environment section and highlight that water is a precious natural resource that we can't make any more of and the water cycle means if we use it faster than it is replenished that is unsustainable and will damage the environment.

**On each table:**

- So first of all, what do you think about the information we have shared with you on dry winters?
  - Probe: was there anything on there that surprised you?
  - Probe: what points stood out the most?
- What do you think SES Water can do to combat dry winters?
  - \*Moderators to write responses on flipchart
    - Probe: What do you think they could be doing as a company?
    - Probe: What could they encourage customers to do?
      - How should they be communicating with customers about this challenge?

- What about people your age, who aren't customers yet but will be soon
  - do you think they should use the same facts and channels to talk to you about this challenge?

**Activity:** Respondents to stick 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> sticker next to their top three ideas

### 14:15 – 14:45 Education programme

**SES Water representative to open session by describing the current education programme including the location of the education centre against the SES Water patch.**

- You are at SES Water's education centre today and have taken part in a tour.
  - What do you think about the education centre and tour? Is there anything that could be improved?
  - What have you learned?
  - Is there anything you have heard that has made you change your views or think about changing your behavior in any way?
- The education centre is primarily used for primary age children.
  - Do you think SES Water have a role in secondary school or colleges to educate? Why do you feel they do/don't?
- You can see on the map that the education centre is located in the East of SES Water's patch and so schools would need to travel up to X minutes to get here. Do you think opening a second education centre would be a worthwhile investment?
  - Why/Why not?
  - Where would you build it?
- What is the best way to reach out to people in your age group to educate on subjects such as water efficiency?

### 14:45 – 15:45 Customer journeys

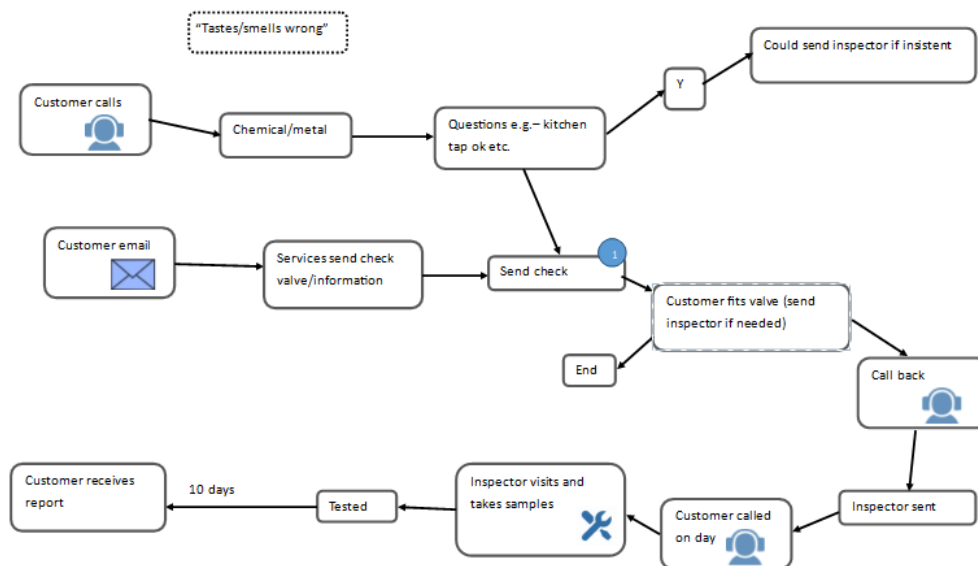
We're now going to talk about the customer service SES Water provides and how they are working to meet customer needs.

At the moment, someone else in your household, such as a parent, deals with your water bill. If there was any issue with the service provided by SES Water they would get in touch. So for example, if your Mum or Dad turned on the tap in the kitchen for a glass of water and it didn't taste right they might

decide to get in touch with SES Water to let them know about the issue. So for example, the water could have a chemical or metal taste to it.

If that were to happen, it is likely your Mum or Dad would go through the following "customer journey":

### Customer journey 1 – water quality



You are SES Water's customers of the future and so we want you to tear this customer journey up and decide what the most awesome customer journey would be for you if you had to report an issue like this to SES Water.

- As a table I'd like you to re-draw this customer journey in a flow chart, highlighting the following things;
  - What contact you'd like to have – what information would you expect to give, what information would you expect to receive
  - When you'd like the contact – how soon after initial contact would you expect a response or action, what update would you expect
  - How would you like contact – what methods would you want to use to contact SES Water, what channels should they use to contact you back and update you

**\*A3 paper on each table and coloured markers to draw flow chart and write key points**

**Moderator to talk to table as they create journey;**

- **What would be your first point of contact?**

- **Communication methods**
- **How would you tell them what's wrong with the water?**
  - **Communication methods**
- **How long do you think the whole process should take?**

**Explain moderator to room;**

Now we've all worked on our tables to build a new customer journey we're going to have a look at each table and see what you'd want and what channels you'd want to use. \*Summary journeys – any overlap in channels, timings, information. Moderators to probe for the reasons behind decisions.

