



2021-26 Customer Tracker

Response to Tender Questions – Part E

SERVICE AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT: Service – The ability to provide the service required as detailed in the specification

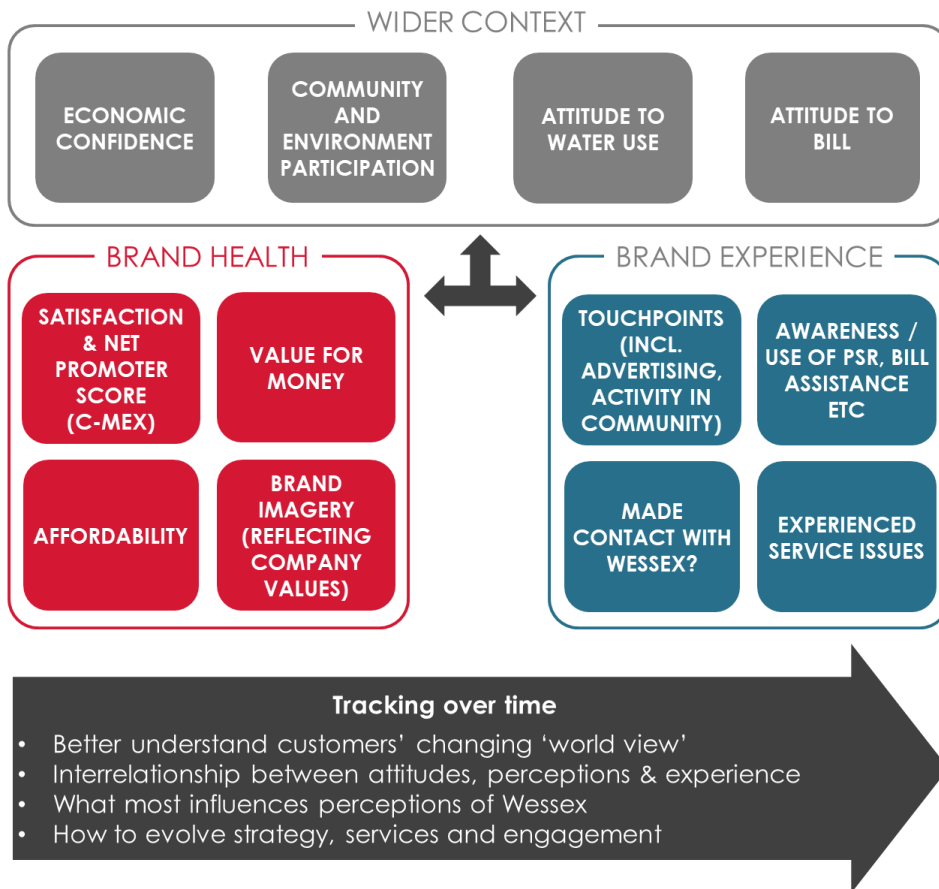
1. Our understanding of Wessex Water's requirements

Wessex Water is recognised as one of the leading water and sewerage companies in England and Wales. A key part of Wessex Water's strong performance stems from putting customers and the local community at the heart of what it does. Both as good business practice and to meet regulatory requirements, the need for **ongoing** engagement with **a full range of customers** is ever more important. A customer tracking survey has a crucial role to play in this, providing robust feedback to:



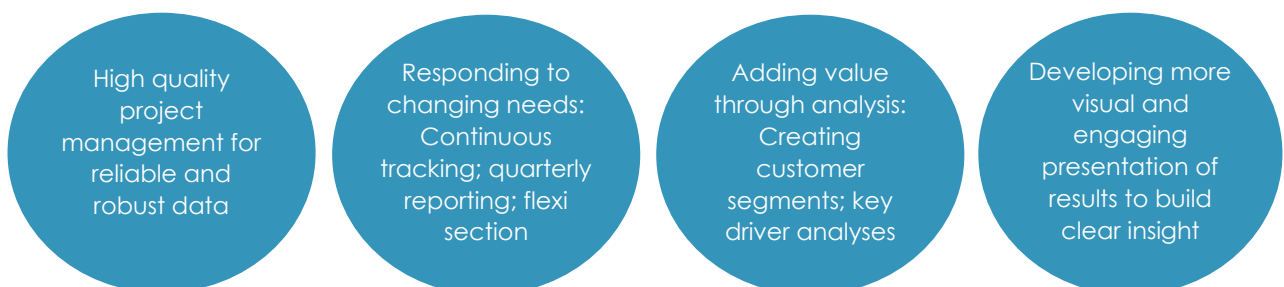
- Understand the **wider context** of how customer attitudes, behaviours and circumstances are changing over time (e.g. community and environmental engagement, household economic outlook). This helps Wessex better engage with their customers as their 'world view' changes
- Measure, and more importantly help understand, how customers perceive Wessex Water across a variety of key **brand health** measures (e.g. satisfaction, net promoter score, value for money and brand imagery). Measuring these in the tracker enables us to analyse what's driving stronger (or weaker) performance. In turn this helps target and prioritise actions to improve consumer perceptions and scores on regulatory measures such as C-Mex
- Understand the full extent of **how customers experience Wessex Water**. Being able to identify how different touchpoints affect customers' views of Wessex Water enables ongoing development of engagement and communication strategy and initiatives.

Fig 1: High level view of customer tracker



2. Blue Marble credentials to deliver the service required

Blue Marble has conducted the Wessex Water tracker survey since 2007. During this time we have worked closely with Wessex Water to ensure we maintain reliable and robust trend data on key required measures, while also developing the survey in a variety of ways to adapt to changing needs and to provide new insight.



We're very excited by the prospect of continuing to deepen understanding of Wessex Water customers, in light of genuine changes in the community and the wider world, as well as changes in Wessex Water's ambitions and obligations.

