CCW

The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Desktop review of behaviour change campaigns

April 2023

community research

Foreword

It is well known that the water sector faces some big challenges. We need to make our water and wastewater services resilient to climate change while continuing to meet the needs of a growing population, all of which relies on people using less water and understanding how to use drains and sewers in a responsible way. We must also do more to protect our precious natural environment, which also relies on people changing their behaviours. Those within the water sector are acutely aware of these challenges and their responsibilities. However, the general public remains largely unaware of the role it can play and the expectations being placed on it in order to meet those challenges.

As this review, and other recent CCW research reveals, changing people's habits around their water use, what they flush down the toilet and rinse down their sink is not easy. While there have been a lot of good campaigns undertaken over recent years, there has been a lack of thorough and consistent evaluation of their impact in the short and longer-term.

This review helpfully identifies campaigns that have been effective, sets out some best practice principles to consider and highlights a number of potential opportunities for future campaigns. Importantly it stresses the need for research and evaluation to underpin all future campaigns so that we can build the evidence base and draw on these learnings.

The urgent need to engage with the public on these matters was brought into sharp relief in 2022 when the drought and exceptional temperatures during the summer drove record-breaking peaks in demand for water at a time when the environment was also at breaking point. We need to work together as a sector, approach things differently, take some risks to try to get people's attention and help them see that we must all play our part.

There is no silver bullet but as a sector we have been presented with the challenge and opportunity to bring about a cultural change in attitudes and behaviours in relation to water and wastewater services. This opportunity cannot be missed.

CCW will be seeking to work in partnership to trial campaigns based on the conclusions of this Review and other work in our People and the Environment programme. We would like to invite other partners from across, and beyond, the sector to join us on this mission.

Dr Mike Keil

Senior Director of Policy, Research and Campaigning

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1. Executive summary

1.1   Introduction, objectives and approach

In CCW's Strategy for 2022/23, it committed to unite the industry under a campaign to raise awareness among people and businesses of the value of water in society and how people's behaviour when using water impacts the water environment. To help CCW design and deliver this campaign, it commissioned an independent review of behaviour change programmes and campaigns run in the UK and elsewhere.

Effecting behaviour change in this field is a challenging problem. Water use and disposal behaviours are generally low engagement activities, and charges for water/sewerage services are typically lower than for other utilities, meaning that as long as the services work and are affordable, there are usually other more important things competing for people's attention. Whilst there have been many campaigns run by the water companies (and others) to encourage people to be water efficient, and to avoid misusing the sewerage system, impact on behaviour change has often been limited.

The main objectives of the review were to explore what has been happening on the ground in terms of campaigns, and to identify a) promising approaches and b) general principles that can feed into future activity. The search was kept wide, inclusive, and flexible. We followed interesting leads. The exercise was not (and not intended to be) a systematic review in the sense of being a full academic literature review and, therefore, the review should not be treated as exhaustive.

1.2   Project scope

The focus of review was on campaigns aimed at households rather than businesses. Small-scale local campaigns as well as large-scale national campaigns were included and there was flexibility in terms of the campaign dates in order not to exclude interesting approaches that happened some time ago.

Messages relating to the following areas were included in scope:

- those aimed at reducing water use
- those aimed at reducing flushing of unflushables (eg wet wipes/sanitary products)
- those aimed at reducing disposal of fats, oils and greases (FOGs) in the sink

Campaigns involving all types of media were included but communications that are part of business as usual (eg on bills) were specifically excluded. Campaigns from different sources were included, eg water companies, charities and product manufacturers, as well as campaigns from outside the UK.

1.3   Effective campaigns

Section 5 of the report provides individual case studies of campaigns that we have identified as being effective, with Section 4 providing a commentary on elements of campaigns and Section 6 providing new ideas for campaigns. In order to reinforce the point that there are many different ways that campaigns can reduce water use and

sewer misuse, we selected a diverse range of campaigns. For example, they include different types of target behaviours (everyday habits, maintenance, and fittings), different ways of achieving wide reach, different behaviour change techniques, and both one-off/short term single channel campaigns and longer term multi-channel campaigns.

