



# Wet wipe research 2025

Research proposal





Your sewer blockage prevention programme is working hard to encourage behavioural change towards sewer friendly habits. Flushing wipes down the toilet is a key contributor to sewer blockages and is a target behaviour to change.

Research conducted by Savanta in 2023 shows that 22% of people admit to flushing wet wipes down the toilet despite 88% saying they are aware they harm the environment.<sup>1</sup>

In order to improve your customer engagement programme so that it effectively discourages people to stop flushing wet wipes, you need to gain a better, more in-depth understanding of wet wipe usage and disposal, including insight on key 'moments of change'.

You also need to evaluate the current engagement programme to understand whether current approaches are influencing behaviour change and whether any changes are sustained in the long term.

<sup>1</sup>[https://www.water.org.uk/news-views-publications/news/public-urged-bin-harmful-wet-wipes-over-fifth-admit-flushing-down?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.water.org.uk/news-views-publications/news/public-urged-bin-harmful-wet-wipes-over-fifth-admit-flushing-down?utm_source=chatgpt.com)



## Key Objectives

**1** To improve understanding of customer attitudes and behaviours towards wet wipes/flushing behaviours, including usage, disposal and alternative products.

**2** To understand the above attitudes and behaviour across a range of key audience types, exploring their personal experiences and learned and adapted behaviours.

**3** Evaluate your current blockage prevention programme, highlighting key areas of success where behaviour is changing in the long-term and where it is not working well.

**4** Identify ways to improve the impact of your blockage prevention programme to reduce the volume of wet wipes entering sewers.



## Approach

- This work is exploratory in nature and requires us to start more broadly and then narrow down.
- Building on the success of the water efficiency work we ran for Wessex Water in 2022, we have designed an approach that explores wet wipe behaviours with a broad sample first and later identifying and selecting a smaller sample of households with a specific story to tell to take part in the longitudinal study.

## Discretion

- Some of the topics and conversations we'll be broaching are of a personal nature.
- The online community phase will allow participants to reveal more personal elements of their lifestyles in a private space.
- Throughout each phase we will carefully craft information, questions and stimulus to create an environment that is non-judgemental, practical and open for sharing.
- We will also use creative, exploratory exercises to lead up to these personal questions e.g. 'What does clean mean to you' or 'what actions do you do that are for comfort vs. hygiene'.