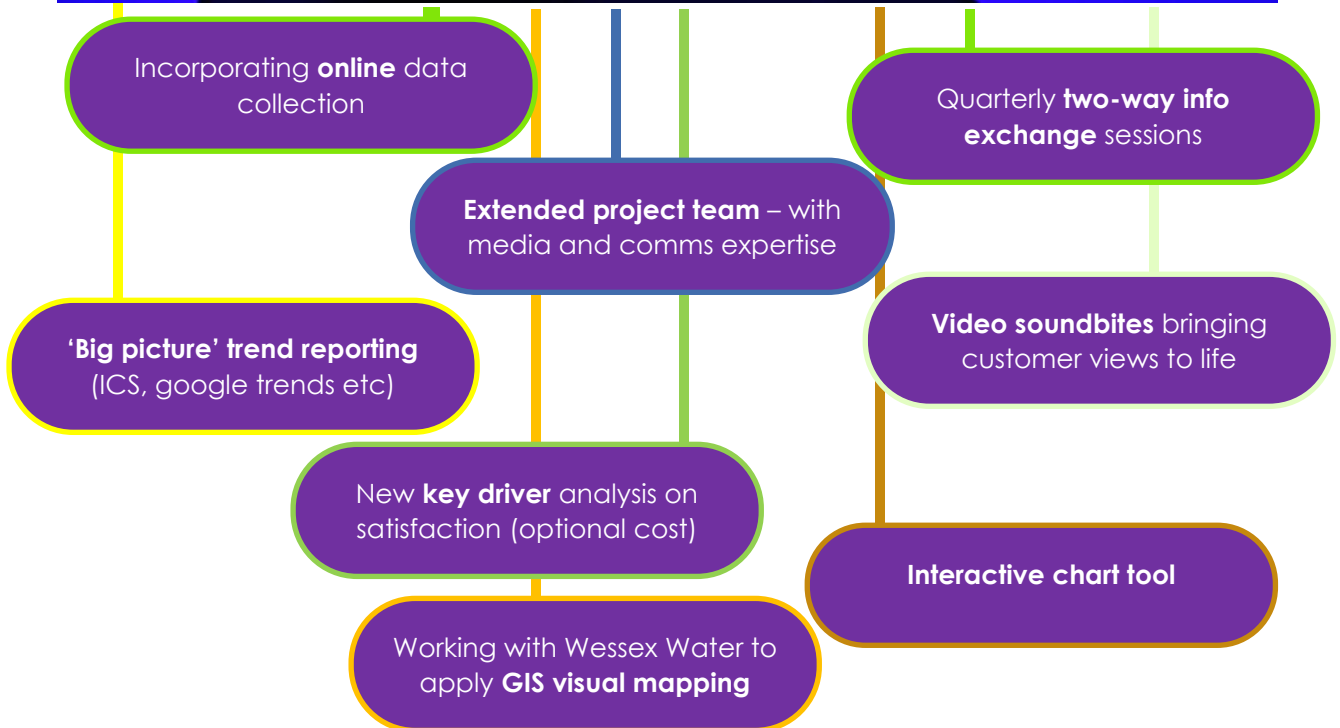
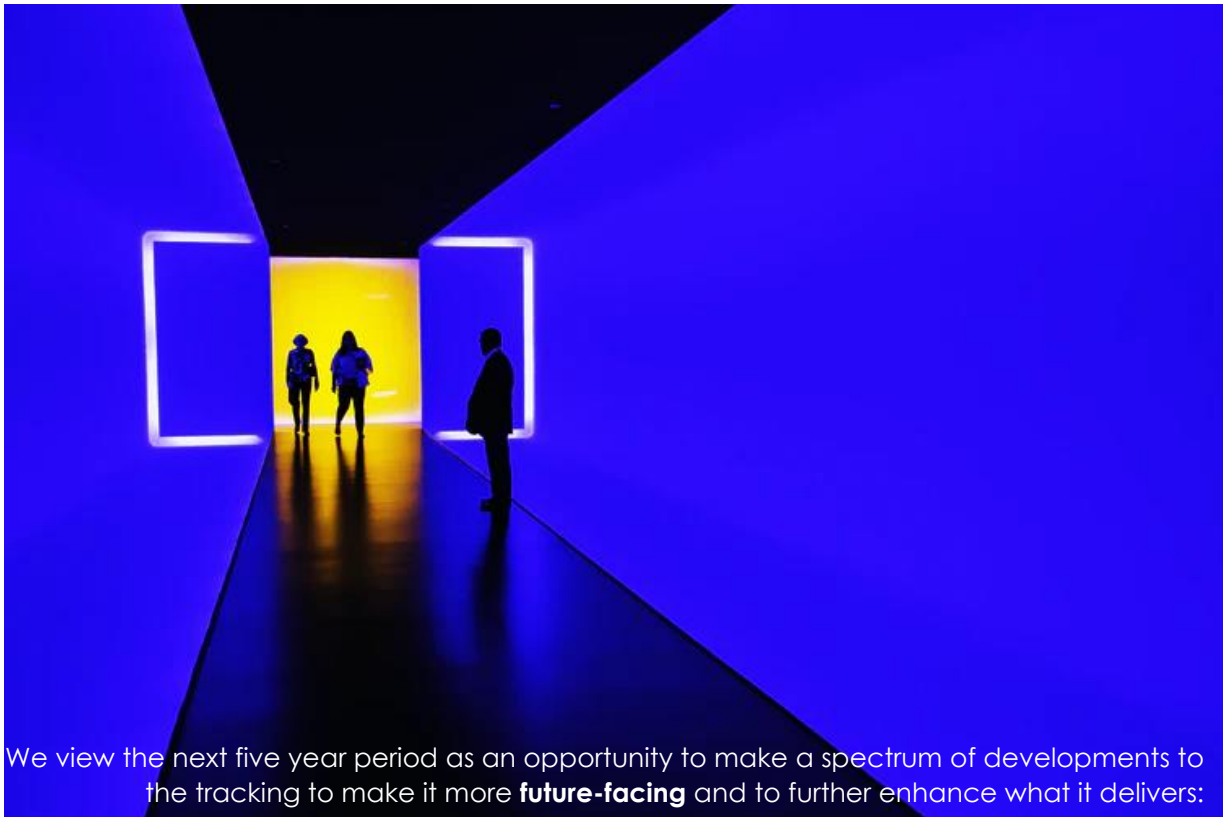
As an agency, we continue to build our credentials to effectively deliver this contract.

- **Water sector expertise.** Blue Marble has particular expertise in the water industry, which we continue to grow apace. We have worked with a wide range of water companies and authored a number of published reports for industry bodies CCWater and UKWIR (details in Appendix Box 1). This helps us provide in-depth and 'on-the-pulse' context in

our reporting, and give informed advice on best practice survey design and hot topic questions.

