

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
OBJECTIVES	3
APPROACH	4
SAMPLE	4
FINDINGS.....	6
<i>Top of mind</i>	6
<i>The customers' experience of our standards</i>	6
<i>Discretionary payments</i>	8
<i>What would you do?</i>	11
<i>Reviewing the payments we make under our Company Customer Charter</i>	21
<i>Digital contact methods</i>	33
RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS	34
APPENDIX 1: ONE-TO-ONE INTERVIEW GUIDE AND SHOW MATERIAL.....	39
APPENDIX 2: ONLINE SURVEY	49

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

We aim to get the services we provide to our customers right, first time, every time. This includes making and keeping appointments, keeping our customers informed during service failures and providing services to the very best of our abilities.

Our Company Customer Charter (CCC) and guaranteed standards are set out in [Our Promise to You](#), which consolidates, in customer friendly language, three sets of standards:

- **GSS** - These are set by Ofwat and must be paid when our customers experience specific service failures and when we fail to make the required payment within Ofwat's set timeframe
- **Enhanced GSS (EGSS)** - These are additional payments which we make voluntarily. They go further than the amounts required by Ofwat's GSS
- **Our customer service standards scheme** - An internal manual which brings together all GSS and EGSS payments plus guidance on discretionary payments made under our Customer Assurance Scheme. These are 'goodwill' payments which our Customer Advisors or Team Leaders may make when we have delivered service below expectation or the customer has experienced loss, damage or inconvenience

Our Promise to You, and the documents which inform it, have not been thoroughly reviewed for a number of years. In light of Ofwat's November 2018 publication [Guaranteed Standards Scheme: Recommended changes to the UK Government](#), and the rising popularity of digital contact methods we have decided that this is an appropriate time to review Our Promise to You.

We will engage two main groups in this research; [our people](#) and [our customers](#). This first report sets out the findings from our engagement with our people (our employees).

OBJECTIVES

The objectives for the employee phase of research were designed to ensure that our review of Our Promise to You will be optimised to meet our customers' expectations and to increase their satisfaction. The objectives were:

- Understanding and interpretation of Our Promise to You, and its supporting documents, with focus on individual drivers for making goodwill payments and what amounts feel appropriate
- If GSS and EGSS are valued, by customers with focus on:
 - Experiences of issuing payments and specifically if customers appear to value EGSS
 - Which GSS should be enhanced, either with overpayments or reduced response timeframes, and to what level these should be set
- How much should NWG pay for EGSS payments. To be considered within the context of proportionality – i.e. what amount feels proportionate to the issue experienced
- Which aspects of GSS our people think it is most important to consult our customers on. This is to be based on their experiences of managing, designing or delivering our current GSS scheme and will directly inform the objectives of phase 2.
- How digital contact methods should be integrated into our standards of service

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

- Do our systems and processes help and support – help them make the right decisions (things I want to do but can’t – either because system won’t allow it or computer says no)

APPROACH

The main component of the research was 30-45 minute telephone or Skype qualitative interviews. The interview guide and online survey can be found in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively.

To enable as many of our people as possible to share their views we supplemented the one-to-one interviews with an online survey, which was a shorter, simpler version of the one-to-one interview questionnaire. To encourage participation in the survey we worked with our Internal Communications team to promote the survey using H2O Info, Cascade, and the Customer Directorate’s newsletter Pipeline.

SAMPLE

Twenty of our people, representing the following directorates and departments, from the NW and ESW regions, took part in the qualitative interviews:

Directorate	Department
Asset Management	Planning & Scheduling (1)
Commercial	Metering (1)
Customer	Customer Care (6) Customer Correspondence (2) Resource & Management Information (1) Water Efficiency (1)
Water	Leakage & Flushing (1) Network Performance (3) Water Networks (2) Water Service Planning (1)
Wastewater	Technical Support – Flooding (1)

We wanted to engage these people as they have first-hand insight to how well our current guarantees, including our EGSS, are working and could therefore suggest potential improvements. Notes were taken during these interviews and we have included extracts throughout the findings section *in italics* to illustrate key points – these should be considered verbatim quotes.

The response rate to our online survey was below our expectations, with only 17 responses received and the majority of respondents (7) stating that their role isn’t customer-facing and that they don’t tend to engage with customers.

Directorate	Number of responses
Assets & Assurance	4

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Corporate Communications	2
Customer	3
Finance	1
Human Resources	1
Information Services	2
Wastewater	1
Water	3

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

FINDINGS

Top of mind

We began each interview by asking participants to tell us anything that came to mind when they thought about our promises to customers and our standards of service. Participants were assured that there were no right or wrong answers.

The majority of participants spoke about the payments we make to customers if we fail to deliver something or respond to a customer within a set timeframe. Participants also noted that we make payments for missed appointments or appointments that we arrived at early or late.

Specific standards were mentioned by participants in relation to interruptions to supply, sewer flooding, metering, low pressure, leaks and blocking drives.

The customers' experience of our standards

Participants were asked to share their perspectives on what our customers know about our standards and how they respond to receiving payments. We began by asking participants if they felt that the average customer is aware of our standards and that that they will receive compensation for various failures. Fifteen interview participants responded to this question with only one feeling that the average customer was aware; *"Yes I do, it's printed on the back of the letters so customers are usually aware."*

The fourteen participants who felt that the average customer was not aware of our standards gave a variety of suggestions why. Some felt that customers wouldn't naturally seek out information about our standards - i.e. that they would have to make a deliberative effort to search for it on our websites and that even though we supply the information through the Our Promise to You booklet that customers were unlikely to read or retain the information;

No - they're confused or don't understand. There's probably stuff on our website about our GSS but personally I wouldn't go looking for that as a customer.

I don't think they do to be honest. The odd few will. The information is in the promise booklet, but I don't think customers will read this for fun.

We asked participants how common is it for a customer to proactively request compensation when something goes wrong. The majority felt that this was uncommon and that most customers were more focused on reaching the operational outcome they expected;

A lot of the time they just want the outcome rather than the compensation.

I have even had experience of going to a customer's home who had suffered from severe internal flooding and she didn't even ask for compensation for the damage.

The exception to this was customers who were already familiar with the fact that we issue compensation. For example, those with previous experience of receiving a payment or those with a

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

friend or family member who had received a payment and told them about it. It was felt that this may motivate the customer to educate themselves on our standards and potentially seek additional payments;

In my experience generally not unless a neighbour has received a payment and told them about it.

No – I don't think customers are fully aware of payments of penalty payment... If we do issue a payment, that's when the customers start taking notice of it, then educate themselves and then jump on it to try and get more in terms of missed answered queries.

If people have had payments previously, then they have an expectation of when they can get a payment

We asked participants who have issued payments to customers to describe how customers respond. Some participants shared stories of customers who had been happy or grateful to receive a payment but the majority reported that customers typically respond with confusion and questions around why a payment has been made;

Most customers are confused - they don't understand why. They think we're giving money away for the sake of it. They say they don't need it.

Customers always say 'what's this money for?', 'why have I been paid for this?'

Participants suggested that customers were especially confused when compensation was given for things that the customer had not complained about or felt wasn't a great inconvenience or when the payment was made automatically with no explanation;

Especially for the one minute early start to work - they'll most likely say it's ridiculous because it's not needed

I think with GSS a lot of the time they have not been told then just receive the payment so they are confused as to why they have it.

Participants reported that some customers can find payment amounts trivial. These participants shared anecdotes of customers responding to payments by saying that they didn't need it, were satisfied with the outcome or apology given or would rather we invested the money elsewhere. Other participants suggested that depending on the customer's experience the amount can feel insultingly low;

Some even question it asking why they are getting £30 when they would rather it was taken off their bill or used to improve our services.