Because our brief was not simply to repeat back to the water industry in England and Wales what they already know, we have not used water company campaigns as case studies, except where they are small-scale and/or from some time ago, so probably not widely known. What unites the selected case studies is that they all represent an interesting or innovative approach to a long-standing, entrenched issue. And, more importantly, they have had impressive results in terms of addressing challenges that the water sector tends to struggle with or going well above the norm in terms of reach or impact. For example, they sustained per capita consumption reduction during the winter and when water use restrictions ended (eg Watercare Auckland's drought campaign); they started conversations as well as changing behaviour (eg Denver Water's Use Only What You Need campaign, Anglian Water's 'Unmentionables' game); they achieved uptake with much less effort than usual, eg Folkestone and Dover Water (now part of Affinity Water) home visit programme and they reached audiences who are unlikely to be particularly engaged (eg Money Saving Expert promoting free showerheads, Yorkshire Water's Fats to Fuels) . All have at least some data on which to judge their reach or impact.

1.4   Campaign best practice principles

Best practice principles in relation to water use and disposal behaviours have been generated from the review, partly based on general behaviour change principles and partly on campaigns run on water use and FOGs/unflushables disposal.

Campaign elements	Best practice principles
Target behaviour	- be clear what people should do – don't just tell them what not to do - focus on a few behaviours, chosen because they are likely to have high impact and uptake – don't provide a long list of behaviours to choose from - to make the task of behaviour change much easier, promote behaviours, products, and services that are easy to do and/or attractive
Target audience	- recognise that there is no 'silver bullet' campaign that will work well for all target audiences - instead tailor campaigns to different target audiences, focusing on behaviours, motivations and messengers that are suited to them - focus particularly on target audiences with most room for improvement and most openness to change
Behaviour change techniques	make more use of a wide range of techniques that have been shown to be effective for behaviour change in this and other sectors, including frequent reminders, helping people make their intentions concrete, and following up on commitments to change

	• as well as choosing doable behaviours, find ways to make it even easier to take action by, for instance, providing how-to videos, links to free products, and reminders
Motivations	• give reasons for taking action that feel immediate, personal, and important to people rather than focusing on reasons that seem distant and impersonal • emphasise positive norms, for example, that many people do, support, and enjoy behaviours and products that reduce water consumption and sewer misuse • don't suggest that many people are wasting water and disposing of FOGs/unflushables incorrectly as this is likely to backfire by suggesting that these behaviours are acceptable and normal
Message tone/ emotion	• fear-inducing articles dominate the media coverage of water resource and sewage issues- this could lead to a sense of hopelessness which in turn could lead to inaction • it is essential to find some way of giving people a sense of what they can do as well as explaining what the water sector and others are doing to address these serious problems
Providing information	• go further than just highlighting problems and causes by addressing barriers to action as well, eg through myth busting and positive social norming
Media/format	• make more use of real stories and examples to make the issues more engaging, memorable and real to people – don't rely on facts and statistics • use unusual and eye-catching media and formats to bring potentially dull and familiar messages to people's attention, and to engage people for longer and in ways that support them to change their behaviour
Other interventions	• use other interventions alongside communications to draw attention to messages that might otherwise be of little interest, increase motivation and reduce barriers
Messengers	• encourage and support organisations outside the water industry to communicate about the issues, particularly those who are listened to and trusted by a wide audience, and can frame communications in a way that is meaningful to them • make sure they keep their voice, identity and independence
Timing	• during obvious crises, when issues are high on the agenda, ensure that campaigns promote changes that can easily be sustained in the long term • do more to promote behaviour change at other times when people are most open to change or even looking for help to change
Evaluation	• use research and evaluation throughout the campaign development process

1.5   Current opportunities

The review has identified a number of potential timely opportunities that could be used to reinforce or disseminate messages about saving water and the correct disposal of unflushables and FOGs:

- with the current concern about energy bills, **focusing on energy savings** from using less hot water is likely to resonate
- there is likely to be an opportunity to **introduce more doorstep FOGs collections** as more local authorities introduce food waste recycling schemes, when doorstep collections of food waste becomes mandatory this year
- **use messengers from outside the water industry** that are keen to engage, such as weather forecasters, the beauty industry, DIY chains and TV home improvement programmes and supermarkets
- **capitalise on the current interest in products that** have the potential to reduce sewer misuse, such as air fryers and period pants

1.6 Research and evaluation needs

As part of its initiative to unite the industry behind a campaign, CCW is currently conducting various research projects in relation to understanding the effectiveness of different messaging, including a project which explores the emotional response to different types of messages from negative, dark and gloomy to more positive, hopeful and light hearted. The review has identified other potential areas which would benefit from further research and evaluation activity:

- to inform the choice of target behaviours for campaigns, **conduct desktop reviews focused on how willing and able people are** to do various target behaviours (eg which they might be delighted to do) and on common knowledge gaps and misconceptions that act as barriers to behaviour change
- **conduct specific message testing** relating to conveying important messages that are not intuitive and are as yet unfamiliar - it would be particularly helpful to test messages around reducing hot water use to save energy, and messages employing less used motivations, eg perhaps saving time and effort (water use) and deterring rats (FOGs)
- **conduct primary research** to better understand how to most effectively change the behaviour of high water users and households disposing of large quantities of FOGs, starting with understanding the behavioural causes of high water use
- **run field trials and/or pilot studies** to compare the effectiveness of alternative approaches that are used at the moment, such as prescriptive messages (eg take a 4 minute shower) vs flexible messages (eg take a shorter shower) and collective vs personal motivations and feedback - these must find ways to measure changes in water use either at household or aggregate level.
- **share evaluation results**, both positive and negative, from all campaigns to build an evidence base about what works
- to support this, it would be helpful to develop a database to record and share campaigns and evaluations and a standardised evaluation toolkit for campaigns in these fields

2. Background and approach

2.1 Research context and objectives

In CCW's Strategy for 2022/23, it committed to unite the industry being a campaign to raise awareness among people and businesses of the value of water in society and how people's behaviour when using water impacts the water environment. To help CCW design and deliver this campaign, it commissioned an independent review of any relatable behaviour change programmes and campaigns undertaken in the UK and elsewhere.

Although there have been many campaigns run by the water companies to encourage people to be water efficient, and to avoid misusing the sewerage system, they have not yet achieved the wide and large scale behaviour change that is needed. A key objective of the review was, therefore, to identify campaigns or programmes that have had measurable success in reducing water use or avoiding sewer blockages.

As well as tracking down campaigns which have been evaluated, the brief at the start of the project was to also focus particularly on innovative and even risky approaches to communicating about these issues, not simply to focus on mainstream campaigns or to reflect back to the water industry what they are already doing.

2.2 Project scope

The focus of review was on campaigns aimed at households rather than businesses. Small-scale local campaigns as well as large-scale national campaigns were included and there was flexibility in terms of the campaign dates in order not to exclude interesting approaches that happened some time ago.

Messages relating to the following areas were included in scope:

- those aimed at reducing water use
- those aimed at reducing flushing of unflushables (e.g. wet wipes and sanitary products)
- those aimed at reducing disposal of FOGs in the sink

For all three areas we looked for campaigns that highlighted what the problem is (eg messages showing water shortages, fatbergs), motivations and reasons to take action (eg social norms, cost savings, impact on nature), and what action to take (eg bin, don't flush).

Campaigns involving all types of media were included but communications that are part of operations/business as usual (eg personalised feedback about water use on bills) were specifically excluded. Campaigns from different types of sources were included in scope, eg water companies, Environment Agency, NGOs, third parties (eg NGOs, product manufacturers, Met Office), intermediaries (eg plumbers, hairdressers) as well as campaigns from outside of the UK.

Campaigns aiming to change behaviours in relation to the natural (water) environment more widely and campaigns limited to specific interventions (eg home visits) were specifically excluded.

2.3   Our approach

We took several approaches to identifying a diverse range of campaigns and seeking out innovative, unusual and effective campaigns. We searched the internet, focusing on organisations/sectors we knew had (or thought might have) run campaigns and carrying out broad searches using key terms. This helped us identify a wide range of campaigns and to get a feel for typical campaigns. We also emailed and/or interviewed contacts at organisations we knew had run, advised on or evaluated campaigns (see Section 8.2 for a list). This helped us to identify campaigns they considered to be innovative and/or effective.

Specialist marketing consultancy, WiseOnWater, also supported the exercise by providing introductions to and information on a diverse range of campaigns.