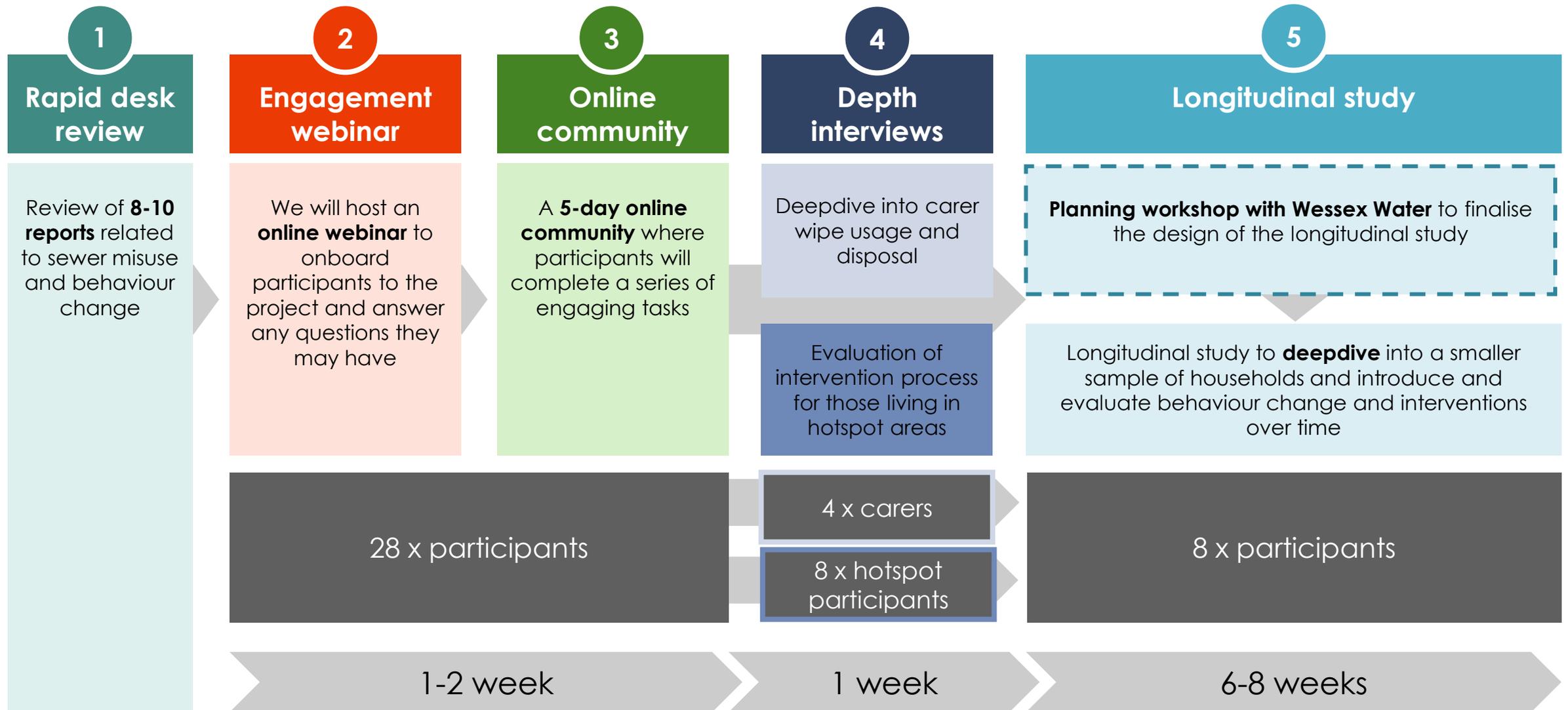
## Sample

- It's important that within this research we reach those individuals who are not only using wet wipes regularly but also disposing of them down the toilet (either regularly, or occasionally).
- We anticipate that we may struggle to get people to admit to this when filling out the recruitment screening questionnaire.
- We will design our questions to be subtle. For example, we will ask participants to tell us which items they use within a long list of bathroom products and include both 'wipes' and 'wipes – flushable', assuming that those who chose the latter are flushing wipes.

## Dissemination

- Nuanced understanding of customer behaviours and lifestyles is at the core of this research.
- It is important that the outputs do justice to the deep exploration we will have carried out, and that the findings are disseminated widely in a way that is engaging and insightful.
- Our proposed approach includes a dissemination workshop at the end of the project where key stakeholders can join, learn and participate.
- We have also included an option for adding ethnographic in-home depths and an engaging video output.





Our sample is composed of **28 households** reflecting key audiences whose behaviours we want to explore:

**Younger Males  
(x2) & Females  
(x2)**

- 18-24 years
- Using wipes in the bathroom or to remove make up

**35-45 years  
(x4)**

- Using wipes regularly

**New parents  
(x4)**

- Baby under 12 months
- Using wipes for baby and other uses

**Parents of toddlers  
(x4)**

- Toddlers aged 1-3 years
- Using wipes for toddler and other uses

**Carers  
(x4)**

- Mix of those working privately and for NHS
- Using wipes for care

- Mix of metered and unmetered
- Mix of homeowners and renters
- Mix of household sizes and mix of SEG (set minimum quotas for each)
- At least 3 x to be living in a shared house
- All to be using wipes regularly – tick box from long list of items used. At least 50% to be flushing wipes to dispose of them.

**Hotspot participants  
(x8)**

- Those who live in sewage blockage hotspot areas who have undergone interventions related to said blockage
- We assume that Wessex Water will provide customer lists for recruiting these participants



## 1

## Rapid desk review

Following the kick off meeting we propose conducting a **rapid evidence review** to establish what we know so far.

We have assigned time to review **8-10 published documents** relating to sewer misuse and behaviour change, and any interventions tested to date.

Relevant reports might include campaign evaluation or research on:

- Programmes designed to change behaviour when it comes to flushing and proper disposal of items
- Sewer misuse or sewer blockage intervention programmes
- Household wipe usage
- Hygienic disposal behaviours in the care and/or health sectors

## 2

## Engagement webinar

We will host an **online engagement webinar** with all participants to introduce them to the project and help them understand what to expect and what we're asking of them.

The webinar will be hosted on **Zoom** and last **30 minutes**.