Half of the customers are very grateful and that didn't expect it. Then the other half take this as an insult and they want more than what is offered.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Discretionary payments

Participants were asked if they had any personal experience of requesting, approving or issuing discretionary (goodwill/optional) payments to customers. Eight participants said that they had experience of requesting payments. We began by asking them what sort of things make them decide to request a payment. A number of factors were cited; the individual scenario, the potential impact on our C-MeX score, if the customer makes a direct request for compensation, the customer's attitude and if making a payment is seen as a cost-effective solution to closing the issue down.

In terms of the potential impact on our C-Mex score four participants suggested that this was on their minds when they were deciding whether or not to request a payment. They acknowledged that this didn't always feel right and sometimes it felt like they were trying to buy a good score;

We always consider C-MeX score in the background. This doesn't feel right, it shouldn't come down to C-MeX score – we should be treating all of our customer fairly.

You do see now if it's coming up to C-MeX customers can be treated different, could be looked up on as though we are trying to buy the customer.

I think we give more now as a team than we did before because of the customer service scoring.

Participants were divided over whether or not the customer's attitude would sway their decision whether or not to request a payment, with some suggesting that the customer's attitude wouldn't influence their decision and others suggesting that if a customer became forceful or aggressive then they would be more likely to request a payment;

Customer attitude rarely influences my decision to give a payment as I believe every customer should be treated the same.

In some cases the louder the customers shout – the more they will get or there is a consequence to not responding to that loud shout i.e. a lower C-MeX score.

Two participants suggested that they requested payments after weighing up the potential cost of letting the call remain open and concluding that it would be more cost-effective to offer a payment as a means of closing the issue down

Taking into consideration time, man hours and effort - It can be cheaper to give the payment to close issue down.

Finally, one participant suggested that any customer who had written to Heidi would be more likely to get a payment due to the pressure to close the contact down;

If people write to Heidi we're told to sort it out and pay the customer

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Deciding how much to give

We then asked participants how they decide how much to give. It is important to note that some participants who responded to this question referred to monetary amounts and other gift options. This suggests that the difference between goodwill payments and 'Our Gift to You' may not be clear.

Many of those who cited a monetary payment referred to '£20' as the accepted, standard amount which they would either pay against the customer's account if there was an outstanding balance or directly to the customer if there was no outstanding balance.

The usual goodwill is £20 against bill if there is a balance, or £20 directly to them if no balance.

A lot of the time we work on a figure of £20 per failure.

Other participants suggested that there were no 'set rules' or 'limits' and that the amounts they request are based on the individual circumstances of the contact, specific requests made by the customer or tailored to reflect something the customer had said.

Each advisor may issue different amounts. No set rule on how to compensate someone.

It all depends on the customer and the situation, you get a feel for your customer and what they want. Sometimes we have to ask what the customer wants in terms of a resolution – what one customer thinks is acceptable for an inconvenience payment is completely different to what another one may expect. A lot more people expect compensation.

For example if the customer mentions that they are celebrating their mother's 100th birthday – I might send a hamper.

Issuing payments

Our final question in this section was around how our people feel when they issue payments. Five positive comments were made, that giving payments feels like a good way to bring an issue to a close, protecting our reputation and building trust in the company;

It feels like it will bring the issue to a close. It's acknowledging that we have done something wrong, and it gets the customer back on side and gives the customer confidence in us.

It's a positive feeling, to get a happy customer – you get that inner-sense of wellbeing.

Two participants described feeling '50/50' or 'average' about giving payments. They expressed concerns that we used payments to 'buy our way out of issues'; that in an ideal world we wouldn't have provided poor service in the first place

Average - the payment doesn't seem like good service as it seems like we're buying out the problem. The best service is when we can talk through the problem or physically help.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

50/50 – I often feel bad that this issue has happened in the first place, it makes you feel better that this is acknowledged by giving this payment, but bad that it had to be given in the first place.

Five participants commented that they don't feel comfortable giving payments and would prefer it if we did more to resolve the original issue;

I don't like making payments, I like to show a lot of empathy, to show that we are committed to improving services in the future.

No I don't feel like I'm giving an excellent service. I would rather have a happy or concluded outcome on the issue rather than making a "sorry" payment. Not sure it means the same to a customer to just give them money rather than sort the issue out. Would receive far better feedback / appreciation for resolving the issues.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

What would you do?

Participants were given four short scenarios to read (see Section 4 of Appendix 1) and asked to put them in order from the most serious 'biggest' fault (i.e. the customer experience which they thought was the most below expectation or would result in the highest loss, damage or inconvenience) to the least serious. Participants were invited to choose the scenario pack they wanted to rank based on their experience from three options;

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Customer, Water and Wastewater¹. The majority of participants (12 interviews, 8 online survey) looked at the 'Customer' scenario cards. The votes cast position the scenarios as follows:

¹ Note: Just two participants selected 'wastewater' due to this low response rate these results are not presented in this report.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Overall participant ranking	Scenario	What we currently would do in this scenario (for context)	Comments	Suggestions for 'putting it right'
1. Most serious fault	A customer telephones us about their charges. We need to call them back and take three weeks to do so	A EGSS payment of £20	<p><i>Three weeks is a long time.... Really poor.</i></p> <p><i>The customer could be really struggling, and could be really fretting about this issue.</i></p> <p><i>The query could be for anything and could really important. If this is a claim it might be time sensitive.</i></p> <p><i>We've taken so long to go back to them, three weeks is a long, long time in my head.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the interim contacted the customer to let them know that we are looking into it, how long we will take and when they will hear from us • Review our systems – could this have been put in the wrong queue? • Review our SLA and ensure it is set to 10 working days • Look at how we are allocating resource. Do we have our people in the right places? • Identify if further training is required

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Overall participant ranking	Scenario	What we currently would do in this scenario (for context)	Comments	Suggestions for 'putting it right'
2.	<p>A customer has contacted us five times over the past six months about their account. We responded on time to each contact but the customer felt that the advice we gave wasn't clear, which is why they keep calling us back.</p>	<p>Customer team managers would expect advisors to request a goodwill payment to be made to the customer.</p>	<p><i>Obviously we have not explained things properly at all. It's probably a few people that has given the wrong information.</i></p> <p><i>After the second call someone should have taken ownership and said I'm going to get you the answer you need.</i></p> <p><i>[This is] an example of a long term problem... There is the potential that at each call back, the customer may have long wait times for the call to be answered and this is going to be very damaging in their opinion of us... a customer may see our call centre staff as incompetent because the situation keeps repeating.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does this identify a training need? • At the end of a customer call ask 'have we answered you question today?' Although this may take a little longer on the call, but this is better than repeats contact. • Follow-up complicated contacts with a letter or email, to give the customer chance to digest the information. • Considering if this customer needs to go on to the priority register.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Overall participant ranking	Scenario	What we currently would do in this scenario (for context)	Comments	Suggestions for 'putting it right'
3.	<p>A customer has been on hold waiting to speak to an advisor for 12 minutes.</p>	<p>Customer team managers would expect advisors to apologise to the customer for their wait.</p>	<p><i>I don't think 12 minutes is all that bad. When you are call utilities in the current climate you expect to wait.</i></p> <p><i>We shouldn't keep people on hold for 12 mins. If we can't answer the call quicker we should give them the option of being called back.</i></p> <p><i>Being on hold for 12 mins is a long time, but we all experience long wait times. There are other options of contact.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'More bums on seats' • Call queue messaging to direct to digital/self-serve options • Call queue messaging to let the customer know their position in the queue and estimated wait time • A call back facility

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Overall participant ranking	Scenario	What we currently would do in this scenario (for context)	Comments	Suggestions for 'putting it right'
4. Least serious fault	Eight days ago a customer sent us a letter asking if they could change the way they pay. We can't agree to the change and haven't told the customer yet.	A GSS payment of £20	<p><i>I know our standard is five days, but this is still not great service at all at eight days.</i></p> <p><i>We are still in our SLA [Service Level Agreement] of ten days. Presume that someone will respond within the next two days – we have done as we are expected on that one.</i></p> <p><i>We still have two days left to respond to that customer, but we do need to respond to the customer in the 10 working day time scale.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the customer to come up with a solution that suits both parties. • Go through affordability options/schemes, which ultimately could give the customer the outcome which they want. • Encourage customers to use other channels, e.g. webchat where advisors can deal with multiple queries at one time.