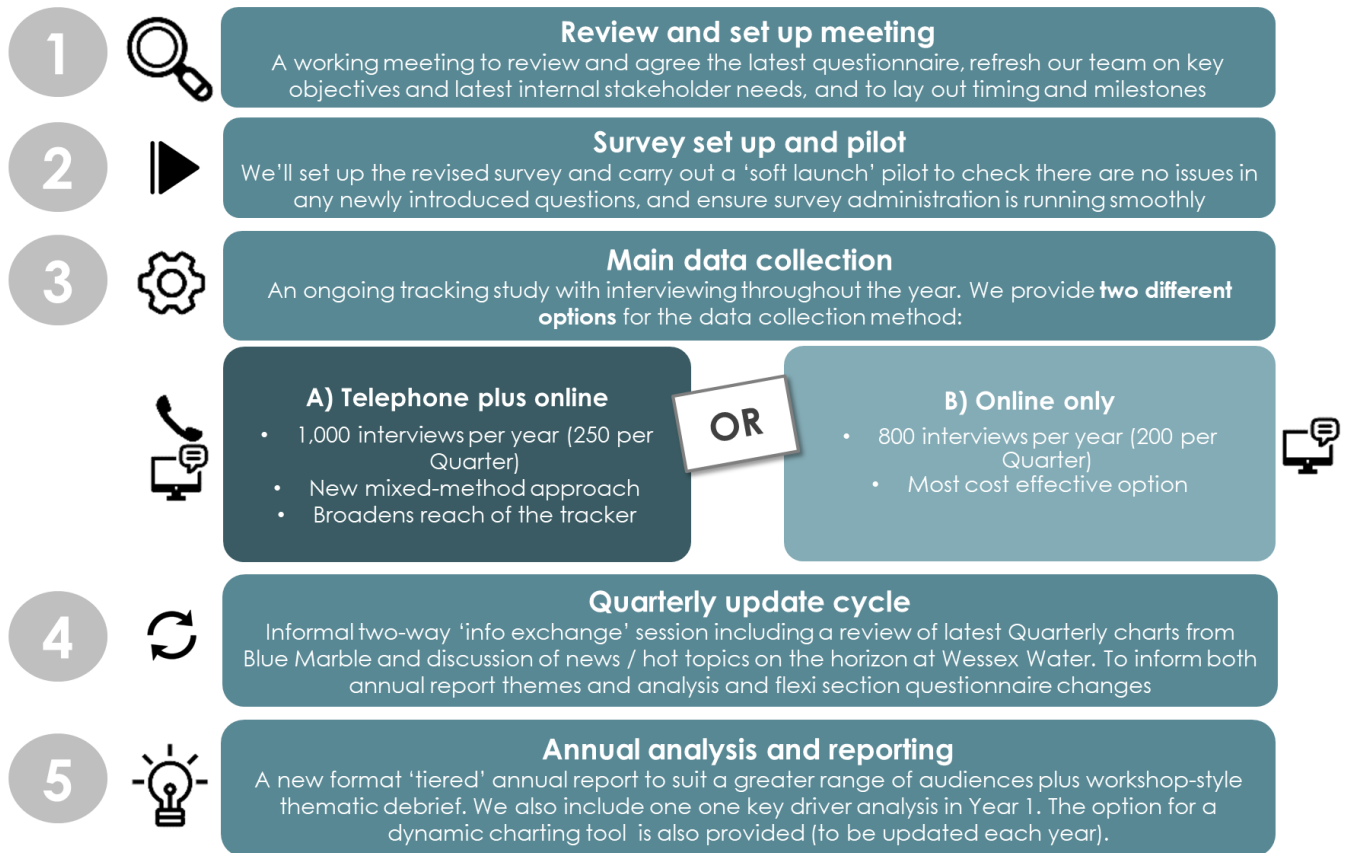
- **Brand tracking experience.** We have ongoing and extensive experience in tracking studies across many categories – not just water and other regulated industries (See Appendix Box 2). This means we're able to interpret results in a wider context, for example:
 - How long it typically takes to build new brand associations
 - To what extent customers are typically open to more communication from brands they use
 - Typical recall of different communications and touchpoints
- **Wider consumer perspective.** Our ongoing 'state of the nation' research into consumer perspectives on a wide range of topics and sectors post Covid-19 gives us a deep understanding of changing mindsets and expectations
- **A senior and experienced team.** The team delivering the reporting and debriefs are fully 'hands-on' throughout. This ensures high quality project management throughout and that we know the data intimately. (See Appendix Box 3 for full team details and CVs)
- **High quality research and deliverables** conducted within MRS Code of Conduct (See Appendix Box 4 for Blue Marble Quality Practices)

Looking ahead to 2021-26, we want to continue a strong trajectory of developing the tracking study and ensure it is applied as widely and as usefully as possible.




The following pages set out the detail of our approach, highlighting these new developments that we recommend introducing.


3. Overview of approach



4. Research method in detail

 **Review and set up meeting:** We include provision for a full review and set up meeting either at the Wessex Water offices or via Microsoft Teams or Zoom. This is an opportunity to fully take stock of where we can improve the tracker, and understand where there's emerging needs from around the business. It will also be a key juncture to collectively review and finalise the latest questionnaire, and to clearly set out timings and roles for the coming year.

Based on the brief we do not expect significant questionnaire changes (an extensive questionnaire review took place in 2020-21). However, we will be keen to input where appropriate to help refine any new questions. We also have a number of thoughts based on ongoing conversations with the team on potential new questions for the flexi-section, and on updating questions in the communication section to reflect latest touchpoints.

 **Survey set up and pilot:** As we expect only mild changes to the existing questionnaire we do not anticipate a need for full cognitive testing of the survey. Nevertheless, we will carefully check the latest survey script, fully brief the field team, and conduct a small-scale pilot to ensure interviewing is running smoothly, and no comprehension or usability issues are raised by customers.



Main data collection

Deciding on the best mode of data collection over the next five years is not a clear-cut decision. We understand from the brief that Wessex Water will not provide customer contact details, and so we must balance the pros and cons of different methods using third party sample, which all have their own constraints. The advantages and disadvantages of our three shortlisted alternatives are summarised below (we have discounted face-to-face interviewing on the grounds of cost).

Telephone only	Online only (panel plus telephone recruit boost)	Telephone and online (panel)
Increasingly limited reach as landlines and voice calls are in decline; few younger consumers are willing to take part in telephone interviews	Looking to the future, digital communication is becoming ever more 'normal', but some groups (oldest) still without internet access	Maximises reach of survey – representing both those who prefer digital communication and telephone
Least cost effective and cost is set to rise in medium term	The most cost-effective option	More cost effective than telephone only, but more expensive than online only
Fully comparable data with past	Likely step change in data	Likely step change in overall data (although we can monitor equivalency with the past using the telephone-based portion of the sample)
Sample is sustainable across multiple years, although increasing screening of unsolicited calls means this may not be the case in the longer run	Even with a blended panel approach there is limited sample available in the Wessex Water region. This restricts volume of interviews per year and sustainability (we may need to go back to some respondents after 18-24 months of tracking)	Enables use of multiple sample sources (both telephone and online) which will exhaust sample at a slower rate (although we may need to go back to some online respondents after 18-24 months of tracking)
No method-effect skews when conducting analysis	No method-effect skews when conducting analysis	Potential method-effect skews when conducting sub-group analysis (although this can be mitigated by matching quota targets within each methodology)
No scope for visual prompts to respondents	Visual prompts allow recognition of specific campaigns	Visual prompts allow recognition of specific campaigns (<i>amongst online sample only</i>)
No scope for visual display to respondents	Scope for engaging / varied visuals to reduce respondent fatigue and enable longer surveys	Scope for engaging / varied visuals to reduce respondent fatigue and enable longer surveys (<i>amongst online sample only</i>)
No scope for capturing video 'vox pops' of respondents	Can capture video 'vox pops' for a subsample of respondents – bringing feedback to life	Can capture video 'vox pops' for a subsample of respondents – bringing feedback to life

Incorporating **online** data collection

Having considered the pros and cons, as a future-facing survey for the next five years, on balance we recommend migrating away from the solely telephone-based interviewing currently used. On balance **our recommendation is for a**

mixed mode telephone and online panel approach, for a variety of reasons:

- The key impetus is to ensure that **a full range of consumer types are engaged** via the tracking – in line with regulatory guidance. On the one hand, telephone is becoming less universal with the persistent decline in landline telephone and less acceptance of unsolicited calls to mobile. On the other hand, a purely online approach still excludes an important minority of older and digitally excluded customers. Mixing both channels means we maximise the reach of the survey.
- **Other benefits include**
 - **More cost effective than telephone-only**, with cost-efficiency from using a shared survey script and centralised fieldwork management for both online and telephone components
 - **The desired sample size of 1000 per year is feasible**, whereas a pure online approach will only sustain a lower sample
 - **Enables added value feature of video vox pops** a portion of those completing the survey online will provide 'in their own words' footage answering a key question, which overlays a vivid sense of customer sentiment into our reporting. (Our standard cost makes provision for 30 video soundbites within one Quarter of each year.)

