

**South Staffordshire Water
Customer Challenge Group (CCG) Customer Research Task Group
Minutes
Friday, 31st August 2012**

Attendees:

Colin Greatorex	CCG Deputy Chair and Lichfield Councillor
Matthew Lewis	Finance and Regulation Director South Staffs Water
Rachel Barber	Customer Operations Director, South Staffs Water
Barbara Julye	Head of Customer Engagement, South Staffs Water
David Wurr	Consumer Council for Water
Philip Hulme	Environment Agency
Ralph Tennant	Federation of Small Businesses
Paul Le Masurier	MVA Consultancy

Apologies:

Jacky Atkinson	Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI)
Ray White	Walsall CAB

Resignation

Alison Cotton	Beechdale Community Housing Association
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1. Welcome and Introductions

The chair (Barbara Julye) welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that since the last meeting, which had been to agree the survey methodology, Alison Cotton had resigned from the CCG and the CCG Customer Research Task Group.

The chair explained the purpose of the meeting which was to review the results from the pilot survey for both the domestic and business interviews.

2. Pilot Findings

Paul Le Masurier presented the results of the CSP and Willingness to Pay pilot analysis designed to test:

- The logistics of the survey methodology, including the expected completion rate for face-to-face and online surveys; and
- Respondents' understanding of the questionnaire.

His presentation covered the domestic and business customers' pilot results, as follows:

- **Domestic Customers**
 - Ten face-to-face interviews were conducted with people who do not use the internet, in the Curborough, Lichfield area.
 - A web-based version of the pilot survey was e-mailed on the 10th August to 150 domestic customers, selected **at random** from the domestic customer database provided by South Staffs Water. Three different covering e-mails were trialled:

- A further 20 were sent out on Thursday, 16th August, to help achieve the target pilot sample of 10. The response rate did not differ significantly by the covering e-mail.
- **Business Customers**
 - The pilot business survey was sent to 150 randomly selected respondents initially, but only two responses were received within the first 24 hours of the survey. A further mail-out of 150 was issued the following day. There was a similar bounce-back rate as seen with the domestic survey, and many of the email addresses were generic company email addresses rather than targeted to an individual.
 - The group discussed the importance of targeting the relevant business representative to obtain useful feedback. Members agreed it would be beneficial to purchase a database of 5,000 local businesses with more targeted email addresses as this would lead to an improved response rate.
 - It was also agreed to increase the incentive for business respondents from £2 to £10 per interview, to increase the response rate.
 - There is some evidence to suggest that emphasising that their views matter helped the response rate.

- **Cognitive Findings**

Paul Le Masurier presented the results of the five domestic and two business customers' follow-up interviews. He explained the reason for the follow-up interviews were to determine:

- the reason why respondents completed the questionnaire
- whether there was anything that could be done to make completing the questionnaire more attractive; and
- respondents' understanding of the survey questions

Paul Le Masurier summarised the feedback from the follow-up interviews as positive, with all questions being understood by respondents, except when asked to identify three service aspects where they would be willing to accept deterioration. Respondents tended to feel obliged to provide three areas – he recommended that this question should be amended to ask for up to three in the main survey.

- **Pilot Summary**

Discussion regarding the results ensued. Paul Le Masurier stated that the approach to the domestic survey appeared generally successful and that even with a bounce-back rate of 30% the goal of 400 responses was achievable. He suggested that the email with 'Win £250' be used as this achieved pilot responses quicker than the alternatives. He also stated that the pilot survey also revealed that response rates amongst domestic customers are low, at around 10% and therefore will require a large sample of around 5,000 domestic customers to be contacted in the Main Survey.

Possible reasons for the low response rate of business customers was also discussed with the recommendation to source alternative business contact email addresses and

increase the charity donation from £2 to £10 for every completed response. Members agreed to the revised incentive.

The preferred cover email for the Domestic and Business Main Survey will emphasise that the respondents' views "matter".

3. Recommendation

The Chair asked the CCG CSP Task Group to agree to proceed with the continuation of this research. It was agreed that the findings of the pilot and copies of the questionnaire and showcards would be circulated to group members and that each member would confirm their agreement to the continuation of this research by Monday, 3rd September.

5. Date and time of next meeting

Agreed as Friday, 26th October.