It is positive to note that the scenario we enhance has been ranked by participants as the most serious fault. It is also interesting to note that the scenario which was ranked as the 'least serious fault' by participants is the scenario which we must make a payment for under Ofwat's GSS.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Eight participants (six interviews, two online survey) looked at the 'Water' scenario cards. The votes cast position the scenarios as follows:

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Overall participant ranking	Scenario	What we currently would do in this scenario (for context)	Comments	Suggestions for 'putting it right'
1. Most serious fault	<p>During repair work to fix a burst main, a customer is left without water for 10 hours. The call to complain about the length of time they had no water.</p>	<p>No payment expected.</p>	<p><i>If this was a commercial company customers could vote with their feet, and that's the mentality we don't have. 10 hours – we should have found a way of letting them know, what if they were a vulnerable customer?</i></p> <p><i>Most complaints are when the water is off but customers are not entitled to GSS</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use office-based staff to contact customers who are impacted. • Look at ways of not interrupting the supply – e.g. rezoning or bringing in a temporary water tank
2.	<p>Tomorrow we will interrupt a customer's water supply for five hours while we conduct some routine maintenance.</p> <p>The customer hasn't been told in writing.</p>	<p>A GSS payment of £20.</p>	<p><i>No comments made.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologise • Ensure that we always give between 24-48 hours notice in writing • Look at ways of not interrupting the supply – e.g. rezoning or bringing in a temporary water tank

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Overall participant ranking	Scenario	What we currently would do in this scenario (for context)	Comments	Suggestions for 'putting it right'
3.	<p>A customer has been advised that a loss of supply is a private issue. The customer has called several times and employs their own plumber following our direction. The issue is found to be on our side of the network. They have incurred costs as a result.</p>	<p>Customer team managers would expect advisors to request a goodwill payment to be made to the customer.</p>	<p><i>This is the worst because we have said to the customer it's not our issue, it's yours. This is quite stressful to a customer, a lot of customers do not know that the water pipe is theirs. We've directed the customer in the wrong place.</i></p> <p><i>I've been involved with one of these – customer side leak, and it wasn't it was on our side. The customer has no idea that they have responsibility for this and have had the worry. Although we have supported them through this, they have had a plumber around at their cost and then it has wound up being out fault.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologise • Offer a virtual visit using video technology (e.g. Utileyes) to make 100% the issue isn't ours and before recommending that the customer contracts a plumber • Offer compensation (amounts from covering the cost of the plumber to £20-£30 suggested)

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Overall participant ranking	Scenario	What we currently would do in this scenario (for context)	Comments	Suggestions for 'putting it right'
4. Least serious fault	<p>We have an appointment to visit a customer's home, following contact they made about the taste of their tap water.</p> <p>We call the customer on the day of the appointment to cancel because emergency works needs to take priority.</p>	A EGSS payment of £20	<p><i>Not a major issue. Bottom line is work needs to be carried out.</i></p> <p><i>We can issue bottled water.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologise and look for availability to book a new appointment for next working day

It is interesting to note that the scenario which was ranked as the 'most serious fault' by participants is the scenario in which we wouldn't make a default payment. It is also interesting that the scenario we have chosen to enhance has been ranked as the least serious fault by participants.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Reviewing the payments we make under our Company Customer Charter

We asked participants to look at two pages of information taken. The first was shared for background information and context and covered Ofwat's standards and the amounts we enhance some of them by. The second showed the payments we make under our Company Customer Charter (see Appendix 1, Section 5).

Participants were asked to focus on the second page and to consider, if in their view, we have the right payments against the right service failures or if they felt that changes should be made. Participants were encouraged to only comment on the payments they had a view on so the number of comments made varies for each item.

A summary of views is set out in the following table and the detail behind participants' thinking is covered over the following pages.

Scenario	What we do to put things right	Summary of participants views
A metered customer hasn't had a bill based on an actual meter read for over a year and there are no access issues.	An automatic payment of £20	✓ The majority of participants felt that this is appropriate and proportionate.
A customer has asked to have a meter fitted. It is more than 90 days later - the meter hasn't been installed and the delay is our fault.	The customer will pay as if they were metered from the 91st day (i.e. they won't pay on their previous rate for longer than they should).	✓ The majority of participants felt that this is appropriate and proportionate.
A customer on a metered supply calls us to report that their water is discoloured. We ask them to run their tap until the water is clear.	The customer's account is credited with an amount equivalent to five cubic metres. (Equivalent to running a tap for one hour).	✓ The majority of participants felt that this is appropriate and proportionate.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Scenario	What we do to put things right	Summary of participants views
<p>A customer's washing machine was on during a discolouration event. They contact us to tell us their laundry is stained.</p>	<p>We visit the customer and give them special detergent. If it does not work the customer can make a claim to replace their damaged items.</p>	<p>✓ The majority of participants felt that this is appropriate and proportionate.</p>
<p>A customer's access to their property is restricted because of planned work which they were not advised about.</p>	<p>An automatic payment of £20</p>	<p>? A small majority of participants felt that this is appropriate and proportionate.</p>
<p>We issued a Waste Water Notice for a leak outside a customer's property and gave the customer a time-scale to repair it.</p> <p>The customer repaired the leak in time and has asked for help with their increased charges.</p>	<p>Provided the leak isn't caused by the customer's negligence, we will fully cover the cost of the lost water.</p>	<p>✓ All participants felt that this is appropriate and proportionate.</p>
<p>In a 12 month period a customer has experienced unplanned interruptions totalling more than 18 hours which have not individually qualified for a GSS payment.</p>	<p>An automatic payment of £20</p>	<p>? A small majority of participants felt that this is appropriate and proportionate.</p>
<p>A customer's living area has been flooded with water from a main.</p>	<p>When this happens we pay the customer's full annual water charge or £100, whichever is more (Max £1,000)</p>	<p>✗ A minority of participants felt that this is appropriate and proportionate.</p>

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Scenario	What we do to put things right	Summary of participants views
<p>A customer has had a County Court Judgment or Credit Default issued against them, by us, in error.</p> <p>We immediately reversed the judgment and any fees entered on their account.</p>	<p>An automatic payment of £150</p>	<p>? A small majority of participants felt that this is appropriate and proportionate.</p>
<p>StepChange have asked us to hold recovery action against a customer they're working with. We then issue a County Court Claim in error.</p> <p>We immediately cancel the claim before judgment is entered and remove any fees.</p>	<p>An automatic payment of £50</p>	<p>✓ The majority of participants felt that this is appropriate and proportionate.</p>