Video soundbites bringing customer views to life

The main potential pitfall of a mixed method survey is the risk of 'method effect' skewing sub-group analysis and / or affecting trends over time: If certain groups of customers complete the survey in a different way (e.g. if younger customers complete the survey online) this group may appear to have different views, but in fact their answers are different just because they answer in a different survey medium. For example, people may answer more 'politely' if being interviewed than when filling out a self-completion survey online.

With careful design and quota control we can mitigate the risk of 'method effect' issues:

- We will impose identical sample quotas on the online element and the telephone element of the survey. This means that all key sub groups will be completing via the different methods in a fixed ratio – and so there is no difference in the method effect
- We will also apply this principle over time i.e. in each Quarter there will be a fixed ratio of online : telephone interviewing, so Quarters can be compared with each other without any concern that differences are down to a variable 'method effect'.

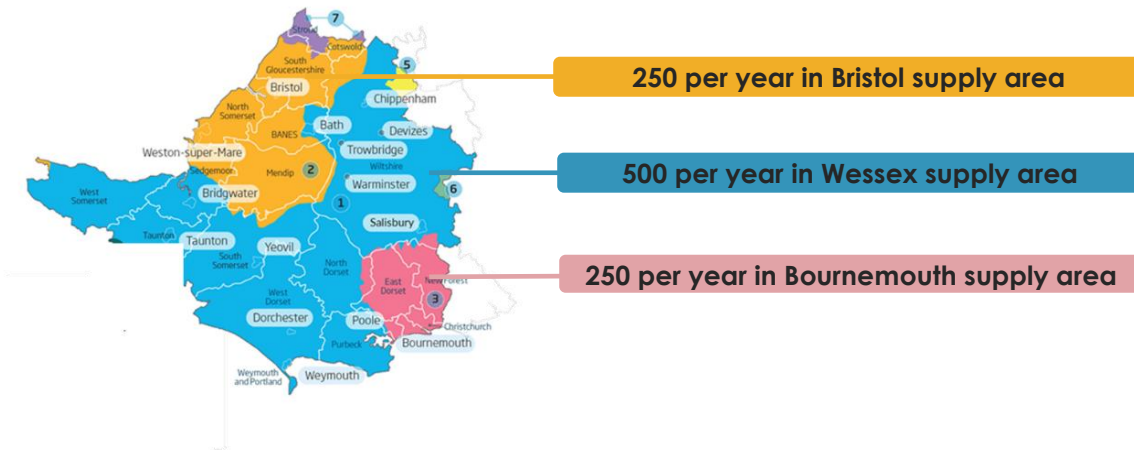
The following pages give further detail of the mixed telephone and online approach. We also **provide a cost option for a purely online approach** which provides the most cost effective solution. However, it should be noted that the key limitation with online-only alternative is the maximum number of interviews that could be reliably achieved is **800 per year**. In other respects the sample structure and questionnaire length would be identical to the mixed mode approach.

For our recommended option of telephone plus online mixed mode interviewing, the sample size, structure and fieldwork scheduling will be as follows. (NB the online-only alternative will only generate 800 interviews per year, but quota proportions will be the same).

Sample definition

All adults 16+ living in the Wessex Water region. To include those responsible for water bill and also those not responsible (reflecting all water consumer approach of C-Mex)

Interviewing will be spread across all months of the year (c.80 interviews per month). Sample profile will be matched each Quarter via quotas on supply area and key demographics.



Demographic quotas will be applied across the total sample. The quotas ensure consistency of sampling over time, matching the profile as used in previous years of the tracking, and enabling us to analyse key demographic groups robustly each year. At the analysis stage, weighting will be applied per Quarter to precisely match the profile to Census data of the region on gender, age and social grade.

Quotas	Per Quarter	Per Year
Male	113	450
Female	137	550
18-34	29	115
35-54	84	335
55+	137	550
ABC1	140	560
C2DE	110	440

Interviewing will be split **50:50 between telephone and online panel**. This ratio will be applied in every Quarter of tracking, within each of the three supply areas, and within each of the demographic quota groups.

Fieldwork for our recommended mixed-method approach will be conducted by BVA BDRC Group. BVA BDRC's telephone division **Perspective Research** have conducted the interviewing for the Wessex Water tracker for the 2020-21 period. Perspective are longstanding and trusted partners of Blue Marble, and have proven dependable over many years of other tracking research in the water industry. Continuing with the same interviewing team as for the last year ensures **we retain maximum continuity**, and use a team well-versed in contacting and engaging with Wessex Water customers. BVA BDRC's digital solutions arm (Alligator) will develop the existing telephone-only survey into a refreshed survey script that will be used by both the telephone interviewers and customers completing the survey online.



The survey script will be designed to be **visually clear and easy to navigate** for customers using all kinds of devices (**PC, tablets and smartphones**), and will include identical questions to the telephone survey to ensure the two can be analysed 'as one'.

Online panel sample will be sourced from a **blend of panel providers**, including Dynata, one of the largest global panel providers. Using a blend of panel providers maximises the volume of customers we are able to reach via online interviewing. However, even maximising panel sample as much as possible, the volume of panellists in the Wessex Water region is still relatively low. We will avoid recontacting any panellists who have previously taken part in the tracking research for at least a period of 18 months, but after this time, some customers who have previously taken part may need to be invited to share their views again.

Note that should the online-only option be chosen, our online fieldwork provider will be **Norstat**. Details for our proposed fieldwork partners are in Appendix Box 5.



The questionnaire will last an average of no more than **20 minutes**. This questionnaire length is currently at the upper limit of what is achievable using telephone interviewing. While there are potential advantages in reducing questionnaire length (higher response rate, reduced cost per interview), we would need to make substantial cuts of 5-10 minutes to see a noticeable benefit. This in turn would mean a much narrower scope of the survey, and so reduce the potential for insight and analysis available.

On balance we recommend continuing with a single-source tracking survey that retains a wide coverage of question areas, including:

a) Core brand performance

- Essential for gauging Wessex Water's perceived performance, brand health and brand image over time

b) Experience and touchpoints

- Questions to diagnose how different interactions and touchpoints can affect perceptions – and so shaping future engagement and communication

c) Questions to enable breakdown of key customer groups

- Questions to profile respondents demographically and by segment, as well as in terms of vulnerability, affordability, metering etc. This enables a more granular view of priorities Wessex Water needs to address amongst a full range of different customer groups

d) Flexible section for hot topic questions

- Important for allowing the survey to be responsive to changing issues – including those raised by customers in previous rounds of research

The combination of these questions, asked of the same respondents rather than in fragmented surveys, gives a strong basis for analysis and insight to feed into a host of business decisions.

