

# NWG People Panels

## # 1: Induction – headline findings

### Background

This round was the first of a series of four initial sessions to be conducted online over Zoom. One session was conducted with each of the five panels. The first induction sessions ran on the following dates:

- **Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March: North East**, customers of Northumbrian Water in the North East
- **Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> March: Essex**, customers of Essex & Suffolk Water in Essex
- **Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March: Employees** of Northumbrian Water or Essex & Suffolk Water
- **Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March: Suffolk**, customers of Essex & Suffolk Water in Suffolk
- **Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> March: Young**, people aged 18-21 who are not currently solely or jointly responsible for paying their water bill (both NW and ESW regions)

Explain was commissioned to recruit for all panels apart from ‘employees’, brief and develop materials for use in each round. In addition, Explain was responsible for the management of the events and with independent chairing and discussion facilitation of two breakout rooms per group. A NWG representative, [REDACTED], attended all sessions and provided information on behalf of the organisation.

This document has been put together by Explain to outline the headline findings of the round, including key themes from attendee discussions.

The round was designed as introductory sessions to allow panellists to be comfortable in the online Zoom setting, become more aware of what the future sessions would be about and what the expectations of their Panel role would be, in addition to providing a basic background of the water industry, Northumbrian Water and Essex & Suffolk Water.

By providing this background information and context, panellists would be brought up to a similar level of knowledge and understanding surrounding the company and industry. This provided a solid foundation to be built upon in future sessions. The intention and aims of the session were shared with panellists, highlighting that the information gathered from these sessions will be used to inform the planning of the company’s long term strategy.

## Attendee profile

Panel group	Total number of attendees	Of whom were 'Defining the Future'
North East	14	3
Essex	9	2
Suffolk	12	3
Young	11	2
Employees	11	n/a

The first round was attended by a total of **57 panellists**, who were a mix of demographics including gender and age group, apart from the 'young' panellists who were all aged 18-21 years old. The group of young future customers included nine panellists living in the North East and two panellists living in Essex or Suffolk regions. **10** attendees had previously attended NWG's 'Defining the Future' research in 2021, which supports the People Panels forming a 'golden thread' through PR24 engagement.

Feedback from chairs and moderators of the respective sessions all indicated that the individuals in each group were engaged and interested in sharing their views, which was also evident from the closing poll results which all attendees voted in. The poll results for all groups are presented in the appendix of this report.

As this is the first session in an ongoing panel series, Explain will aim to over-recruit for all groups in advance of the second session. This will account for potential drop-outs or sickness, thus ensure there is a good turnout for future sessions. For those who are recruited but did not attend the first session, a 30-minute overview of the induction session will be given to those individuals immediately prior to the commencement of the second session. They will also be provided with briefing materials in advance.

## Summary of findings

There were 90 minutes in each session, with roughly 10 minutes spent in two separate groups for breakout discussions, which were facilitated by Explain.

### What would you like to get out of this process?

To gain insight into the water industry and NWG

To provide feedback and have their views heard

To understand the wider impact NWG has

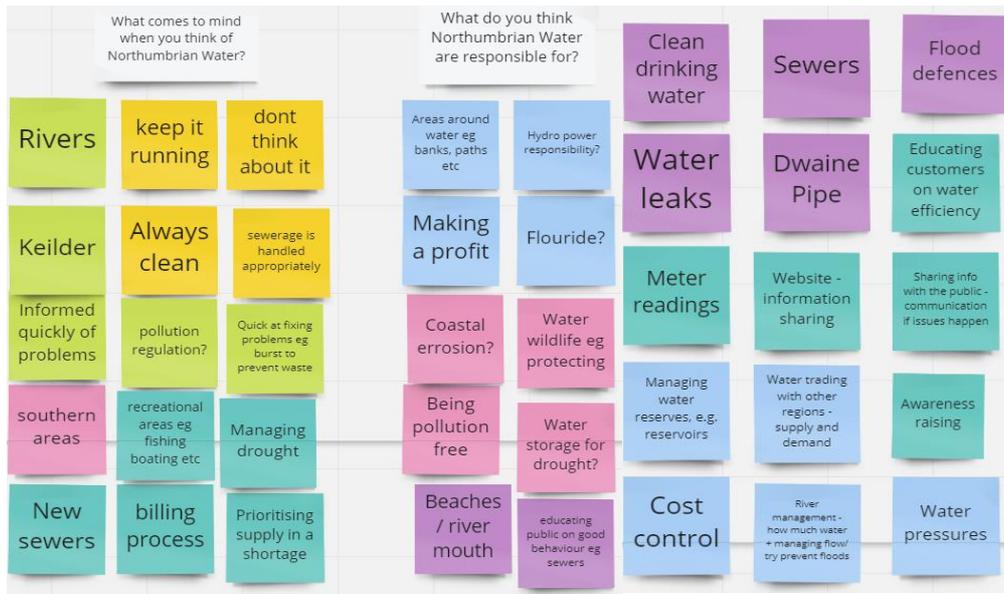
Most attendees reported that they were very interested in the business' future direction and were interested in providing their thoughts. Many attendees additionally felt that they aren't kept up to date with what is happening in the business and hoped the sessions would give them more of an insight into what's happening in the water industry and the direction that the company is taking.