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Water meters	Participants' views
<p>A metered customer hasn't had a bill based on an actual meter read for over a year and there are no access issues. <i>(i.e. we could have read the meter without needing access to the customer's property)</i></p> <p>When this happens we make an automatic payment of £20</p>	<p><u>✓ The majority of participants (11) felt that a payment of £20 feels appropriate and proportionate.</u></p> <p>Four reasons were given for this view with the majority of participants stating that the amount just feels 'fair'. Three participants gave different reasons; customers are encouraged to submit their own meter reads and can do so if they feel we've not been proactive, the number of complaints we receive in this area is low and that an inaccurate bill wouldn't be a big inconvenience.</p> <p><u>The payment amount should be changed</u></p> <p>Two participants suggested that we could avoid making these payments. One participant suggested that customers could be billed based on self-submitted reads, another suggested that if we could demonstrate all reasonable efforts had been made to read the meter then a payment should not be required.</p> <p>One participant suggest that the payment amount of £20 should be increased if we have massively underestimated a meter read and as a result the customer goes onto receive an unaffordably large bill.</p> <p><u>Other suggested changes</u></p> <p>One participant was concerned that having to pay a customer £20 is not a big enough incentive for us to ensure that we read meters on time.</p>
<p>A customer has asked to have a meter fitted. It is more than 90 days later - the meter hasn't been installed and the delay is our fault.</p> <p>When this happens the customer will pay as if they were metered from the 91st day <i>(i.e. they won't pay on their previous rate for longer than they should).</i></p>	<p><u>✓ The majority of participants (10) felt that what we currently do feels appropriate and proportionate.</u></p> <p>All of these participants stated that our current approach feels 'fair'.</p> <p><u>Other suggested changes</u></p> <p>Two participants suggested that we should reduce the timeframe of this standard as 90 days felt too long. One participant suggested a month the other 60 days.</p> <p>One participant suggested that we shouldn't wait until the 91st day to charge the customer as though they were metered and that instead we should do this from the moment their meter request has been processed;</p> <p><i>If we are charging people from the 91st day on a metered rate why don't we do this from the start? We can still use comparisons from when the meter is installed to ensure that the payment amount is fair for the customer, this is more a reactive approach than just pulling a number from a spreadsheet/table.</i></p>

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Water quality	Participants' views
<p>A customer on a metered supply calls us to report that their water is discoloured. We ask them to run their tap until the water is clear.</p> <p>When this happens the customer's account is credited with an amount equivalent to five cubic metres. (Equivalent to running a tap for one hour).</p>	<p><u>✓ The majority of participants (9) felt that what we currently do feels appropriate and proportionate</u></p> <p>These participants felt that the amount we credit is 'fine' and 'fair' and that it doesn't represent a significant cost to the business;</p> <p><i>We asking them to run their tap, we cover the cost – I think this is perfectly fine.</i></p> <p><u>Four participants felt that what we do is too generous</u></p> <p>Four participants felt that although it was right to credit the affected customers' account that five cubic metres was too much;</p> <p><i>More than appropriate, we could be asking to run for 5/10 minutes and they're getting an hours' worth of water credited.</i></p> <p><i>Five cubic metres is very generous because it's a lot.</i></p> <p><u>One participant felt we should give more</u></p> <p>One participant had a different view and suggested that we should pay £20 as 'our main goal is to provide clean fresh drinking water always'.</p>
<p>A customer's washing machine was on during a discolouration event. They contact us to tell us their laundry is stained.</p> <p>When this happens we visit the customer and give them special detergent. If it does not work the customer can make a claim to replace their damaged items.</p>	<p><u>✓ The majority of participants (10) felt that what we currently do feels appropriate and proportionate</u></p> <p>These participants felt that what we currently do is fair;</p> <p><i>It is never nice for your things to get ruined so I think this is fair but we only replace like for like.</i></p> <p>Two participants expressed concern that some customers may submit fraudulent claims;</p> <p><i>Washing machine is a little different, no evidence to say what was in the washing machine and what was thrown away, generally we discuss this in a team – you can tell some customers are genuine and some aren't.</i></p> <p>There was one suggestion that we should cap the amount available to discourage high claims and another that we this should only offer support if the discolouration was caused by an unplanned event and therefore the customer did not receive prior notice of works.</p>

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Blocked access	Participants' views
<p>A customer's access to their property is restricted because of planned work which they were not advised about.</p> <p>When this happens we make an automatic payment of £20</p>	<p><u>? A small majority of participants (9) felt that a payment amount of £20 is appropriate and proportionate</u></p> <p>These participants felt that the allowance amount was a fair reflection of the potential disruption caused;</p> <p><i>Definitely fair allowance; it would only really affect a minority of people</i></p> <p><i>It shouldn't happen in the first place, but I think the payment amount is fine.</i></p> <p><u>Seven participants felt that a different payment amount should be made</u></p> <p>It was felt that blocked access could be a particular issue for people with mobility issues or people with young children and that for these customers £20 would not be sufficient compensation;</p> <p><i>Money does not compensate access. If we are aware of the customers' needs and we still block access then this is wrong</i></p> <p><i>£20 doesn't cut it - £50 might be more appropriate. Customers might have kids or shopping that they can't get into their house. Not everyone has street parking either</i></p> <p>Two participants felt that the length of time we blocked access for should be considered and that if it resulted in someone being late for work or having to pay for alternative transport that the payment amount should be increased;</p> <p><i>The £20 would personally make me feel better, but it would depend on how long I would be blocked in, if it was for a short time then OK, but if it was going to impact on appointments etc. would £20 cover alternative transport i.e. taxis? £20 isn't going to go far.</i></p> <p><i>If longer than this than we would look at this differently. If we have dug a hole that has prevented someone from getting their car off the drive, would look at this differently. The normal payments of £20 is usually quite fair, but are some mitigating circumstances.</i></p>

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Leakage allowances for metered customers	Participants' views
<p>We issued a Waste Water Notice for a leak outside a customer's property and gave the customer a time-scale to repair it.</p> <p>The customer repaired the leak in time and has asked for help with their increased charges.</p> <p>When this happens, provided the leak isn't caused by the customer's negligence, we will fully cover the cost of the lost water.</p>	<p><u>✓ ALL participants (13) who responded to this question felt that what we currently do feels appropriate and proportionate</u></p> <p>These participants felt that customers' would have a positive response to us covering the cost of this type of leak. It was suggested by one participant that the payment should be made within 10 days of the customer making the repair;</p> <p><i>This is fair, it's an incentive to customers to do it themselves.</i></p> <p><i>I think we are very fair with this. More than happy with this. Even if this is down to customer's negligence we would still offer to help and give an allowance. I think we are more than fair with this</i></p>

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Interruptions to water supply	Participants' views
<p>In a 12 month period a customer has experienced unplanned interruptions totalling more than 18 hours which have not individually qualified for a GSS payment.</p> <p>When this happens we make an automatic payment of £20</p>	<p><u>? A small majority of participants (7) felt that a payment amount of £20 is appropriate and proportionate</u></p> <p>These participants agreed with the payment amount.</p> <p><u>Five participants felt that the payment amount should be more flexible, depending on individual circumstances</u></p> <p>These participants suggested that factors such as the times of the interruptions, if bottled water had to be purchased and if the customer was unable to shower should be taken into consideration,</p> <p><i>18 hours is a long time, depending on what time of day it is this could be very annoying. It's not just about buying the bottled water, but it's the inconvenience of going out to get it, being unable to shower etc. £20 may cover the costs of what they have to do, but 18 hours is a long time... Make it more suitable for the costs that they have had to spend.</i></p> <p><i>It should be case dependant – If it's off overnight and you don't notice then it would be a good payment, if it's off during the day and it effects your way of life then £20 isn't really great.</i></p>