We also took several approaches to searching for evaluations and data on reach and impact. CCW asked the water companies and we asked other contacts for any campaign evaluations that they could share. We also searched the internet for any relevant evaluations and data that are publicly available, including the following:

- views on YouTube video, likes/shares on social media – they give an indication of reach and level of interest in campaigns
- water company statutory publications – for example, we have found useful information about sewer misuse campaigns and impact on number of blockages in strategic direction statements and pollution incident reduction plans
- databases such as Tools of Change[1] and Community Based Social Marketing[2]
- academic publications of trials of campaigns – there are not many but they provide the most rigorous publicly available evaluations

We also discussed with contacts their thoughts on what makes a good campaign and their suggestions for future campaigns.

2.4   Notes on the approach

Three issues determined our method:

- **the need to find novel approaches** - the main aim was to find novel approaches that seemed promising or likely to be effective. Therefore we kept the search wide, inclusive, and flexible, following interesting leads; there was no intention to be systematic
- **the need to find promising approaches** - there needs to be at least some evidence that campaigns work, so focusing effort where it is likely to pay off and not repeating things that have not worked well

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[1] Tools of Change - Case Studies
[2] Forums : Community-Based Social Marketing : Doug McKenzie-Mohr (cbsm.com)

- **tight timetable** - we had to be pragmatic and efficient in how we searched; the exercise was not (and not intended to be) a systematic review in the sense of being a full academic literature review, therefore the review should not be treated as exhaustive

There are a number of caveats that need to be borne in mind in relation to the review:

- **issues in relation to evaluation** - when choosing case studies, we only included campaigns that were evaluated in some way
  - however, the rigour of the evaluation differed, ie some campaigns were evaluated by looking at reach, attitude change and/or self-reported behaviour change - however, some monitored behaviour change more systematically
  - the dearth of evaluation data generally means that we could not only include those with more robust evaluations; this is further explored in Section 3.3
  - there is little attempt to establish causality (eg using control groups, data analysis to exclude weather) and little attempt to disentangle the effect multicomponent campaigns
  - in some cases, we have included campaigns involving very small pilots which have not been tested more generally

- **drawing conclusions from different times/places** - we kept the search wide, and looked for international examples and examples from some time ago, as our main aim was to pick up a wide range of unusual and effective approaches;   this means that caution is needed in assuming that similar campaigns will work well here and now – we cannot simply assume this
  - when looking at campaigns from some time ago, it is important to recognise that (i) culture/norms/behaviours have changed (eg wipes are much more widely used now than just a few years ago), (ii) media for communicating have changed (eg social media is much more widely used, text messages less so), and (iii) the context has changed (eg we are now in a cost of living crisis)
  - likewise when looking at campaigns from different countries, it is important to recognise differences with England and Wales eg the higher levels of awareness in, say, Australia; and the different legal restrictions in, say, South Africa

3. Campaign research and evaluation

3.1 Why run people-centred campaigns?

The traditional standard approach to running campaigns to reduce water use and sewer misuse was for the water industry to:

- promote behaviours that seemed likely to be impactful if adopted
- advise people to do them and explain the need from a water industry perspective
- run campaigns at times when behaviour change was most needed
- convey the messages themselves through their usual routes for communicating with customers

There is starting to be a shift away from this approach and a growing awareness that, for behaviour change campaigns to be effective, people need to be put front and centre. This means, for instance, promoting behaviours that appeal to people; highlighting the benefits that matter most to them; focusing on times when they are most open to change; using techniques that support change and running campaigns through messengers they already listen to and trust.

Effective people-centred campaigns need to be informed by behavioural science and by research and evaluation. So while developing campaigns, it is important to do two things in parallel: draw on general behavioural principles about what works to change behaviour and use research and evaluation to understand exactly how to apply these general principles in specific circumstances.

There are several steps to developing behaviour change campaigns, summarised in Figure 1 overleaf[3]. Behavioural science and research and evaluation have a role to play at each step, as discussed below.

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[3] There are many different models of behaviour change and different ways of describing the process of developing behaviour change campaigns and other interventions. This report draws on many different models and processes, including UCL's approach based on the COM-B model (explained by Social Change UK in their Guide on the COM-B Model of Behaviour), Behavioural Insight Team's EAST approach, Doug McKenzie-Mohr's social marketing approach (see the Community Based Social Marketing website for more detail). They have much in common, although the terminology, emphasis, and details differ.

Figure 1: Steps to develop a behaviour change campaign

1	• Chose the target behaviour and target audience to focus on
2	• Identify motivations to build on and barriers to address
3	• Design a campaign that will reach/ engage the audience and change behaviours

Conduct robust **research** to inform design

4	• Pilot on a small scale
5	• Roll out on a large scale

Implement a **robust evaluation process** to monitor effectiveness & identify improvements

3.2   Behavioural science

What is the role of behavioural science?

