

## Shadow Metering Research Discussion Guide: November 2020

### Research objectives

- Understand reactions to the key elements of the shadow metering proposition
- Understand importance of key messages for customers and priorities
- Understand concerns and how UU can mitigate against these
- Understand how UU should be communicating this message to unmeasured customers
- Understand preferred formats for communicating this message
- (At a later date) test the communications we have drafted with a wider audience

### Research timings

- Recruitment screener and launch Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> November (LAUNCHED)
- Discussion guide delivered to UU Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> November
- Discussion guide signed off Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> November 3pm
- Fieldwork Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> – Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> November
- Analysis and reporting Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> – Monday 30<sup>th</sup> November
- Draft report delivered Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> December
- Final report delivered Friday 4<sup>th</sup> December

### Group timings

- Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> November at 16.30pm (Open to meters, smaller household, vehicle ownership)
- Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> November at 16.30pm (Not open to meters, smaller household, vehicle ownership)
- Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> November at 16.30pm (Open to meters, larger household, vehicle ownership)
- Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> November at 18.00pm (Not open to meters, larger household, vehicle ownership)

### Welcome and introduction (1-2 minutes)

- Welcome, introduction to Verve and interviewer
- Outline MRS code of conduct and anonymity
- Audio and video recording of session, anonymised footage to be used internally by Verve and United Utilities only, footage will never be shown publicly
- Why we're doing this research:
  - We're here today to talk about Water Meters
  - As you may know, water meters measure the amount of water you use in your home, so that you only pay for what you use
  - Today we'll be discussing some of these issues and getting feedback from you on a scheme that United Utilities will be rolling out, related to this
- The session will last up to 75 minutes, and should be fast paced and interactive
- Because we're using Zoom I want to make sure that only one person talks at once, so I'll ask people by name to speak, and if you have a point you would like to make, please put your hand up
- If we are going off topic or repeating the same points over – I will interrupt you – please don't be offended – we have a lot to get through

- Moderator using two screens
- Any questions?

### About you (5 minutes)

- I'd just like to go around and get everybody to introduce themselves – please keep your introduction to about 30 seconds each as there is lots to talk about
- Please tell us:
  - Your first name
  - What area you live in
  - A little bit about your family and your home (e.g. who's at home, vehicle ownership, garden etc)
  - How water efficient do you think you are in your home and why?
  - 30 seconds!

### Spontaneous views on water meters (10 minutes)

- So, we're here to talk about water meters – tell me about water meters?
  - *Acknowledge any questions and ask opinions of the wider group*
  - *Acknowledge any objections and ask opinions of the wider group*
  - Are people aware of how you are currently charged for your water and sewerage? Do you know what this is based on?
    - *Explain RV using definition from UU website*
    - *Does this make a difference at all to your views on water meters?*
- What would people say are the benefits to water meters?
  - *Probe and challenge on customer reactions*
  - *Throw benefits to the wider group for discussion*
  - *Draw up list of potential benefits on screen*
- What would people say are the drawbacks to water meters?
  - *Probe and challenge on customer reactions*
  - *Throw drawbacks to the wider group for discussion*
  - *Draw up list of potential drawbacks on screen*
- Why do you personally not have a water meter?
  - For those open to them in particular – what has stopped you from getting a water meter?
- Why do you think that United Utilities would prefer it if all customers were on a water meter?
  - Who would benefit most from this?
  - What would be the benefits to United Utilities?
  - What would be the benefits to customers?
  - What would be the result of *not* fitting more meters
    - For United Utilities?
    - For customers that don't yet have them?

### Introducing Shadow Metering (30 mins)

- I'd now like to show you a high level (draft) communication from United Utilities. There are four different parts to it and I will introduce one at a time:

## 1) What is United Utilities doing?

We're going to be fitting new meters to our water pipes in your road. These meters will help us to better monitor the amount of water being used in your area. This will allow us to spot potential leaks much quicker and even identify if you have a leak on your own plumbing which you may not even be aware of.

We'll be in your road fitting these new meters on [DATE AND TIME]. We'll be working in the footpath outside your home and may need to do some digging but we'll keep any disruption to an absolute minimum. You don't need to be at home while we do this work and we'll pop a card through your door to let you know if we need to switch off your water for a short time.

## 2) Making sure you have the cheapest water bill

Once we've installed the meter, we'll then be able to tell you if you would make a saving on your existing bills based on the amount of water you use. We know that many of our customers would be better off with a meter but are put off applying as they're not sure if they would make a saving compared to their existing fixed bill.

Going forward, every time we send you a bill we'll now show you what you would pay based on your meter reading. We'll compare this against your current fixed bill and if you *would* have paid less with a meter then we'll charge you the lower amount. This is our 'Lowest Bill Guarantee'. It will run for two years, and at the end of this period, you can choose whether to switch to a metered tariff for good, or remain on your original tariff.

## 3) Replacing lead pipes for free

While we are fitting these meters, if your property has a lead supply pipe, We'll replace your water supply pipe for free when we fit your meter, or give you a voucher for 65 per cent of the cost if you wish to arrange this yourself. This voucher will be valid for two years.