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Water flooding	Participants' views
<p>A customer's living area has been flooded with water from a main.</p> <p>When this happens we pay the customer's full annual water charge or £100, whichever is more (Max £1,000)</p>	<p><u>X A minority of participants (4) felt that what we currently do feels appropriate and proportionate</u> These participants agreed with the payment amount.</p> <p><u>The majority of participants (10) felt that what we do should be tailored to the individual household's circumstances and the extent of damage caused</u> These participants acknowledged that this is an emotive issue. Their main concerns centred on whether or not the affected customer had home insurance or not and, if so, what it covered (e.g. if the customer would be covered to stay in a hotel if necessary).</p> <p>Participants were especially worried for customers who did not have home insurance. It was felt that these participants would be left feel 'furious' or very dissatisfied with the current payment amount;</p> <p><i>If they don't have insurance, a water bill of £400-500 per year isn't going to cover carpets, sofa or whatever else – so we are putting these customers in a worse position. Needs to be fair across the board. The amount of money seems a good step, maybe should be based on need (no insurance) this would be a challenge though.</i></p> <p>One participant pointed out that the amount for water flooding is lower than for sewer flooding and queried why these were different;</p> <p><i>It's interesting because sewer flooding is a min of £150, why is this different to this?</i></p>

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Customer accounts	Participants' views
<p>A customer has had a County Court Judgment or Credit Default issued against them, by us, in error.</p> <p>We immediately reversed the judgment and any fees entered on their account.</p> <p>When this happens we make an automatic payment of £150</p>	<p><u>? A very small majority of participants (7) felt that a payment amount of £150 is appropriate and proportionate</u></p> <p>Seven participants agreed that the payment amount was fair and felt that the amount would be welcomed by a customer in debt;</p> <p><i>I think this is more than enough as we are reversing everything, the £150 is just money in their pocket so this is fine.</i></p> <p><i>This could make a big difference to someone in the position of debt.</i></p> <p><u>Six participants felt that the payment amount was too small</u></p> <p>These participants acknowledged that whilst this is the highest amount we pay under our Company Customer Charter it may not be sufficient to cover the potential financial and emotional impacts on the customer. Participants queried if the customer would have ongoing repercussions in terms of the customer's credit record. Alternative amounts between £250 - £1,000 were suggested by two participants;</p> <p><i>This stands out as being one of the highest payments. It is not enough compensation if this error has an impact on the customer's credit rating. It should be a flexible payment based on impact.</i></p> <p><i>I can only imagine how the customer must feel if this happens to them.</i></p>

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Customer accounts	Participants' views
<p>StepChange have asked us to hold recovery action against a customer they're working with. We then issue a County Court Claim in error.</p> <p>We immediately cancel the claim before judgment is entered and remove any fees.</p> <p>When this happens we make an automatic payment of £50</p>	<p><u>✓ The majority of participants (7) felt that a payment amount of £50 is appropriate and proportionate</u></p> <p>These participants felt that this amount was fair and appropriate;</p> <p><i>I think this one is more than enough, we are covering the fees and we have reversed and cleared the fees.</i></p> <p><u>Four participants felt that the amount should be higher</u></p> <p>These participants felt that any customer engaged with StepChange would be in financial difficulty and therefore the emotional impact of a County Court Claim would be high. These participants suggested that the payment amount should be increased and suggested amounts ranging from £100 - £500;</p> <p><i>If a person is going through StepChange they are obviously in financial difficulty so the payment should be £100 at least.</i></p> <p><i>£50 payment in comparison to the £150 payment [that we make for issuing a County Court Judgment or Credit Default in error] seems a little low. This should be increased because they still have the same amount of worry – they still had the fear of getting a CCJ so they should be compensated the same as someone who has had one entered and removed.</i></p>

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Digital contact methods

Our current version of 'Our Promise to You' focuses on telephone and written contact. As the final part of our review we asked participants if they thought digital contact methods (e.g. social media, web-chat and text messages) should be included in our standards.

A small majority of interview participants (14) were in favour of including digital contact methods in Our Promise to You. On the basis that these are common methods of communication that our customers are familiar with using, digital is some people's main mode of communication and that it is just 'the right thing to do';

I have seen some Facebook contacts which haven't been managed very well at all, and if GSS was incorporated in these then they may be dealt with more seriously.

Yes – this could be the customer's only way of actually contacting the business. I don't see why anyone should be left out.

Most people and companies want a digital method of contact. Just because a person chooses to contact us via those methods they shouldn't be exempt from receiving the same service standard as other methods.

Online survey participants were very much in favour of including digital contact methods in our standards with 90% stating that they should be.

Twelve participants weren't in favour of including either any or all digital contact methods in Our Promise to You. They either felt that we should 'stick with what we have at the moment' or only include certain 'measurable' methods such as email and text. Particular concerns were expressed about the inclusion of contact from social media as it would felt these customers would expect an 'instant response' and that as social is considered to be an easier method of contact that customer's would be more inclined to complain;

No - it's too easy for people to use that and will create more contact that we don't need. It's too simple and doesn't take effort

No because I would ring up if I had an issue so would assume generally people would do the same - I am quite old fashioned.

Guaranteed response times to digital contact methods

We asked participants if they thought that if digital methods were included in our standards whether or not we should guarantee response times. Sixteen interview participants agreed that we should on the basis that customers would expect this.

These participants suggested response times that they felt would be appropriate;

- Social Media - an 'instant response', 10 minutes, 'within an hour', 24hrs, 3-5 days
- Email - 3-5 working days to 'the same as letters'

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

This was supported by 80% of participants in the online survey who agreed that we should guarantee response times to digital contact methods in the same way that we do for telephone and written contact.

Five participants felt that we should not guarantee response times on the grounds that that we aren't 'being forced' to do it, that this would disadvantage customers who use traditional contact methods and that if customers become aware that we offer compensation for complaints made on social media that we would attract more negative contact;

I think they would feel it was unfair if they heard they got a quicker, better quality response if they emailed in.

Compensation for late response to digital contact

Finally we asked participants if they thought we should compensate customers for failing to meet the response times we set for digital methods. Participants were divided on this, with eight agreeing that we should compensate customers and seven feeling that we shouldn't.

Those who felt that we should suggested that compensation should be set at the same level as for written and telephone contact;

If we want to be the best I think we should. We have to offer these kinds of services if we want to compete.

Yes – if we are giving this as an option as a mode of contact then these should be managed and policed in the same way as written and telephone.

Those who felt that we shouldn't compensate for late response suggested that this would be 'an expensive nightmare', that within our current resource we would be setting ourselves up to fail and that customers wouldn't understand why we were compensating them;

We already pay out significant amounts.

Definitely not - that's a minefield we don't want to get into.

They don't even really understand why we give GSS payments.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

This report details the employee phase of research which was conducted in support of our review of Our Promise to You.

The project team will meet to discuss the report's findings and recommendations (set out below) and to agree our approach to phase 2, which will engage customers.

Recommendations

The customers' experience of our standards

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

1. The majority of participants felt that the average customer is **unaware that they will receive compensation for various failures**. We should validate whether or not this perception is accurate by exploring levels of awareness with our customers and consider if campaign activity is needed to raise awareness on the basis of results.
2. **Participants suggested that customers tend to be more interested in receiving an operational resolution to their issue than compensation**. In some cases customers find the payments amounts trivial and feedback to us that they didn't need it, were satisfied with the outcome or apology given or would rather we invested the money elsewhere. Many of the payments we make are required by Ofwat, and therefore must be made. However other payments, including our EGSS and goodwill payments, could be re-visited with the challenge in mind of whether or not the payment represents excellent service and what else we need to put in place around it operationally to fully satisfy the customer.