Behavioural science makes clear that many aspects of the message can make a difference to the impact of a campaign: the target behaviour, behaviour change techniques and motivations used, knowledge gaps addressed, and tone. Also many factors besides the message itself can make a difference: messenger, timing, location, and media/format. They affect whether people pay attention to the campaign and/or whether they change their behaviour as a result. To design an effective campaign, it is important to consider all the above elements of a campaign.

Behavioural science also has something to say about each of these elements, ie general principles that are relevant. For example, in relation to choosing behaviours, when considering how many behaviours to suggest in a campaign, it is best to only promote one or very few. If too many behaviours are promoted, this can lead to choice overload which can lead to inaction and/or moral licensing, with people taking an easy action and feeling that they are now doing enough.

What is currently done?

While the use of behavioural science is gaining traction, it is far from mainstream yet. Most campaigns are still developed with little or no reference to behavioural principles and techniques. So, as can be seen throughout the next section, several valuable principles and techniques are not widely used at the moment. But there are a growing number of examples of good practice, some of which are described in the next section and the case studies.

How is behavioural science used in this review?

Throughout Section 4, we have highlighted general behavioural principles and included examples that illustrate them.

3.3   Research and evaluation

What is the role of research and evaluation?

Research and evaluation play an essential role in ensuring that campaigns are effective. They should be used at each step of the campaign development process outlined in Figure 1, for example to:

- Step 1 - Identify behaviours that people are most willing and able to do, and people who are most in need of change and amenable to change.
- Step 2 - Understand the main motivations and barriers to the target behaviours.
- Step 3 - Test campaign material to ensure that it is understood, believed, and trusted
- Step 4 - Pilot and evaluate campaigns on a small scale, to improve them and/or to choose between alternatives.
- Step 5 – Rollout campaign on a large scale and evaluate to assess whether they have the expected impact and to improve them.

Research – what is currently done?

Research at steps 1-3 is not often carried out and is certainly not routinely carried out as part of campaign development. However, there are examples of good practice, such as those mentioned in Section 4 and just a few examples given below:

- Step 1 - Affinity Water commissioned research to identify behaviours that are both impactful and amenable to change. The research has suggested focusing on, for example, using eco-cycles on washing machines and dishwashers and only using when full – through to suggesting spending two minutes less in the shower. To consistently promote these behaviours, it will help to inform customers how much water and money they can easily save (a current knowledge gap), and provide nudges and reminders at the point of action (to help break existing habits).
- Step 2 - United Utilities routinely runs campaign ideas past its customer panel. For example, it tested messages explaining that reducing hot water use reduces energy costs. It found that this really resonated with the panel and also that many had never made the connection before between energy and showering. Following this positive response from the panel, it rolled out messaging.
- Step 3 – Before Southern Water's universal metering programme began, it carried out extensive customer research, including thorough testing of campaign material to accompany the meter rollout.

Evaluation – what is currently done?

The evaluation described at steps 4 and 5 of Figure 1 are often not carried out for sewer misuse and water saving campaigns. Where evaluations have been carried out, they are often very limited and far from the 'gold standard' in several ways. There were a number of identified issues:

- assessing impact is often difficult for communications campaigns. Sometimes the only information collected is reach. This is understandable because, for example, with videos, it is easy to establish the number of views but very much harder to find out whether people changed their behaviour as a result of viewing. Sometimes even information about reach cannot be collected: eg with posters it is not possible to determine how many people actually noticed them
- many organisations did not identify which metrics they considered a barometer of success Even where analysis/evaluation did take place, it was measured on shorter term data (such as digital metrics during the campaign itself) and does not take into account longer-term data such as brand perception/ behaviour change metrics after the campaign. This kind of data could show the lasting, positive, effects of communication campaign or provide valuable insight on what worked and what didn't for the future
- for multifaceted campaigns, it is rare for evaluations to try to disentangle the effects of different components, although a few do (eg the evaluation of Northumbrian Water's wet wipe campaign which compared the impact of bin giveaways and the threat of fines)
- there is often much going on alongside campaigns making it difficult to establish whether the campaign itself is responsible for any behaviour change. For example, in the drought last year what was the impact of media coverage, water company comms, environmental charities, farmers? A small number of campaign evaluations, mainly (but not solely) those led by academia, used methods for excluding external factors, such as randomisation and control groups
- evaluations of less effective campaigns are less likely to be made publicly available e.g. in water company documents