Some attendees cited a more specific interest in finding out, for example, how the water is treated exactly or how water resources may be affected by climate change. Panellists who commented on their desire to gain insight into the safety of water often related this to their role as a parent, responsibility of protecting family members and ensuring children are kept safe by knowing how the water is safely treated.

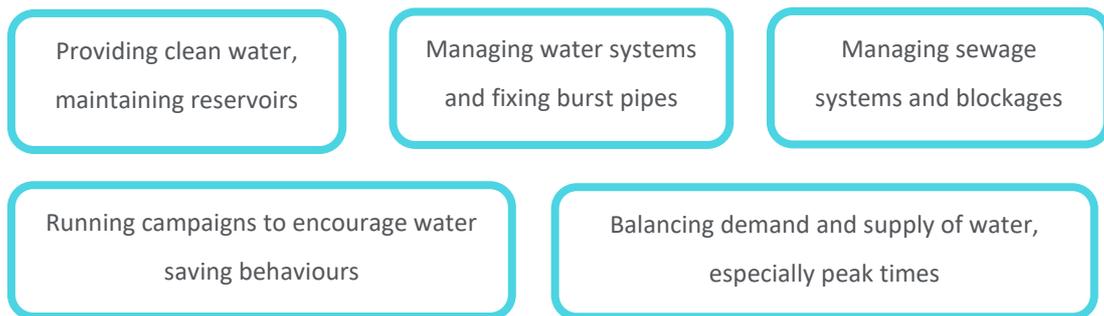
One attendee, in the North East panel, additionally stated their interest rose from a community orientation angle, of finding out their wider impact of the company, such as how charities are supported by the company.

**What do you think their role and responsibilities might include?**

A Miro board ‘post-it note’ exercise was completed in breakout discussions to allow panellists to share their views ahead of sharing information with them about the role of the organisation. An example is provided below. Due to employees having knowledge and understanding of the roles and responsibilities, this question was not asked in the employee panel.



Panellists were asked what they thought Northumbrian Water or Essex & Suffolk Water’s role involved. Broadly aligned to what the remaining four panels thought the roles of Northumbrian Water and Essex and Suffolk Water were included:



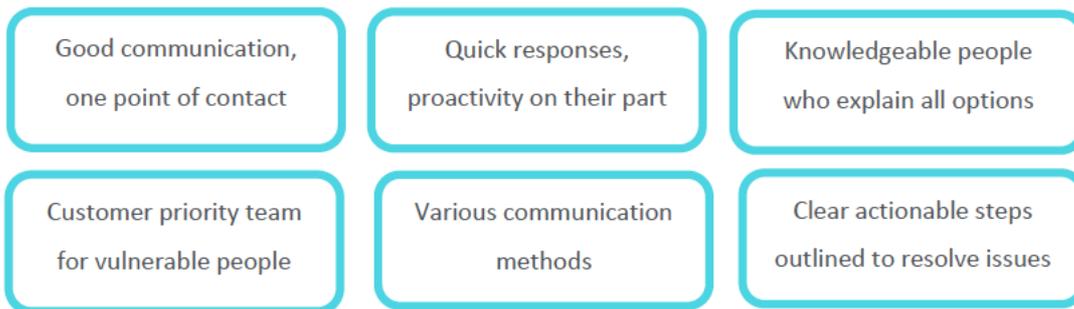
Most attendees across the panels were aware of the variety of roles and responsibilities of Northumbrian Water and Essex & Suffolk Water, with all of the above points covered in each session.

Some attendees, for instance one panellist in the ‘North East’ panel, and one in the ‘Young’ panel, revealed they were unaware that NWG operated in regions other than their own.

There were particular questions arising during the sessions which highlighted attendees' lack of awareness of where the water is treated from (rivers and reservoirs rather than the sea), how the water is treated and, from those based in the Essex and Suffolk regions, why the supply and sewage systems are split.