**15.45 – 16.00 Q&A**

So hopefully you've learnt a lot about SES Water and your water services today, but if anyone has any other questions you'd like to ask the SES Water team, now is your chance.

We'll start with the questions on the post-it note wall \*read out each individual post-it note for answer from SES Water representative

Does anyone else have any other questions or comments to make?

**16:00 Close**

**Explain moderator to the room:**

The only thing left to do before you go is to give you your incentives as a thank you for giving us your time today. Each of the moderators have your incentives on their tables and we'll just need you to sign to say that you have received them. Can you also complete this sheet to let us know if you would be happy to take part in future research?



## Appendix 3 – Community group discussion guide

### SES Water

### Pre-formed group

### Discussion guide v2

#### Introduction

I'd like to thank everyone for coming along today. My name is Jeni and I'm from Explain, we're a market research agency based in Newcastle, and we're carrying out a research project on behalf of SES Water. The purpose of our conversation today is to find out what SES Water can do to improve their customer service, especially for customers who may need additional assistance.

Just before we begin I need to let you know Explain work to the Market Research Society Code of Conduct - this means that everything you say throughout the day will be completely anonymous. And we're only interested today in what is said, and not who said it.

Can I also just check that everyone is happy for us to record your discussions today?

#### Warm up

- Thinking about any companies that you receive a service from or pay a bill to, have any of these companies ever provided a service which has really helped you out? (This doesn't have to be a utility company, it could be a telephone or broadband provider, the council etc)
  - If yes:
    - Could you tell me about this?
    - What problem/situation were they helping with?
    - What was it that made this service experience so special?
- Have you had to contact SES Water before?
  - If yes - probe for information on experience;
    - Could you tell me about this?
    - What problem/situation were they helping with?
    - Was your overall experience positive/negative? Why?

- Are there any particular barriers or worries you experience when getting in touch with companies, such as service providers?
  - If yes:
    - What are these barriers / worries?
    - How can the companies you deal with help to reduce these worries / barriers?
- Are there any particular companies that you would feel especially comfortable approaching for help in relation to these barriers / worries? (These don't have to be utility companies)
  - If yes:
    - Which companies are they?
    - Why would you feel comfortable approaching these companies? (Moderator to probe for specific experiences or perceptions)
- Have you every struggled to pay a utility bill?
  - Did you contact the organisation directly? Why/Why not? How did they respond? Were you satisfied with how they responded?
  - If you were to every struggle to pay a water bill, how would you want SES Water to respond?

## Customer journeys

SES Water wants to ensure they look after all their customers, particularly those that might need a bit more help or assistance. They therefore have a range of services for these customers. The services they offer at the moment include: **(HANDOUT TO BE DEVELOPED BASED ON THIS INFORMATION - <http://www.waterplc.com/userfiles/file/HelpingHandFactsheet.pdf>)**

- **Individual notification in emergencies**
- **Braille, large print and audio/CD services**
- **Text Relay Service;** Text Relay connects people using a textphone with people using a telephone or another textphone. It aids customers with impaired hearing. For more information go to [www.textrelay.org](http://www.textrelay.org)
- **Home dialysis users and patients convalescing at home**
- **Password Scheme;** Setting up a password to protect from bogus callers
- **Bogus Callers;** Advice on how to avoid becoming a victim
- **Nominated correspondent;** When you would like someone to speak on your behalf.
- **WaterSure Scheme;** For low-income households.

- **Water Support**
- **Water Direct**
- **Payment plan**
  
- So what do you think about the services SES water offer?
  - Were you aware that these services were available?
  - Probe: do you think you would benefit from any of these additional services?
  - Is there anything else SES Water could provide that you would find useful?

### **Customer journey 1 – reporting a fault**

#### **\*Moderator to have current SES Water journey to use as reference**

- I want you to imagine that you find a fault near your home, this could be a leaking mains pipe or faulty manhole cover – you decide to report this to SES Water. I'd like us to come up with an idea of what your ideal customer journey would be. Let's think about:
  - How you want to get in touch? Why?
  - What you would want to happen on first contact? What do you expect the person you deal with initially to do on the first contact? What action do you expect to be taken on the first contact?
  - One action that can be taken is that SES Water assesses the urgency of the fault over the phone with you — is this the right thing to do? How soon would you expect them to get in touch?
  - SES Water schedule for the fault to be repaired and call to notify you. Are you happy with this contact method? How soon would you expect them to schedule the repair? Would you expect any other communication whilst waiting for the repair?
  - SES Water complete the repair on the fault, they send you a notice of completion - What would this look like? How would you receive it?
  - If not already mentioned; Do you think there are other services or points of contact that could be provided to you or other vulnerable customers during this customer journey?

Close

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