Having said this, we fully endorse evolving the survey content as needed, and are well placed to input into any questionnaire changes that Wessex Water wish to make. We will look to actively discuss ideas for the flexi section during ongoing reporting sessions.



Quarterly update cycle

We propose that rather than simply having a 'one-way' quarterly output where we send over latest tracker results, we develop a two-way quarterly session with an informal 'virtual bean bag' approach. This would be a video call session once a Quarter, designed to encourage a 'positive feedback loop' of information sharing and idea generation between Blue Marble and various team members at Wessex Water:

Quarterly **two-way info exchange** sessions



This quarterly 'feedback loop' will ensure the tracking survey is much more responsive to time-specific events and emergent needs in the business, aid interpretation in our reporting and provide inspiration for new questions in the flexi section.

In addition we envisage that we may have 'special guests' from around the business to join the sessions and lend their perspective. Furthermore, in the course of discussions there may be specific thoughts that inspire an idea for a deep dive into the data (e.g. if a hypothesis arises within the wider team). Within our costs **we include provision for up to 3 simple 'ad hoc' data requests a year**; additional or more complex analysis will be costed on a case-by-case basis.

5. Timeline

We envisage the following timing for key actions in the tracking programme (for set up and the first Quarter). While our recommended mixed mode option will use the same fieldwork provider as currently conduct the telephone interviewing, there will be a need to script and set up a new survey suitable for online completion and to conduct necessary tests. This requires c.2 weeks. Based on receiving 'go ahead' on 10th March this should provide adequate time to commence fieldwork in early April.

Action / Delivery	When?	Who?
Submit proposal*	08/02/2021	Blue Marble
Contract award & commencement*	10/03/2021	Wessex Water
Review meeting and agree questionnaire*	15/03/2021	All
Final questionnaire signed off*	19/03/2021	All
Survey scripting and checking; fieldwork set up*	22/03/2021 – 29/03/2021	Blue Marble
Interviewer briefing and pilot interviews*	30/03/2021	Blue Marble
Main interviewing live	01/04/2021 – 30/06/2021	Blue Marble
New data tables template set up complete*	30/04/2021	Blue Marble
Data tables checked using interim data*	07/05/2021	Blue Marble

Open ended coding for Quarter of fieldwork complete	06/07/2021	Blue Marble
Data tables with final Quarterly data ready	07/07/2021	Blue Marble
Quarterly report delivered to WW	15/07/2021	Blue Marble
Quarterly 'two way info exchange' session	21/07/2021	All

Action/delivery marked with asterisk (*) are for initial set up Quarter only. Remaining actions to take place on a Quarterly basis at equivalent dates within the calendar Quarter.

Additional annual reporting actions and deliverables

Action / Delivery	When?	Who?
Written annual report sent to Wessex Water	29/04/2022	Blue Marble
Debrief / workshop session	04/05/2022	All

The key risks to delivering on schedule are:

- Sickness/absence of key Blue Marble personnel: additional resources within the Blue Marble team can step in to assist should unforeseen circumstances arise. As a small agency, all staff have a good understanding of all projects, expediting handover. We are also putting forward a core team of mixed method researchers which means they can be flexibly deployed at all stages of the project.
- Suppliers not delivering on time: We have many years' experience of working with our suppliers and trust them to deliver as agreed at the outset. Our recommended sample sizes (and questionnaire length) have taken into consideration the time available. We also have solid relationships with other suppliers and could transition tasks to an alternative if necessary.
- Not receiving Wessex Water sign-off within required timescale: We will manage this risk by distributing a day-by-day plan at kick-off to give a clear dateline for the review and sign off for materials

6. Quality Management

Quality management – project personnel, service standards and deliverables

- The Project Director is responsible for ensuring the quality of outputs (progress reports, research instruments, reports, etc.) and inputs (e.g. scrutiny of the analysis) and for supervising the Project Manager. A second Director on the project team acts as a quality assurer – reviewing key project deliverables and acting to check and challenge
- Questionnaires, recruitment specs and screening documents are developed and agreed with the client before recruitment commences. We work with trusted partners to source good quality respondents.
- A complete system of checks is in place for our analysis procedures. All documents (discussion guides, stimulus materials, analysis spec, data tables, debrief charts) are signed off by the lead Director.
- We build measures into our online surveys to ensure high quality results. We impose built in checks on 'speeders' and 'flatliners' as well as quality check questions to ensure respondents are answering consistently when filling out the survey.
- As standard practice, we always conduct a **'soft launch' pilot phase** for our surveys
- All output documents are carefully planned and include substantial Director-level time. Debriefs are always attended by the lead Director and presentation planning involves all team members. We take care to understand (in discussion with our client) the nature of the audience and their needs and expectations from a debrief meeting

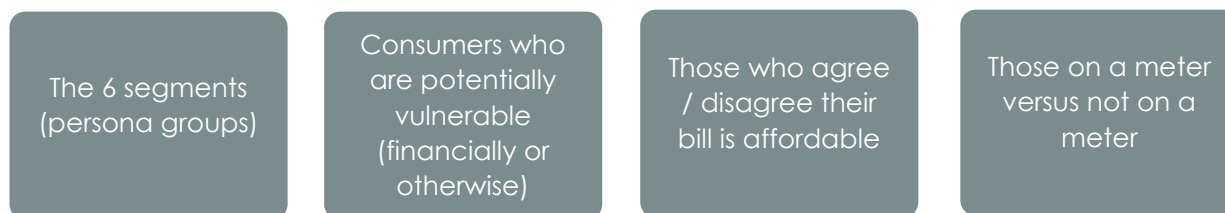
-
- We are GDPR compliant and our policies and processes ensure data handling is secure and where personal information is concerned, we are acting (and documenting) within our GDPR compliant data protection policy. We are a **Cyber Essentials Certified** organisation with high levels of data security and data handling processes.



SERVICE AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT. Technical support – How we will provide technical support and advice. To include technical reporting

7. Analysis and reporting

Analysis and interpretation: Our senior-level team will directly oversee the production of comprehensive data tabulations which will be produced by our fieldwork partners. The same team will then conduct all analysis and interpretation of the results, immersing fully in the detail of the data. Alongside analysis of the three distinct water supply areas and key demographic subgroups, other key groups will also be explored. We will divide up the sample by different dimensions and interrogate differences between:



Our reporting highlights key differences by subgroup, and the annual debrief is thematically structured reflecting particular topics and groups that are of interest to Wessex Water.

When we are conducting analysis we must always carefully consider the statistical significance of any apparent differences between subgroups, and we take care to highlight where subgroups have small base sizes and where differences are significant. The table below gives a guide to the robustness of key subgroups samples, both for our recommended approach (mixed method interviewing) and the online-only alternative.