However, there are examples of good practice, described in the next section and in a few examples given below:

- Northumbrian Water's 'Bin It' campaign was thoroughly evaluated. This included comparing the impact of two alternative approaches, a bin giveaway and a communications campaign in areas with recent blockages. The evaluation looked directly at number of blockages, rather than relying on, for example, self-reports of behaviour change[4]. It found that blockages reduced by 60% and this improvement was sustained (although it is not clear how long for)
- a lawn watering reduction programme in Massachusetts was also thoroughly evaluated at the pilot stage[5]. The evaluation compared water consumption in a group of 100 households who received campaign materials and a control group of 100

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[4] A case study on the 'Bin the wipe' campaign is available on the Behaviour Change website.
[5] MassDEP's case study of their pilot campaign is available on their website.

households who did not, randomly selected. They were given feedback about how their water use compared to their neighbours the previous summer as well as correcting misconceptions about garden watering. The evaluation compared impact on low, medium and high water use households. It found that households who received the campaign material had lower consumption than those who did not. The saving was greatest in the high water use households, and also differed with type of watering system

There is clearly a need for more and better evaluation of campaigns (eg looking at water consumption and blockages). Waterwise is currently developing an evaluation toolkit for water efficiency campaigns that seek to change behaviour. Having such a toolkit should help. The growing use of email campaigns will also make evaluation easier, and some organisations are already doing A/B testing[6] with different email headers or content.

> Use research and evaluation throughout the campaign development process. First identify key motivations and barriers. Then test draft messages, including different options, before launch. Next try out the campaign on a small scale to test impact as well as identifying implementation issues that need ironing out. Following the rollout on a larger scale, implement a robust evaluation mechanism to monitor how it is working and what, if anything, can be improved.

How are evaluations used in this review?

In Sections 4 and 5, we have identified campaigns that had a positive impact. We took into account all evaluations, irrespective of methodological quality. We included evaluations looking at any indications of impact: reach, awareness and knowledge change, attitude change, self-reported behaviour change, and measurable behaviour change (eg reduced consumption, reduced sewer blockages). Where other factors affected robustness (eg size of trials or use of control groups) we have sometimes mentioned it - but to avoid repetition, we have not always done so.

We think this approach is reasonable, partly because we would have little evidence to draw due to the small number of 'gold standard' evaluations and partly because we think that less than perfect evaluations still provide useful insights, as shown by the following types of evaluations:

- **Evaluations that only look at reach.** This at least gives an indication of the level of interest in a campaign, even though it does not show whether interest translates into behaviour change. For example, 'The Tiny Kettle' film[7] had 3.1 million views and 'The End of Football' film[8] 1.9 million views (see Section 4.6) - ie their reach is in in a completely different league from many water company films. Clearly large reach is not

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[6] A/B testing—also called split testing or bucket testing—compares the performance of two versions of communications content to see which one appeals more to consumers. It tests a control (A) version against a variant (B) version to measure which one is most successful based on key metrics.

[7] LOOK! A TINY KETTLE! - YouTube

[8] Manchester City and Xylem present: The End Of Football - YouTube

enough to guarantee a campaign's success, but without decent reach a campaign will fail.

- **Evaluations compare per capita consumption (PCC) or number of sewer blockages before and after the campaign.** This at least gives an indication of the level of impact, even if there is no attempt to separate out the effect of external factors, such as weather or other campaigns being run at the same time. For example, in the area in Bradford where Yorkshire Water's '[Fats to Fuels'](#) was run, there were 85 blockages in three years before it began but only one in the 18 months afterwards.

- **Evaluations that look at a campaign as a whole, rather than the communications specifically.** It could be argued that it does not make sense to try to separate out the impacts of components of campaigns in cases where they are only effective when used together.

- **Evaluations that look at informal feedback about what works from those who ran the campaign.** Again this provides useful insights, even if it is less robust than other evaluation methods. E.g. Hubbub report that there was a long queue at a university freshers' fair to take their water use survey (the 'personality quiz'[9] in [Section 4.6](#)); and Skewb report[10] that children playing their Minecraft game about water wanted to continue after the session was supposed to end (see description in [Section 4.3](#)). Note that both of these had more formal evaluations too, but the informal feedback is very insightful.