Discretionary payments

3. Participants with experience of issuing payments reported that some customers respond with **confusion and question why the payment has been made**. Particularly when the payment has been made for something that the customer had not complained about or felt to be a great inconvenience. This suggests there is a need to re-visit the communications we make before, during and after issuing payments to make sure we keep the customer fully informed.
4. Four factors were cited by participants as criteria they may use when deciding whether or not to request a **discretionary payment**:
 - The potential impact on our **C-MeX score**
 - **The customer's attitude** (i.e. if they were very annoyed or aggressive)
 - The potential **cost of letting the call remain open** (i.e. if it would be more cost-effective to offer a payment as a means of closing the issue down)
 - The origin of the contact (it was suggested by one participant that a customer who had contacted **Heidi** would be more likely to get a payment due to the pressure to close the contact down)

Customer team managers should consider whether or not we want our people to consider this as part of their decision making process and brief/train teams appropriately.

5. When talking to participants about how they decide how much to pay as a goodwill payment it was clear that some **conflated goodwill payments with 'Our Gift to You'**. Customer team managers may want to think about if these needs to be re-briefed or if new training is required.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

- Participants gave mixed responses when we asked them how much they decide to give, with some citing **£20 as the 'accepted, standard amount'** and others suggesting that there were **no 'set rules' or 'limits'**. Customer team managers may want to think about if this needs to be standardised or if limits should be set.
- A number of participants were not positive about the experience of giving payments**, expressing concerns that we used payments to 'buy our way out of issues', that they don't feel comfortable giving payments and that they would prefer it if we did more to resolve the original issue.

What would you do?

- In the scenario ranking exercise '*What would you do?*' it was interesting to note that the **water scenario** which was ranked as the 'most serious fault'² by participants is the scenario in which we wouldn't make a default payment. It is also interesting that the scenario we have chosen to enhance was ranked as the least serious fault by participants. It would be interesting to test these scenarios with customers to see if they share the views of our people, and then, depending on the results consider if changes are required.

Reviewing the payments we make under our Company Customer Charter

- If we **block access** to a customer's property because of planned work and do not advise the customer we make an automatic payment of £20 not advised about. A number of participants felt that blocked access could be a particular issue for people with mobility issues or people with young children and that for these customers £20 would not be sufficient compensation, an amount of £50 was recommended by one participant, two others suggested that the payment amount should be flexible depending on the length of time we had blocked access for and any costs incurred by the customer as a result.
- If we **flood the inside of a customer's property with water from a main** we pay the customer's full annual water charge or £100, whichever is more (max £1,000). The majority of participants felt that what we do should be tailored to the individual household's circumstances and the extent of damage caused.
- If a customer has experienced **unplanned interruptions totalling more than 18 hours which have not individually qualified for a GSS payment in a 12 month period** we make an automatic payment of £20. A number of participants felt that the payment amount should be more flexible, depending on individual circumstances and that factors such as the times of the interruptions, if bottled water had to be purchased and if the customer was unable to shower should be taken into consideration.

² During repair work to fix a burst main, a customer is left without water for 10 hours. The call to complain about the length of time they had no water

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

12. If we issue a **County Court Judgment or Credit Default issued against a customer in error** we will immediately reverse the judgment and any fees entered on their account and make an automatic payment of £150. A number of participants felt that this may not be sufficient to cover the potential financial and emotional impacts on the customer. Alternative amounts between £250 - £1,000 were suggested by two participants.

Digital contact methods

13. A small majority of interview participants and the majority of online survey participants were in favour of including digital contact methods in Our Promise to You.
14. The majority of participants agreed that if digital methods are to be included in our standards then we should guarantee response time in the same way that we do for telephone and written contact.
15. Participants were divided on the question of offering compensation for late response times to digital contact. Those who felt that we should suggested that compensation should be set at the same level as for written and telephone contact. Those who felt that we shouldn't suggested that this would be an unwelcome expense

We should explore what customers think of the inclusion of digital contact methods, and, depending on the results, give serious consideration to including them in Our Promise to You.

Engaging customers

At the close of interviews we asked participants what they thought would be the most important things to consult with our customers on as part of the second stage of this research. The following recommendations were made:

Awareness: *Are customers aware that our standards exist? Customers are often shocked we pay compensation in many cases which suggests they are not aware of GSS payments and that we need to explore this with them.*

Compensation: *We assume customers want compensating. In a lot of case customers are not expecting this or wanting this. Do they feel a payment is even needed in some cases? We should discuss what amounts they would expect for various scenarios. Who should be compensated and what for? How should we manage customers who 'shout' i.e. is it right to make payments to placate them? Should extra categories be added to the scenarios we pay out for?*

Priorities: *What is more important? Speed, compensation, a resolution, communication or an apology?*

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

Timeframes: *What timeframes do customers think are appropriate for us to respond /communicate in? Would customers agree to flexibility, if we could give a better service in return and avoid paying out?*

Regional differences: *Do NW and ESW customers feel differently? Do we need to tailor Our Promise to You for each region?*

Education and communication: *Do customers want to be educated on our standards? Do we waste our time/money distributing information i.e. do customers read it?*

Contact methods: *What contact methods do customers use? How would they like to contact us? What role do digital methods play in the mix. Are there generational differences we will need to account for?*

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

APPENDIX 1: ONE-TO-ONE INTERVIEW GUIDE AND SHOW MATERIAL

INTRODUCTION

- Thank you for taking the time to talk to me.
- Introduce self and role as a researcher
- Let's start by checking that you're happy with why we're here to today [*take any questions and share any background information required (grey box below) before moving to consent section*]

Our guaranteed standards are set out in [Our Promise to You](#), a customer-facing document which sets out what we will do to put things right when we get them wrong.

Our Promise to You is going to be reviewed this year. The Customer Compliance Team has asked us to talk to our employees and customers so that their views can inform any changes they make.

There are three main reasons Our Promise to You is going to be reviewed:

- 1. Our Promise to You, and the documents which inform it, have not been thoroughly reviewed for a number of years.*
- 2. In 2018, following consultation with all companies, Ofwat published a number of recommended changes to its GSS scheme.*
- 3. We know that digital contact methods are becoming increasingly popular and we need to think about how to reflect these in Our Promise to You.*

The first stage of the review is to talk to around 30 of our people, from all over the business, who are involved in managing or delivering 'Our Promise to You' – and hopefully you're going to be one of them!

This conversation is your chance to tell us what you think of our standards. By sharing your views you'll help us to make changes to improve our approach. There are no right or wrong answers – I just want to hear your honest opinions.

[Check participant is happy and move to consent]

INFORMED CONSENT

Collect Pre-Signed Consent Form OR ask for a form to be signed before beginning.

SECTION 1: ABOUT YOU

Q1. To start please can you tell me about what you do and how your work relates to our standards of service?

SECTION 2: TOP OF MIND

Q2. I'd like you to tell me what comes to mind when you think about our promises to customers and standards of service

If participant is struggling give reassurance that there are no right or wrong answers - we're just trying to understand which parts of our standards are top of mind to different people in the business.

If prompts are required ask:

- What services do our standards cover?
- What sorts of things do we do to put things right when we get them wrong?

SECTION 3: THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE OF OUR STANDARDS

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

As someone who chats to our customers on a daily basis **or** is closely involved in delivering or managing services, I'd like to understand your perspective on what our customers know about our standards and how they respond to receiving payments.