		Anticipated sample size per annum	
		Mixed method – 1,000 per year	Online only – 800 per year
Supply area	Wessex	500	400
	Bristol	250	200
	Bournemouth	250	200
Social grade	ABC1	560	450
	C2DE	440	350
Age	16-34	115	90
	35-54	335	270
	55-64	550	440
Signs of vulnerability	Any	340	270
	Responsible Citizens	300	240
Segments (persona groups)	My World & Cost Conscious	200	160
	Family Focus	150	120
	Closed World View	60	50
	Stretched & Struggling	80	60
	Young Disconnected	30	24
	Disagree	70	56
Bill affordable	Disagree	70	56
On a meter	Yes	550	440
Have made contact	Yes	200	160
On support tariff	Yes	c. 25*	

Key:	■	■	■	■	■
	Too small to analyse	Minimum base for analysis	Moderate base for analysis	Good base for analysis	Very good base for analysis

Reporting

Our standard reporting deliverables will be:

- **Quarterly** standardised Powerpoint update report of c.15 slides including up-front 'at a glance' summary one page of key metrics and Exec Overview
- **Annual report deck** in Powerpoint including a new 'tiered' structure, ensuring the document has relevant and digestible content for a wide range of audiences – from higher level Exec team to analysts who wish to scrutinise data in more detail
 - High level 'on a page' Executive Summary
 - 30-page thematic presentation slides
 - Extensive appendix with 'data library' slides for more in-depth review / interrogation
 - Charts and narrative will build in a host of secondary data sources to provide broader context for trends in consumer mindsets, including
 - ICS customer satisfaction index (showing if satisfaction with brands across a variety of sectors is trending up or down, as a reference point for Wessex Water beyond the water sector)
 - Google trends for relevant terms, to understand key topics that are building and declining in relevance for consumers
 - Blue Marble's own self-funded research (e.g. 'through the keyhole- life under lockdown' insight)
 - Plus CCWater reported data, GfK consumer confidence index,
 - Schedule of relevant news / PR, Wessex Water communications and activity schedule, key supply interruptions etc
- **Annual face-to-face workshop-format debrief** utilising the annual report deck in a more flexible discussion format.

'Big picture' trend reporting

We take great pride in the quality of our reporting outputs in all formats, making sure they are **accessible, relevant and visually attractive** - some example extracts below:

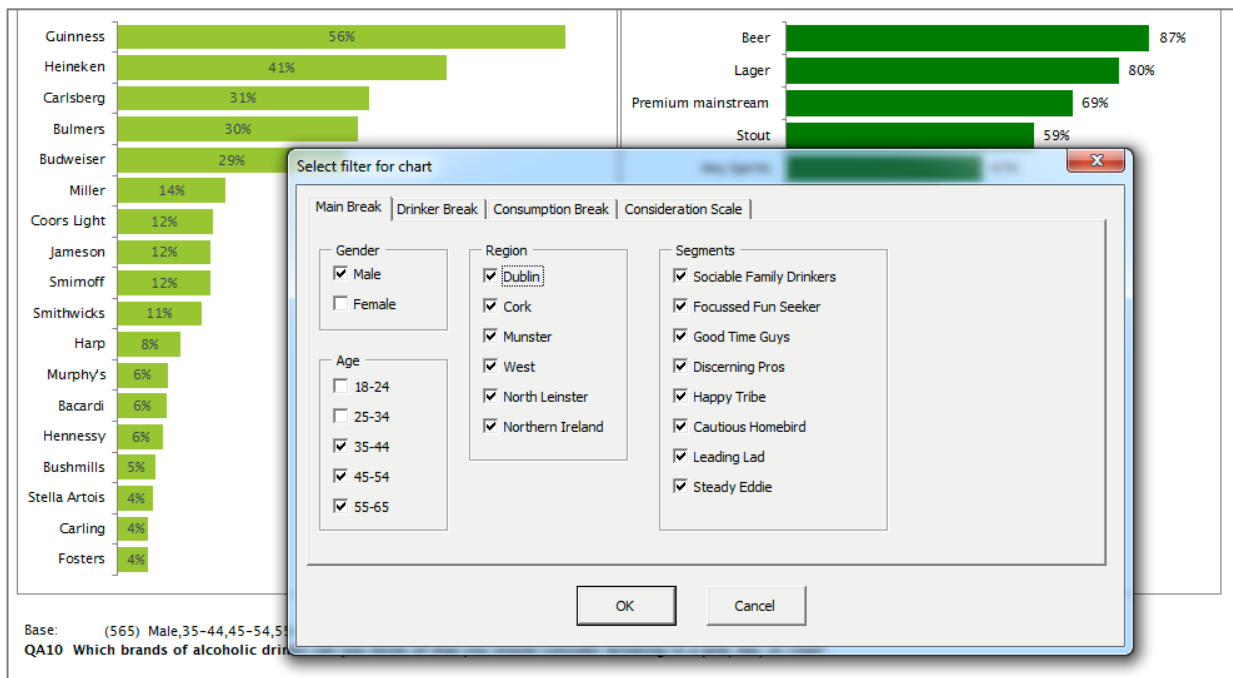


In addition to our reporting we will provide further deliverables to add depth of insight:

Interactive chart tool

Included in our basic costs is an **interactive chart tool**, to be refreshed with the latest data every year (after each full year of tracking) which will allow Wessex Water to see results at a glance amongst different key groups.

- Interactive chart tool**
- A new output included in our cost to enable greater interrogation of annual data in a visual way
 - We would create a bespoke set of 10-15 interactive charts showing key measures for Wessex Water
 - The team at Wessex Water would be able to apply a suite of different filters (e.g. customer persona group, gender, age, vulnerability, Level of bill affordability etc) to see how different subgroups compare and to test their own hypotheses
 - This will be an Excel-based solution so will not require costly software subscription
 - Example case study for an alcoholic beverage company below:



Key driver analysis (optional cost)

As an optional added cost for Year 1 we strongly recommend one key driver analysis. This is a sophisticated multivariate analysis that can identify how much different variables influence key measures of success. We recommend that we use this to model which variables influence **satisfaction**, which is a key component of C-Mex. The analysis would be conducted by an experienced statistician and would identify the priorities to address in order to improve Wessex Water performance in this regulatory measure. A succinct Powerpoint summary of findings and implications would be appended to the annual report.

Working with Wessex Water to apply GIS visual mapping

As an additional overlay to our reporting, we are interested to explore other ways of driving insight about customers such as using Geographic Information Systems and mapping population features to support service and

communication initiatives e.g. using customer data and other data sources (such as Census or other administrative datasets) to:

- Understand the geodemographic profile of customers in debt to then target services and communications relating to financial support
- Similarly, mapping low meter take up to target relevant community-level communications
- Using GIS to profile the four counties within Wessex Water's region against a range of data to support the community strategy

Finally, **full data tables and verbatim answers** to open ends will also be provided. Note that in our costs we include full coding of two open end questions; coding of other open questions is available as an additional cost option.

