

9240/United Utilities Cognitive testing feedback



Approach

Cognitive testing completed with five people living in the United Utilities region. The cognitive tests were undertaken to confirm understanding and to identify any areas of the discussion guide (or associated materials) that might be problematic in live sessions. The discussion guide and materials have been updated from stage 1, with updated figures included, and a shortening of some sections to keep deliberative sessions to no more than 3 hours (down from 3.5 hours).

The stage 1 materials went through extensive cognitive testing, and live sessions, and were agreed (between DJS and United Utilities) to be understandable and fit for purpose.

Therefore, the purpose of the cognitive testing for stage 2 was to re-confirm that materials remain understandable, and to look to identify any areas that might benefit from further / final refinement.

Overview

All tests ran to time, and the questions and materials (pre-task, post-task, stimulus – including video) and questions from the discussion guide were all well-understood.

There were questions asked about penalty and reward and the oversight applied to performance commitments – although these were answerable via the FAQs. The only question asked that we weren't able to answer on the spot was in relation to current per person daily water usage – this will be added to the FAQs.

Outcomes

Material	Comment	Actions
Discussion guide	Long term plan: a few found the shift from thinking long term to short(er) term a bit jarring. Took a couple of minutes, and a couple of reminders when moving to '25-30 to think about the shorter-term	No action required
	Two questions about voluntary and compulsory requirements (how are voluntary PCs arrived at?)	If asked in live sessions this will be covered by moderators, voiced over, talking about the research that is undertaken with customers on the business plan
	One had difficulty thinking about plans from customer / consumer / citizen perspective (struggle to differentiate feelings)	No action required
	A few found the statutory requirements easier to reconcile / understand with values attached	Moderators have access to two slides, one with associated costs included, and one without. The one without is shown first, and the one with values included can be shown as an additional learning aid if required
Stimulus	Longer term plan for 2050: Would like to see current per person consumption	To be added to the FAQs
	Three-pillars: is this UU only, or is it in conjunction with LAs, Environment Agency etc?	If asked moderators to confirm it is United Utilities' plan, but there may be some areas / projects that require involvement from 3rd parties
	Reducing interruptions: moderator needed to (re)clarify the measure. The participant would have found it easier to see as 3hrs +	Moderators to voice over the scale and check for understanding

additional time.

Moderators were required to note / remind participants to take the scale on commitment slides into account (otherwise just focusing on the % improvement without considering additional context) – a couple were more focused on the % improvement figure, and didn't notice the scale without prompt (e.g. 25% improvement in reducing the number of properties affected by sewer flooding outside of their property would mean a reduction from 18.12 events per 10,000 properties to 13.65 events per 10,000 properties by 2030).

Moderators to remind participants to focus on the improvement figure and the scale it relates to

Comparative performance: water companies measured on length of time properties are without water. Some confusion (from two participants) around how United Utilities could be in the 'better performance' group, but have not met its target.

Moderator to voice over that as well as comparative performance, companies have their own targets.