- We'll primarily use this time to go through the research process and introduce the moderation team so that participants feel comfortable reaching out with any questions or concerns.
- We will only touch upon the topic of the research project lightly, framing it as wanting to gain an understanding of everyday habits in the bathroom and beyond. This is to ensure that we gain spontaneous feedback during the next stage of the project.

 = 28



**3 Online community**

Following the briefing webinar, participants will be onboarded onto a dedicated online community hosted on incling.

The community will be **live for 5 days**, asking participants to complete a series of interactive and engaging tasks that specifically explore:

- Household contextual understanding
- Wipe purchase, usage and disposal behaviours (diary task)
- Common flushing behaviours
- Behavioural differences inside and outside the home
- Moments of change/moments where good habits let slip
- Audience journalism: participants consulting household members, friends and families for wider input

 = 28



**DIARY**  
Understand patterns of behaviour and get ‘real-time’ feedback



**DISCUSSION**  
Open conversation either one-to-one or in a group



**VIDEO TASK**  
Bring consumers’ worlds to life with in-the-moment footage



**CONCEPT EVALUATION**  
Test and improve campaigns, adverts, web pages, comms etc.

Example online community tasks and tools



## 4

## Depth interviews

**Carer depths:**

- 45 minutes hosted on Zoom
- As the carer audience will have their own individual stories to tell, we propose inviting them to take part in a 45-minute depth interview to understand their wet wipe usage and disposal behaviours
- Within this, we will seek to understand how they came to their behaviours, including any training, advice or guidance provided by colleagues or organisations

**Participants in hotspot areas:**

- 45 minutes hosted on Zoom
- As well as understanding the living and household context of these participants, these depths will explore their experience of sewer blockage intervention measures
- As well as investigating the relative pros and cons of various intervention measures, we would seek to understand whether the interventions have influenced behaviour in the short- and long-term.



We will aim to take 2 participants from each of these audiences into the longitudinal phase



5

Longitudinal study

**Planning workshop:**

- Following the first phases of research, we will convene with Wessex Water to share key insights from online community and depths
- During this session, we will finalise the design of the longitudinal study, ensuring we are plugging gaps and knowledge



The WhatsApp methodology allows us to gather in the moment thoughts and feedback in a way that is quick and convenient for participants. Responses can be provided via text, voice note or video

**Longitudinal study:** a study to track behaviours over time and test and evaluate behaviour change interventions in real time

Example outline for tasks and ideas:



## + Follow up ethnographic interviews and video

### Ethnographic interviews

- We have provided costs for an optional, additional phase of research where we select and invite **5 participants** to take part in a filmed depth interview in their homes
- The idea behind the interview is to gather footage of them speaking about their experiences and journey for the development of a high quality and engaging video output
- We will work with our specialist videography partner, Starr brothers, to film and generate the videos to a high professional standard. They will accompany Blue Marble moderators to the interviews
- Suggested video outputs include a 5-minute engaging video summary, or 5 x 1-minute case study videos



Starr Brothers have been making films across the UK and abroad for over 10 years.

William and Edward Starr, both BA (Hons), are adept in managing the filming process from inception, storyboarding and shoot logistics through to the actual camerawork, editing, colouring and audio-mixing, doing so for the smallest charities to the largest multinational firms and organisations.

The pair have long-term relationships with clients such as England Golf, The NHS, PWC, STIHL, Motability, Age UK, and numerous central government departments.

[starrbrothersfilms.com](http://starrbrothersfilms.com)



Phase	Task	Week																				
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
		09-Dec	06-Jan	13-Jan	20-Jan	27-Jan	03-Feb	10-Feb	17-Feb	24-Feb	02-Mar	09-Mar	16-Mar	23-Mar	30-Mar	06-Apr	13-Apr	20-Apr	27-Apr	04-May	11-May	18-May
	Project commission																					
	Set-up meeting																					
	Location and sample finalisation																					
1	Rapid desk review																					
	Finalise screener																					
	Recruitment																					
2	Finalise engagement webinar pack																					
	Engagment webinar																					
3	Finalise online community materials																					
	Online community (5 days)																					
4	Finalise depth interview materials																					
	Depth interviews with carers and hotspot participants																					
	Collaborative workshop																					
5	Finalise longitudinal study materials																					
	Longitudinal study																					
	Analysis and reporting																					
	Final report																					



BLUE MARBLE

[www.bluemarbleresearch.co.uk](http://www.bluemarbleresearch.co.uk)