4 Appendix

Box 1: Blue Marble experience in the water sector, including links to published research

- Large scale programmes of research for Wessex Water for both the PR14 & PR19 price review customer engagement involving both qualitative and quantitative research methods amongst a range of audiences including non-household customers
- Customer satisfaction CATI survey amongst a representative sample of Water2Business customers including measuring awareness and understanding of retail opening.
- 'Willingness to Support' resilience investments as part of DCWW DWMP programme of work. An extensive phased project including deliberative (online) qualitative research with NHH and HH customers – and 30 vulnerable households
- Youth Boards (DCWW, Bristol Water, Wessex Water, South Staffs Water): Innovative and co-creative approach to consulting with future customers.
- Resilience Investment research (Affinity Water): Qualitative research to understand customers' attitudes towards and acceptability of additional resilience investment and the associated bill impact.
- Priority Services expectations (Wessex Water): Research with customers in vulnerable circumstances to explore perceptions of Wessex's priority services proposition, expectations and experiences.
- Understanding customers' experience of repeated service problems (DCWW): A series of qualitative methodologies to understand the experiences of those 'worse served'. Re-convened sessions allowed DCWW to directly respond to customer recommendations and present a future plan of action for dealing with service issue
- Engaging customers for better consumer and business outcomes (CCW 2020): a study exploring what customers feel is most important for water companies to ask their views on, and how to do this research in a meaningful way for business as usual activities and companies' five-year business plans. <https://www.ccwater.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Engaging-water-customers-for-better-consumer-and-business-outcomes.pdf>
- Consumer Expectations and Priorities (CCW, 2019): multi regional project across England and Wales exploring people's expectations of a sector watchdog. <https://www.ccwater.org.uk/research/consumer-expectations-and-priorities/>
- Market Reform – learning from the Scottish Experience (CCW, 2016): Major project bringing evidence about the non-domestic customer experience of the (maturing) open market in Scotland <http://www.ccwater.org.uk/blog/2016/08/25/open-for-business-lessons-for-the-non-household-retail-water-market-in-england-based-on-customer-experiences-in-scotland/>
- A Tide of Opinion - The Customer Voice within the Price Setting process (CCW, 2015): Research to discover how customers want to have their voice heard during the business planning process including representation by CCGs <https://www.ccwater.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/A-Tide-of-Opinion-the-Customer-Voice-within-the-Price-Setting-Process.pdf>
- Review of PR14 customer engagement, communication and education (UKWIR 2014): Heading the industry's own evaluation of PR14 customer engagement activity <https://www.ukwir.org/forefront-report-page?object=129658>

Box 2: Recent Blue Marble consumer and customer tracking experience: case studies

In addition to running the Wessex Water customer tracker for over 10 years, Blue Marble have a wide range of experience in customer and consumer tracking surveys:



Affinity Water customer perceptions tracking. Telephone-based tracking survey of customer perceptions, including a statistically-derived index to focus on key actions needed to improve value perceptions. A representative sample of 1,900 customers per year was structured around the eight Affinity Water water resource zones, allowing community-level analysis and assisting customer understanding at a more localised level.



AHDB trust and transparency tracking. Large scale online 'State of the nation' public attitudes tracking study (n=1,000 per year) into societal concerns and views of the food production system, with a focus on how perceptions of the sustainability of agriculture drive overarching environmental concerns. Key driver analysis identified the most important underlying factors to address in future communications to build positive perceptions of British farmers.



Higgidy brand tracking. Annual survey of 1000 online interviews with nationally representative sample plus booster samples of key target segments. Provides a robust measure of Higgidy's brand health amongst key competitors in a highly dynamic and competitive market. It also explores the relationship between brand attributes, affinity with the brand and intention to purchase - enabling future category management and communications decisions.



Royal Canin brand and communications tracking. Online dip tracking survey of both customers and potential customers to monitor how brand awareness, brand health and imagery develop over time, versus key competitors. The tracking has reflected the dynamic nature of the premium pet food market; a host of newer brands gaining share of mind, and increasing consumer emphasis on 'natural' ingredients prompted Royal Canin to respond with innovative content via new communications channels.



HTA member perceptions tracking. Annual 'dip' tracking survey gathering views of HTA members on a wide range of areas including future intention to renew, satisfaction, value for money and attitudes towards HTA and what it offers. The analysis of what drives key brand 'health' measures by different member types has helped HTA understand who requires priority attention, and what elements are most important to address to maintain the membership base.

Box 3: Your Blue Marble Team for this project



Ben Potts, Director, Head of Quantitative Research will be overall project lead, responsible for all aspects of project delivery, as well as leading project design, debrief sessions and providing a key point of contact. A quantitative research specialist with over 20 years' experience, a key area of Ben's expertise is brand, satisfaction and communications tracking. Ben

joined Blue Marble in 2017 as Head of Quantitative Research, bringing wide-ranging expertise from major agencies including BMRB and GfK NOP, as well as The Source (M&C Saatchi's research arm). **BA (Hons) Geography. MRS Certificate (Distinction).**

Relevant Experience:

- **Customer tracking (Wessex Water):** Ben is well known to Wessex Water and has directed and managed Wessex Water's continuous telephone-based customer tracking survey since 2017
- **Value for money tracking (Affinity Water):** Directing and managing Affinity Water's continuous customer tracking survey from 2017 to 2020
- **Brand and communication tracking (Royal Canin):** Directing and managing a large scale online 'dip' tracking research project since 2017 amongst both customers and prospects at gauging the effectiveness of a diverse range of communications and shaping future activity
- **Brand tracking (Higgidy):** Heading up the brand tracking research for this innovative and growing food brand, which has been critical in steering marketing and product development
- **Business Plan Acceptability Testing (Welsh Water):** Devising, directing and managing an innovative mixed mode quantitative study to develop the final version of the Welsh Water business plan for PR19 and provide the customer acceptability score reported to the regulator
- **Brand and communications tracking specialist:** Historically Ben had directed tracking research for a wide array of organisations including Action for Children, Auto Trader, Mercedes-Benz, McDonalds', Simplyhealth and TalkTalk.



Laura Weston, Associate Director will act as **project manager**, providing hands-on management of fieldwork, production of project schedule, questionnaire and reports, and having an active role in developing insight and face-to-face meetings and debriefs. Laura will be first point of contact for day-to-day communication, questionnaire updates and ad hoc data requests. Laura is a mixed methods researcher previously working at Nat

Cen Social Research, Kantar, and more recently acting as Insight Lead at the media agency Manning Gottlieb OMD, giving her extensive expertise in media and tracking research. **MSc Social & Cultural Research; BA (Hons) Marketing.**

Relevant experience:

- **Value for money tracking (Affinity Water):** Laura has worked in a project manager role on Affinity Tracking since joining Blue Marble
- **Tracking for official statistics:** Laura dedicated the first part of her career to some high profile, public sector survey tracking programmes with random probability sampling CAPI and RDD CATI interviewing Public Health England, Food Standards Agency, Health and Social Care Information Centre, DCMS and Sport England
- **Brand and campaign tracking:** More recently and before joining Blue Marble, Laura worked on a range of brand and campaign tracking studies for a variety of clients and including setting-up and maintaining bespoke tracking through online panel surveys as well as interrogating third party tracking and utilising self-serve dashboard services such as YouGov
- **Water sector experience:** throughout her time at Blue Marble, Laura has worked on a range of projects in the water sector across a range of audiences and predominantly BAU challenges and is familiar with key business planning methodologies, such as customers' price acceptability and willingness to pay
- Brand Index data to create bespoke tracking reports and investigate issues. Sectors include transport, automotive, FMCG.