Participant <i>has</i> personal experience of issuing any type of penalty payment	Participant <i>does not have</i> personal experience of issuing GSS, EGSS and/or Goodwill payments
<p>Q3. Do you think the average customer is aware of our standards and that that they will receive compensation for various failures?</p> <p>Q4. How common is it for a customer to request compensation when something goes wrong? <i>[Probe: what things are they most likely to request compensation for?]</i></p> <p>Q5. When you issue payments how do customers respond? <i>[Probes: Do they understand why they are getting a payment? How do you think it makes them feel? Do they comment on the amount? Any differences between GSS/EGSS/Goodwill]</i></p>	<p>Q5. OPEN QUESTION: I'd like to hear any views you have about customers' experiences of receiving payments when we have failed to meet our standards.</p> <p><i>[Based on response ask appropriate follow up questions or draw upon questions in the left column]</i></p>

SECTION 4: WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Q6. I'm going to give you a four short scenarios to read [**present appropriate Scenario Cards – customer, water or wastewater**], I'd like you to put them in order for me, from the most serious 'biggest' fault (*i.e. the customer experience which you think is the most below expectation or would result in the highest loss, damage or inconvenience to the customer*) to the least serious. Please tell me your thinking as you go.

Q7. Now I'd like you to tell me what, if anything, you think we should do to put things right in each scenario.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

CUSTOMER SCENARIO CARDS – SHOWN TO ANY PARTICIPANT NOT FROM THE WATER OR WASTEWATER DIRECTORATE



Eight days ago a customer sent us a letter asking if they could change the way they pay.

We can't agree to the change and haven't told the customer yet.



A customer telephones us about their charges. We need to call them back and take three weeks to do so.



A customer has contacted us five times over the past six months about their account.

We responded on time to each contact but the customer felt that the advice we gave wasn't clear, which is why they keep calling us back.



A customer has been on hold waiting to speak to an advisor for 12 minutes.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW


PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

WATER SCENARIO CARDS – SHOWN TO ANY PARTICIPANT FROM THE WATER DIRECTORATE




We've carried out emergency repair work to fix a burst water main.

A customer calls to complain that they were without water for 10 hours.




Tomorrow we will interrupt a customer's water supply for five hours to do some routine maintenance.

We haven't written to the customer to let them know.



We have an appointment to visit a customer's home, following contact they made about the taste of their tap water.

We call the customer on the day of the appointment to cancel because emergency works needs to take priority.



Following several calls we advise a customer that a loss of supply is their issue, not ours.

On our direction the customer pays for a plumber, who discovers that the issue is on our side of the network.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

WASTEWATER SCENARIO CARDS – SHOWN TO ANY PARTICIPANT FROM THE WASTEWATER DIRECTORATE



We've advised a customer that a drainage issue is on their side of the network.

On our direction the customer pays for a drainage contractor, who discovers that the issue is on our side of the network.




It has been raining heavily. Lots of customers are calling to tell us they've been flooded. Our advisors are arranging visits for everyone who calls.

One customer complains about the length of time it is going to take for us to attend their property.



We received a call from a customer about a smell coming from a drain at the front of their house.

Fifteen days later we call them back to arrange a visit.



The inside of a customer's home has been flooded with sewage from one of our assets.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

SECTION 5: EGSS AND OUR COMPANY CUSTOMER CHARTER

I'd like you to look at these pages (**Ofwat's Standards and Enhancements Decision Board**)

- The first page covers Ofwat's standards and the amounts we enhance some of them by. I'm sharing this page with you for context and information – we have no plans to make any changes to these
- The second page shows the payments we make under our Company Customer Charter

Q8. I'd like you to look at the second page, and what we currently do to put things right.

- Have we got it right?
- Do you want to make changes? If you do please explain your reasons to me
- Is there anything else we should add to our Company Customer Charter (things you think we get wrong which customers should be compensated for but currently aren't)

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

These are Ofwat's Guaranteed Standards of Service, some of which we enhance★

These are for information only, we do not plan to make changes to these standards.

Making and Keeping Appointments	Ofwat The minimum we must pay	NWG living water The amount we pay
A customer has made an appointment with us. We haven't given some, or all, of this information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If we will visit during the morning or the afternoon • The times we consider to be the morning or afternoon • A two-hour time slot (if requested) 	£20	£30★
A customer had an appointment arranged and we did not: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit on the appointed day • Visit during the morning or afternoon as agreed • Visit within the appointed two-hour time slot (if requested) 	£20	£30★
A customer has had their appointment cancelled by us with less than 24 hours notice.	£20	£30★

Account Queries and Complaints	Ofwat The minimum we must pay	NWG living water The amount we pay
A customer wrote to us to query their bill. Ten working days have passed and they haven't received a substantive response from us.	£20	£20
A customer wrote to us to request a change to their payment arrangements. We're unable to agree to the change. Five working days have passed and they haven't received a substantive response from us.	£20	£20
A customer wrote to us to complain about their supply of water or their sewerage services. Ten working days have passed and they haven't received a substantive response from us.	£20	£50★

Water Supply	Ofwat The minimum we must pay	NWG living water The amount we pay
In 48 hours, or less, we plan to interrupt a customer's supply for at least four hours. We wrote to the customer several days ago to tell them and to state the times their water will be turned off and back on again. Their supply is not turned back on by the time we state in the notice.	£30	£30
A customer's supply has been unexpectedly interrupted because of an emergency event. 12 hours or more have passed and their supply has not been restored.	£30	£30
A customer has experienced low pressure* twice, for more than one hour each time, within 28 days. This was not caused by necessary work on the network.	£25	£25

*Below seven metres static head (0.7 bar)

Wastewater	Ofwat The minimum we must pay	NWG living water The amount we pay
The inside of a customer's building has been flooded with sewage from one of our assets.	Payment equal to annual sewerage charges (Min: £150 Max: £1000)	Payment equal to annual sewerage charges (Min: £150 Max: £1000)
A customer's land, property or outbuilding has been flooded with sewage from one of our assets.	Payment equal to 50% of annual sewerage charges (Min: £75 Max: £500)	Payment equal to 50% of annual sewerage charges (Min: £75 Max: £500)

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH



These are payments we make and actions we take under our Company Customer Charter.

Water meters	What we currently do to put things right	Is this appropriate and proportionate? Do you want to make any changes?
A metered customer hasn't had a bill based on an actual meter read for over a year and there are no access issues. <i>(i.e. we could have read the meter without needing access to the customer's property)</i>		
A customer has asked to have a meter fitted. It is more than 90 days later - the meter hasn't been installed and the delay is our fault.	The customer will pay as if they were metered from the 91st day (i.e. they won't pay on their previous rate for longer than they should).	

Water quality	What we currently do to put things right	Is this appropriate and proportionate? Do you want to make any changes?
A customer on a metered supply calls us to report that their water is discoloured. We ask them to run their tap until the water is clear.	The customer's account is credited with an amount equivalent to five cubic metres. <i>(Equivalent to running a tap for one hour).</i>	
A customer's washing machine was on during a discolouration event. They contact us to tell us their laundry is stained.	We visit the customer and give them special detergent. If it does not work the customer can make a claim to replace their damaged items.	

Blocked access	What we currently do to put things right	Is this appropriate and proportionate? Do you want to make any changes?
A customer's access to their property is restricted because of planned work which they were not advised about.		

Leakage allowances for metered customers	What we currently do to put things right	Is this appropriate and proportionate? Do you want to make any changes?
We issued a Waste Water Notice for a leak outside a customer's property and gave the customer a time-scale to repair it. The customer repaired the leak in time and has asked for help with their increased charges.	Provided the leak isn't caused by the customer's negligence, we will fully cover the cost of the last water.	

Interruptions to water supply	What we currently do to put things right	Is this appropriate and proportionate? Do you want to make any changes?
In a 12 month period a customer has experienced unplanned interruptions totalling more than 18 hours which have not individually qualified for a GSS payment.		