## 4) What will happen if I move out?

If you move out of the property, and have not switched over to a metered tariff (or are still under the terms of the Lowest Bill Guarantee two year period), then whomever moves into the property will then be subject to a metered tariff.

- **For section 1 – Fitting the meters**
- What are your immediate reactions to this?
  - What questions do people have about this?
  - Does this sound like a something that UU should be doing?
  - Is it clear why UU are doing this?
  - Do you feel that it is a good thing?
  - Do you have any concerns about this?
  - What are the biggest concerns?
  - *Note down biggest concerns to tackle later*
- **For section 2 – Lowest Bill Guarantee, 3, 4 (questions as appropriate)**
- What are your immediate reactions to this?
  - What questions do people have about this?
  - Is it clear why UU are doing this?
  - Do you feel that it is a good thing?
  - Do you have any concerns about this?
  - What are the biggest concerns?
  - *Note down biggest concerns to tackle later*
  - How would you feel about being put on the Lowest Bill Guarantee automatically rather than opting for it? Would you prefer to have a choice?
  - At the end of the Lowest Bill Guarantee, would you be happy to be switched to a meter if you had consistently paid less or would you still want to make that decision yourself?
  - How would you feel if the meter was fitted but you were *not* offered the Lowest Bill Guarantee? I.e. you would receive no comparison bill and you would not pay less if you were saving money. How would you feel about that?
- Does this sound like an appealing offer?
  - Why/why not?
- Does this sound like a fair offer?
  - Why/why not?

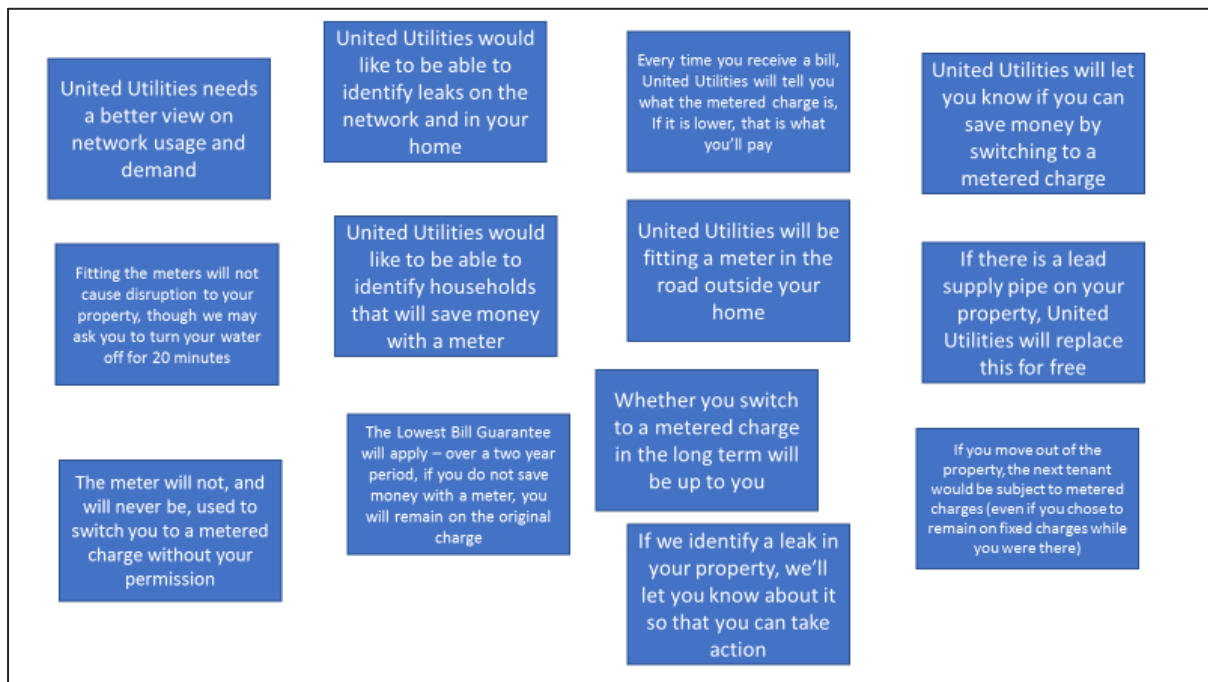
- **For section 3 – Lead Pipe Replacement, 4**
  - What are your immediate reactions to this?
    - What questions do people have about this?
    - Do people know whether they have a lead water supply pipe?
    - What do you know about lead supply pipes? Is it clear why UU are offering to replace them?
    - Do you feel that it is a good thing?
    - Why is that? Are you aware that there are health concerns and risks?
      - How does that make you feel?
    - Do you have any concerns about this?
    - What are the biggest concerns?
    - *Note down biggest concerns to tackle later*
  - Does this sound like an appealing offer? *For those with a lead pipe – does this have any particular impact over and above the Lowest Bill Guarantee?*
    - Why/why not?
  - Does this sound like a fair offer?
    - Why/why not?
  - The voucher will be valid for two years – do you think that is fair and reasonable?
    - Would you be likely to take it up? When?
  - If lead pipe replacement wasn't a part of this overall offer, do you think it would change your opinion of the offer in any way?
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- **For section 4 – Moving House**
  - What are your immediate reactions to this?
    - What questions do people have about this?
    - Do you feel that it is a good thing?
    - Do you have any concerns about this?
    - What are the biggest concerns?
    - *Note down biggest concerns to tackle later*
    - Does this sound reasonable vs reverting the new tenants' bill to a fixed amount? Or is it of no concern to you?
  - Overall, what do you think you might do if you received this communication in full?
    - Look for more info?
    - Contact UU?
    - Take up the offer?