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[9] [What type of water user are you? Take the #TapChat quiz and find out! (riddle.com)](#)

[10] [Minecraft link-up schooling new players in net zero transition - Utility Week](#)

4. Elements of communications campaigns

4.1   Overview

This section discusses the elements of communications campaigns. For each element, it discusses why it matters for engaging people and changing their behaviour; what is currently done and how well it works; challenges that have not yet been solved, debates for which there is no clear answer yet; risks that need to be avoided and finally, thoughts on best practice and opportunities that could be tapped.

The good practice principles are based mainly on general principles to do with communications and behaviour change plus evidence from other areas that have been more thoroughly researched than water use and sewer misuse. For some elements, there are some hard and fast rules, but for others, what works best depends on specific circumstances, or we do not yet know what works best.

The example campaigns mentioned in this section were chosen to give ideas about how the good practice principles can be implemented, not because the campaigns are known to be particularly effective in themselves. In many cases they were not evaluated or we were not able to source the evaluation – unless specifically stated. This is distinct from the examples provided in Section 5 which were evaluated and shown to be effective.

Note that for most of the campaign elements discussed in this section, we could not find research/evaluation that robustly tested or demonstrated the value of certain elements, for example a particular motivation. So while it is possible to say that a campaign that uses a particular motivation can be effective, it is not possible conclude that the motivation is the magic ingredient responsible for a campaign's efficacy. However, there are a few examples of research/evaluation which, for example, compare campaigns with and without a particular motivation, or use qualitative feedback to gain insights into how influential people felt a particular motivation was for them.

4.2   Target behaviour

Why does choice of behaviour matter?

The first step in any behaviour change campaign should be careful consideration of what behaviour(s) to promote. Key considerations include:

- **How many?** It is generally advisable to promote a small number of behaviours. Offering many behaviours to choose from might result in people feeling overwhelmed by choice to the point of doing nothing and/or choosing the easiest even though it might have little impact. However, promoting just one target behaviour is risky unless it is likely to be suitable for many people in the target audience.
- **How specific?** Campaigns should clearly tell people what to do (e.g. put fat in a jar in the bin), not just what not to do (e.g. don't put fat down the drain) as the latter leaves them with the sometimes difficult task of working out for themselves what they should be doing. On the other hand, there is a risk that being overly prescriptive (eg promoting four-minute showers) could possibly deter people (eg if they think that four-minute

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showers are unrealistic for them), as discussed in Section 5.9, although so far there seems to be only a little qualitative evidence on this point.

- **Which behaviours?** To achieve maximum bang for buck from a campaign, it makes sense to promote target behaviours that are likely to have most impact, taking into account likely uptake and likely impact per person. The choice of target behaviours is not straightforward, as discussed below.

> Don't just tell people what not to do – be clear what they should do instead. Also don't provide a long list to choose from – instead focus on a few, chosen because they are likely to have high impact and update. To make the task of behaviour change much easier, promote behaviours, products and services that are easy to do and/or attractive.

What is currently done and how well does it work?

How many? How specific?

Water saving campaigns often provide an overly long list of target behaviours, eg the standard list of 'top tips'. Sewer misuse campaigns often tell people what not to do (eg don't pour FOGs down the drain), rather than clearly specifying what to do. However, campaigns are increasingly moving towards good practice.

We did not come across any research comparing campaigns with a different number of target behaviours, a gap that would be useful to fill. However, it is notable that many of effective campaigns, including the case studies, had just one or a few target behaviours. There are also campaigns in which the short list of behaviour is seen as an important component. For example, Queensland's Target 140 campaign focused mainly on promoting a single behaviour. The four-minute shower was chosen because it was easy to do, reduced bills, cost nothing, and was relevant to most people so they could easily join in[11].

Which behaviours?