Water flooding	What we currently do to put things right	Is this appropriate and proportionate? Do you want to make any changes?
A customer's living area has been flooded with water from a main.	We pay the customer's full annual water charge or £100, whichever is more (Max £1,000)	

Customer accounts	What we currently do to put things right	Is this appropriate and proportionate? Do you want to make any changes?
A customer has had a County Court Judgment or Credit Default issued against them, by us, in error. We immediately reversed the judgment and any fees entered on their account.		
StepChange have asked us to hold recovery action against a customer they're working with. We then issue a County Court Claim in error. We immediately cancel the claim before judgment is entered and remove any fees.		

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

SECTION 6: DISCRETIONARY PAYMENTS

Q9. Do you have any experience of requesting, approving or issuing discretionary (goodwill/optional) payments to customers? *(these are payments which we choose to make when we've inconvenienced the customer or caused them loss or damage – the exact scenarios and amounts aren't specified in our standards)*

[If 'no' ask if the participant has any opinions on these types of payments that they'd like to share then jump to next section]

- a. What sort of things do you try before deciding to give a payment? (probe: Is a payment the first or last resort?)
- b. What sort of things make you decide to request/give a payment? (probe: customer's attitude or characteristics, satisfaction scores (5/5, Rant & Rave, C-Mex)
- c. How do you decide how much to give?
- d. Do you feel that our systems, processes and people help and support you to make the right decisions around discretionary payments *[i.e. Are there ever things that you want to do but can't because either systems, processes or people won't allow it?]*
- e. How does it make you feel to issue payments? [Probe: do you feel that you're providing excellent service?]

SECTION 7: DIGITAL CONTACT METHODS

OPTY focuses on telephone and written contact. As part of this review we're looking into the inclusion of digital contact methods (e.g. social media, web-chat, text message) in our standards.

- Q10. Do you think digital contact methods should be included as part of our standards?
- Q11. Do you think customers would expect us to guarantee response times to digital contact methods?
- Q12. Do you think we should compensate customers if we fail to meet the response times we set for digital methods?

SECTION 8: THE NEXT PHASE OF RESEARCH - CUSTOMERS

The next phase of this project is to engage customers through focus groups. Thinking about everything we have just discussed and your experiences of our standards...

- Q13. What do you think are the most important things to consult with our customers on?
- Q14. Finally, before we finish is there anything else you'd like to say or add to any of the comments you've made?

THANKS AND CLOSE

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

APPENDIX 2: ONLINE SURVEY

Please note this is a copied and pasted version of the online survey, if you would prefer to view it in the format participants saw it in, including the survey routing please [click here](#).

1. About You

Please tell us which Directorate of the business you work for

- Assets & Assurance
- Commercial
- Corporate Communications Customer
- Finance
- Human Resources
- Information Services
- Wastewater
- Water
- I don't know, I'm unsure or I'd prefer not to say

Which of the following best describes your day-to-day role at NWG

- My role is customer-facing and I engage with customers every day
- I sometimes engage with customers as part of my role, but not every day My role isn't customer-facing and I don't tend to engage with customers I don't know,
- I'm unsure or I'd prefer not to say
- Other (please describe) _____

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

2. Our Customers' Understanding of Our Standards

Please rate your agreement with the following statements:

Customers are aware of our standards and that that they will receive compensation for various failures

- Strongly Disagree
- 2
- 3
- 4
- Strongly Agree

Customers are likely to request compensation when something goes wrong

- Strongly Disagree
- 2
- 3
- 4
- Strongly Agree

Which do you think is most important to a customer when we get something wrong

- Receiving compensation
- Receiving an apology
- Somethingelse _____

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

3. The scenarios below all describe customer experiences which are below standard.

[COMPLETED ONLY BY PARTICIPANTS FROM DIRECTORATES OTHER THAN WATER OR WASTEWATER]
Please rank the scenarios from the one you think is the very worst, to the one you think is the least worst.

	1 – The very worst	2	3	4 – The least worst
Eight days ago a customer sent us a letter asking if they could change the way they pay. We haven't responded yet.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A customer telephones us about their charges. We need to call them back and take three weeks to do so.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A customer has contacted us five times over the past six months about their account. They kept calling back because they felt that the advice we gave wasn't clear.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A customer has been on hold waiting to speak to an advisor for 12 minutes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please use this space if you would like to explain your rankings

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 1: EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

[COMPLETED ONLY BY PARTICIPANTS FROM THE WATER DIRECTORATE]

Please rank the scenarios from the one you think is the very worst, to the one you think is the least worst.

	1 – The very worst	2	3	4 – The least worst
<p>Tomorrow we will interrupt a customer's water supply for five hours to do some routine maintenance. We haven't written to the customer to let them know.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>We have an appointment to visit a customer's home. We call the customer on the day of the appointment to cancel because emergency works needs to take priority.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Following several calls we advise a customer that a loss of supply is their issue, not ours. On our direction the customer pays for a plumber, who discovers that the issue is on our side of the network.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>We've carried out emergency repair work to fix a burst water main. A customer calls to complain that they were without water for 10 hours.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please use this space if you would like to explain your rankings

[COMPLETED ONLY BY PARTICIPANTS FROM THE WASTEWATER DIRECTORATE]

Please rank the scenarios from the one you think is the very worst, to the one you think is the least worst.

	1 – The very worst	2	3	4 – The least worst
<p>The inside of a customer’s home has been flooded with sewage from one of our assets.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>We received a call from a customer about a smell coming from a drain at the front of their house. Fifteen days later we call them back to arrange a visit.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>We’ve advised a customer that a drainage issue is on their side of the network. On our direction the customer pays for a drainage contractor, who discovers that the issue is on our side of the network.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>It has been raining heavily. Lots of customers are calling to tell us they’ve been flooded. One customer complains about the length of time it is going to take for us to attend their property.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please use this space if you would like to explain your rankings

4. Ofwat's Standards of Service

When we fail to meet certain standards of service we are required, by Ofwat, to make a payment to the customer affected. We know that all of the service failures listed below represent poor service, but we'd like to understand which you think is the very worst, to which you think is the least worst.

	1 – The very worst	2	3	4 – The least worst
Failing to specify an appointment time, arriving late or cancelling an appointment with less than 24 hours' notice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Failing to respond to a contact or complaint within 5-10 working days.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Failing to turn a customer's water back on, within the time we said, following a planned interruption or an emergency interruption lasting more than 12 hour.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flooding the inside or outside of a customer's home with sewage.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please use this space if you would like to explain your rankings

Our Company Customer Charter

When we fail to meet certain standards of service we make payments, or take action to put things right.

Our Company Customer Charter covers everything listed below. We know that all of these represent poor service, but we'd like to understand which you think is the very worst, to which you think is the least worst.

	1 – The very worst	2	3	4 – The least worst
Failing to read a meter for over a year or to install a meter within three months of it being requested.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asking a customer to run their tap for an hour to clear discoloured water or causing stained washing as a result of a discolouration event.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Restricting a customer's access to their property, without telling them, during planned works.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flooding a customer's home with water from a main.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issuing a County Court Judgment against a customer in error	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please use this space if you would like to explain your rankings

Digital Contact

Our Promise to You focuses on our response times to telephone and written contact. We're onsidering whether or not digital contact methods, such as social and text messages, should also be included

Do you think digital contact methods should be included as part of our standards?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure, don't know or prefer not to say

Do you think we should guarantee response times to digital contact methods in the same way that we do for telephone and written contact?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure, don't know or prefer not to say

If you think that we should guarantee response times to digital contact how long do you think we should have to respond?

Thank you for taking part!
Your views will help us to review Our Promise to You and to continue to deliver an unrivalled customer experience!