Emma Partridge, Partner and Founder of Blue Marble is well known to Wessex Water. Emma will support Ben and Laura from a senior standpoint, and bring Quality Assurance to the project – ensuring that all deliverables fully meet your objectives and stepping in to lead the project if Ben is unavailable. During Emma's 30 years in the research industry she has specialised in service sectors (such as financial services and utilities) and public sector research. Over the last 10 years Emma has worked closely with clients across the water industry including its regulators (EA, Defra); consumer bodies (CCW and Customer Forum); its collaborative research body (UK Water Industry Research); and individual water companies. She has directed research and engagement projects across three business planning cycles PR09, PR14 and PR19. As such, producing high quality reports open to industry wide scrutiny has become second nature.

BA (Hons) Classics; Certified Member of Market Research Society.

Relevant Experience:

- As **account lead for Wessex Water** (over the last 10 years) and Dwr Cymru Welsh Water (for the last 5 years), Emma has been responsible for designing and overseeing the delivery of large programmes of research and engagement
- **Understanding the drivers of C-MEX measures by customer segment type** (Wessex Water): Emma led this in-home qualitative research to supplement self-reported water behaviours with observed behaviours.
- **CCW: Engaging water customers for better consumer and business outcomes.** Emma directed this review of customer engagement during PR19. This research marked a major review of customer engagement practices across the sector and has already made a significant contribution to debate across the industry
- Emma has developed **new approaches to engaging hard to reach customers.** For example implementing Youth Boards (future customers) for several water companies including South Staffs, Bristol Water, DCWW, Cambridge Water and Wessex Water
- **Conducting community research** in areas of high deprivation in Wales
- Emma has conducted **company specific engagement audits** (in preparation for PR19) and more recently has been facilitating regulation teams, advising on PR24 engagement
- Emma regularly presents findings to a senior audiences, **speaking at leadership conferences and industry events**; and presenting to industry bodies and CCG groups.

Box 4: Blue Marble Quality Practices



All research is conducted within the MRS Code of Conduct and quality is assured across the project process. Because much of our work is conducted for public sector and clients in regulated sectors, Blue Marble Research also ensures that all research projects are carried out according to the Government Social Research Code and the GSR Ethical guidelines. We have a documented Quality Management Process and our quality management system mirrors ISO20252, based on experience of systems used by large agencies. Our focus on quality and continuous improvement leads to a 'right first time' approach throughout – and covers all aspects of fieldwork and data collection. Our focus on quality and continuous improvement leads to a 'right first time' approach throughout.

At Blue Marble, we operate under *secure processes 'by design'*. This general practice of data security includes the following processes:

- IT & office security (Cyber Essentials)
- Secure transfer processes (according to client requirements)
- Data is deleted from any devices once stored on secure server
- Hard copies of reports remain in our (secure) office
- GDPR Compliance: more stringent recording and deleting processes for 'PI' extend to client-sensitive data
- Agency & staff under confidentiality agreements (and where required, client NDAs)

Specifically regarding customer data, as part of good practice and to comply with principles of GDPR we ensure:

- Our team undergo regular annual training on best practice in data security and GDPR
- At project initiation we complete internal project compliance forms identifying whether we will be handling personal data and considering the optimal modes of project management to minimise any risk to personal data throughout the project
- We adhere to the practice of anonymising or pseudonymising personal data files as soon as possible
- We do not transfer personal data to or from clients and subcontractors unless it is absolutely necessary (for example when a customer requests a callback from the sponsor of the research)
- Any transfer of personal data is via secure client ftp or our own AES256 encrypted secure transfer system and files are also password protected for double encryption
- Our internal post-project review processes require all personal data to be deleted from all locations once the project is complete; recorded in a 'data destruction log'
- We put in place data processor agreements with all our subcontractors to ensure they adhere to principles of GDPR including not holding personal data outside of the EEA

Our IT infrastructure ensures the following cyber essentials are adhered to:



- Network Security - industry leading Unified Threat Management device to block unauthorized access or attacks through the implementation of the inbuilt Intrusion Detection and Prevention, Anti-virus and Firewall modules.
- Secure Configuration - When new devices are configured, a fresh factory image of Windows is installed and then only the required applications and runtimes are installed for users. All factory default passwords are changed, and any default admin accounts are removed.
- Access control - All PC's require Active Directory authentication password credentials in order to log on. In addition to this, there is a defined length and complexity policy in place exceeding NCSC recommendations. Share/NTFS permissions control what data users have access to. Once configured, only the intended user will have a login configured on that device
- Patch Management - critical patches are installed within pre-agreed timescales
- Malware Protection - Windows Firewall is used on all Laptops/Workstations, along with BitDefenderAV. On-access scanners monitor all system activity and automatically scan for virus/malware files which may have been downloaded from the Internet or through email. External devices are automatically scanned upon insertion.

Box 5: Our proposed fieldwork partners



Perspective Research Services (BVA BDRC) – telephone fieldwork subcontractor

Blue Marble have a close and long-standing relationship with Perspective Research Services, who have conducted fieldwork for the Wessex Water tracker over the 2020-21 period, as well as Affinity Water customer tracking for Blue Marble for five years.

- Perspective Research Services complies with ISO 20252, the recognised international quality standard for market research.
- MRS Company Partner, which means all employees adhere to a Quality Commitment and the MRS Code of Conduct.
- All respondent recruitment is conducted in accordance with the Interviewer Quality Control Scheme (IQCS). Perspective quality control a minimum of 10% of all projects which exceeds the minimum set by IQCS of 5%
- Fully GDPR compliant, with a full-time dedicated Data Protection Officer on site at all times.
- Perspective Research Services were the inaugural winners of the MRS Award for Data Collection (2012).
- Perspective are one of the largest independent market research call centre operations in the UK, with a dedicated 80 station CATI centre in central London.

ALLIGATOR Alligator Digital Solutions (BVA BDRC) – online fieldwork subcontractor for mixed-mode option

Blue Marble have a strong relationship with Alligator,. Alligator have scripted and hosted numerous online surveys for Blue Marble, delivering to exacting quota requirements and within demanding timeframes.

- Alligator are MRS Company Partner, which means all employees adhere to a Quality Commitment and the MRS Code of Conduct
- Alligator won the award for Best Online Data Collection at the MRS Operations Awards in 2018.
- Fully GDPR compliant



Norstat – online fieldwork subcontractor for online-only option

Norstat have been established for nearly 25 years and have a proprietary online panel of over 650,000 consumers in 18 European countries.

- Certified members of the Market Research Society
- Norstat run ongoing quality assurance routines in panel recruitment and management
- Certified by ISO 9001 and ISO 20252:2019, the recognised international quality standard for market research