### What does unrivalled customer experience look like?

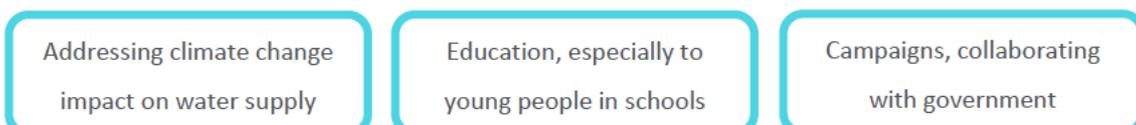
When considering unrivalled customer service, the common themes included:



Referencing their own experiences of customer service, many attendees began by discussing the reason they would contact customer services would be to deal with an issue, therefore referenced need for clear instructions to resolve issues and one point of contact who understands the issue throughout, rather than explaining it to several parties. This was particularly the case in the 'young' panel. The requirement of having various communication methods was also frequently mentioned by the younger panellists, including in the 'young' panel, and less frequently discussed by older panellists across all panels. When prompted, members of the panel agreed that channels should include those such as website and smartphone app.

### Opportunities for Northumbrian Water Group in the next 5, 20, 50 years?

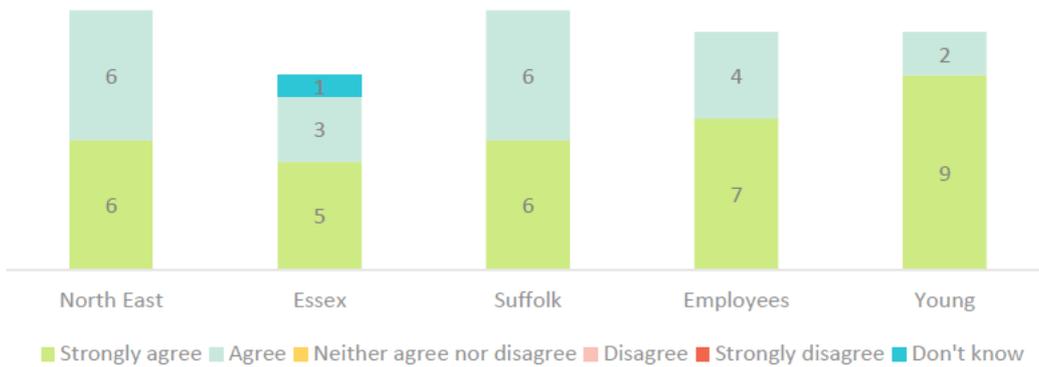
In all sessions, the opportunities discussed by attendees centred around the urgency to address climate change, particularly with a focus on education about water-saving behaviours in schools so that the future generations can become more conscious. Collaborating with the government on climate change, or with regulators to refine definitions of 'avoidable waste' and 'flushable', for instance, were thought to be opportunities for NWG as some attendees shared that there seemed to be a lack of ownership on product advertisement restrictions, in alignment with climate change.



## Event feedback

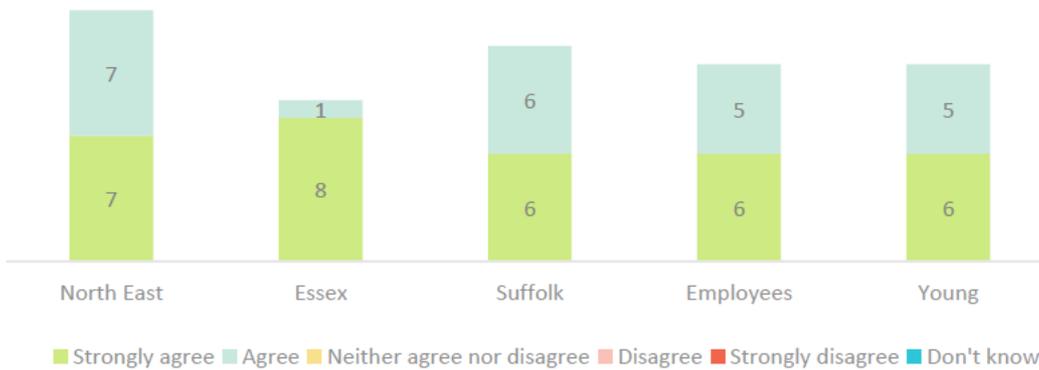
All panellists voted on a poll, containing four questions, at the end of the session. Panellists were asked to use a rating of 1 'strongly agree' to 5 'strongly disagree' to show how they felt about each statement. The results were as follows:

The information provided throughout was clear and easy to understand



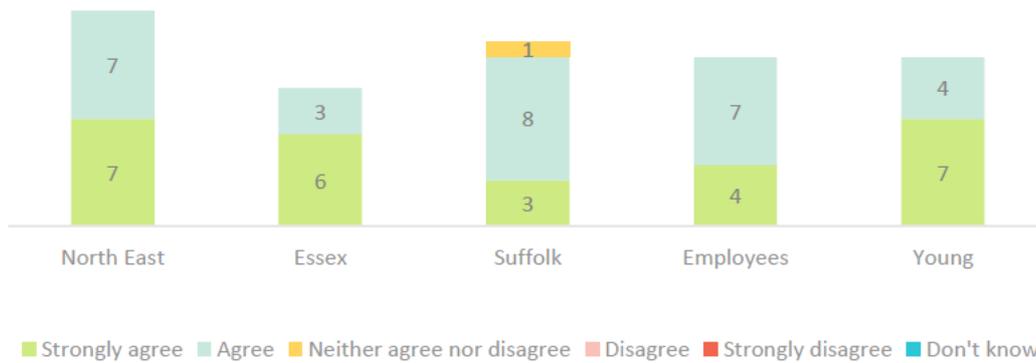
Across all sessions, half or more than half of panellists 'strongly agreed' that the information provided throughout was clear and easy to understand. The remaining panellists, aside from one answering 'don't know', also 'agreed' with this statement.

I understood the purpose of the session



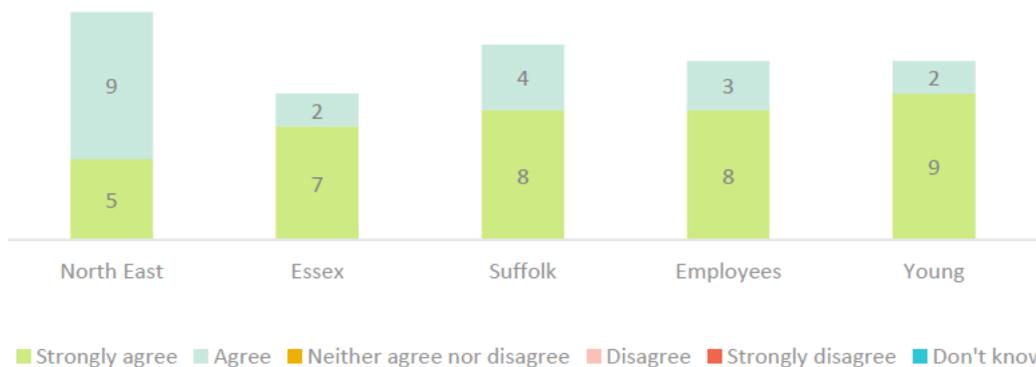
All panellists in this session stated they understood the purpose of the session, with Essex panellists appearing to be particularly clear with the aims and objectives.

The discussion was interesting



All panellists in this session, with the exception of one attendee in the ‘Suffolk’ customers panel, agreed or strongly agreed that the discussion was interesting. The results show that the number of participants who ‘strongly agreed’ that the discussion was interesting were ‘young panellists’. This contrasts to the quarter of Suffolk panellists ‘strongly agreeing’ with the statement; with two thirds ‘agreeing’ with the statement.

Overall, I was satisfied with the session I participated in



All panellists stated they were satisfied with this session overall. The greatest satisfaction of the session, measured by the number who ‘strongly agreed’, came from the Young panel (82%) followed by Essex (78%), employees (73%) then Suffolk (67%). In the Northumbrian panel, the majority of attendees ‘agreed’ with this statement, and 36% who strongly agreed (five out of 14 attendees) – it’s expected the Northumbrian panel was most engaged since they’re the most likely group to have existing relationships and experience with NW. Overall, all five panels reported that they were satisfied with the session they participated in. We will continue to track satisfaction over the sessions and seek to increase agreement across all measures.

## Appendix

These are the results of the 'post-it' exercise, completed on Miro and facilitated by Explain, when posed with the questions:

- What comes to mind when you think of Northumbrian Water / Essex & Suffolk Water?
- What do you think Northumbrian Water / Essex & Suffolk Water are responsible for?

### Northumbrian

Northumbrian Water customers had a much broader view of NW's role compared to perceptions of Essex & Suffolk Water in the respective customer groups.



### Suffolk



Essex

There were some misconceptions from Essex about what the responsibilities involved, for instance panellists mentioned plumbing as something Essex & Suffolk Water would be responsible for.



Young