### Developing the messaging (15 mins)

- United Utilities will be implementing the scheme that we've just seen, and we want to be able to communicate this to customers in as effective a way as possible, and in a way that help to reassure them of any concerns that they may have
  - *Accept and acknowledge any reactions to this news*
- What we'd like to do is get your help in building that communication. Your feedback so far and questions you have will be useful in building the communication so it is as clear as possible to customers and helps to tackle any concerns they may have
- I've got a number of 'facts' about the initiative on the page that I'm going to show you, and what I want to do is build these into a set of messages and ensure that the most important elements come out

- We can add in new facts or messages, and make notes on any of the ones that exist if anything is not clear

Share screen:



- Please take a moment to read through each of these messages; we're then going to build them into a whole message
- If United Utilities was to write to you to tell you about this programme, what are the first things that you would want to hear?
  - *Challenge if they say simply that it won't cost them any money – as this would never be the lead-in message before the programme itself is introduced*
  - *Explain that the communication needs to outline why United Utilities are doing what they are doing as well as explain the details of the programme*
- Imagine how you yourself might approach communicating a message like this – what would be the most important thing to start with?
  - *Probe on reasons for placement throughout*
  - Which particular element would you lead with?
  - Which elements would you put alongside as supporting messages to clarify things? And in what order?
  - What kind of language and tone is important when communicating these elements? Please give examples
  - Does this leave any questions or doubt? Is there any information that isn't here that you think should be?
  - *Annotate each element with any supporting info or clarification required*
- What else is important to know about? What would you tell people next?
  - *Probe on reasons for placement throughout*
  - Which particular element would you lead with?
  - Which elements would you put alongside as supporting messages to clarify things? And in what order?
  - What kind of language and tone is important when communicating these elements? Please give examples

- Does this leave any questions or doubt? Is there any information that isn't here that you think should be?
- *Annotate each element with any supporting info or clarification required*
- What else do you think people should hear about?
  - *Probe on reasons for placement throughout*
  - Which particular elements of the message would you communicate next?
  - What kind of language and tone is important when communicating these elements? Please give examples
  - Does this leave any questions or doubt? Is there any information that isn't here that you think should be?
  - *Annotate each element with any supporting info or clarification required*
- Let's re-read the entire message that we've built – can everybody just take a moment to do that?
  - How do we feel about how the message reads as a whole?
  - Does it feel like it strikes the balance between what you need to know and not giving you too much information?
  - Does it paint the full picture? Does it leave you with any specific questions or concerns?
    - *Show list of concerns we drew up earlier – does it tackle all of these issues?*
  - Is this message persuasive in a way that tackles any concerns that people might have?
  - What information or reassurances can we add in to tackle these questions or concerns?
  - Is there any specific kind of language and tone that should be used or avoided, now that we've built the message in full?
  - Is there anything else in there that is needed? E.g. links to further information, contact details etc
  - What do you think you might do if you received a communication like this?

### Messaging format and reactions to draft comms (15 mins)

- How do you think you would you want to receive this information?
  - Now that you have a good understanding of content (as you've just created the messages yourselves) what approach might you take to designing this communication to ensure customers are well informed about the programme?
    - Spontaneous then probe on:
      - Letter format
      - Leaflet (visual) format
      - Shorter communication
      - Longer communication
      - Infographic
      - Communication that directs you to a webpage for more information
      - Or a combination of these?
  - *Show examples of existing comms; letter, FAQ, leaflet in turn (randomise across groups) IF NEEDED TO STIMULATE CONVERSATION*
  - I'm going to show you a number of different formats in which you might receive this information, and we'd like to know whether any of these formats fit with what you might like to see (please focus on the style rather than the specific content, as the content in these is draft content only)
    - Long letter?
      - How does this style of communication fit with what you'd like to see?
      - What do you like or dislike about it?



- Short letter with accompanying FAQ?
  - How does this style of communication fit with what you'd like to see?
  - What do you like or dislike about it?
- Leaflet with visuals?
  - How does this style of communication fit with what you'd like to see?
  - What do you like or dislike about it?
- Are there any other formats in which you might like to receive this information? What and why?
- Finally, if you were to receive this information in the format that we worked out together, what would you be most likely to do?

**THANKS AND CLOSE**