Broadly, target behaviours fall into the following categories:

- frequent routine behaviour eg binning rather than flushing wipes, taking shorter showers
- occasional maintenance behaviours, eg checking for and fixing leaks
- occasional purchase and installation behaviours, eg buying reusable products instead of single use wipes and sanitary products, fitting a water efficient showerhead
- spreading the word, eg telling others about new water saving behaviours
- citizen action, eg signing petitions to ban wipes

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[11]Creating positive habits in water conservation: the case of the Queensland Water Commission and the Target 140 campaign: University of Southern Queensland Repository (usq.edu.au)

For both water use and sewer misuse, campaigns have mainly focused on frequent routine behaviours. For water use, there have also been some campaigns on occasional purchase/installation behaviours and maintenance behaviours. Campaigns promoting spreading the word and citizen action are unusual, eg Thames21's campaign asking people to write to their MP in support of banning wipes[12].

There is a wide range of behaviours to choose from, particularly for water use, but generally the focus has been on just a few of them, although there are examples of campaigns focusing on innovative behaviours. Examples include:

- **For FOGs disposal**, target behaviours could include: cooking with less oil/fat (reduce), reuse used oil/fat again for cooking or a different purpose (reuse); putting FOGs in a food waste collection where permitted or separate doorstep collection where available (recycle); taking to a household recycling centre or other collection point (recycle) or putting in a bottle or jar and bin – only the latter is commonly mentioned. Target behaviours could also include actions that facilitate these behaviours, eg placing a jar near the sink, fitting a sink strainer, or buying an air fryer – rarely mentioned or promoted for this purpose. Campaigns could talk about oils, fats and food scraps – but food scraps are typically not mentioned in campaigns.
- **For unflushables disposal**, target behaviours could include switching to reusables, switching to plastic free equivalents, reverting to products used in the past (eg toilet paper), or binning rather than flushing – the latter is commonly mentioned although switching to reusable and plastic free equivalents are increasingly mentioned.
- **For water use**, the list of water-using activities is long, covering bathroom (eg bathing, showering, toilet flushing, washing hands), kitchen (eg washing up, water for cooking and drinks), outdoors (eg gardening watering, car washing, cleaning decks) and other behaviours (eg washing clothes, cleaning the house, washing pets). For each of these activities there are many possible target behaviours, ie many ways that water use could be reduced. For example, just looking at showering, target behaviours could include shorter showers, collecting water while waiting for it to run hot, leaving water to run for less time before showering, turning off the water partway through and more. However, the focus of campaigns has almost exclusively been on taking shorter showers.

What are the challenges, debates, and risks?

When choosing target behaviours, there are several criteria to take into account – each is discussed below. This section discusses some of the less obvious criteria that are worth considering. It suggests some possible behaviours that meet the criteria, but these are tentative suggestions, so further research is needed to establish whether they are in fact worth promoting.

What behaviours would people be delighted to do?
While campaigns can take steps to make behaviours more appealing, the task of behaviour change is much easier if the target behaviours are appealing to start with. In

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[12] Taking action against plastic in wet wipes to protect our rivers - Thames21

other words, if people enjoy doing something, it will be easier to persuade them to give it a try and there will be less need to support them to sustain it.

Behaviours are likely to be appealing if they reduce issues that bother, frustrate, or annoy people (address pain points) or build on experiences that people find enjoyable (address pleasure points). For example:

- Procter & Gamble (P&G) identified soaking and scrubbing plates as a common pain point[13]. It developed several products to reduce the need to soak and scrub (thus appealing to consumers), with the added benefit that it enables people to save water.
- People often feel annoyed at having to stand around and wait while their shower warms up to the right temperature, meaning they sometimes walk away and the water runs for longer than it needs before they shower. Showers that turn on when they reach the right temperature are likely to be welcomed (although they are not yet mainstream, and few people are aware of them).

What behaviours would people find almost effortless?

Following a similar line of argument, the smaller the barriers people face to doing a target behaviour, the more likely they are to give it a try and to continue doing it. It makes sense to promote behaviours that take as little effort as possible. For example, the following behaviours seem very low effort:

- switching from buying standard to plastic-free wipes - this is easier than, for example, switching to reusable products that would need washing
- switching to using the small flush on dual-flush toilets - this is easier than, for example, flushing less which requires breaking the habit of flushing each time and for some people has an 'ugh factor'
- switching to eco programmes on washing machines or dishwashers - this is easier than, for example, only running washing machines or dishwashers when full because it can still be done at a convenient time and there is no need to let laundry or dishes build up

However, even with apparently low effort behaviours, people might face barriers that campaigns would need to address. For example:

- switching to plastic-free wipes – difficulty identifying wipes that can be flushed
- switching to using the small flush – difficulty identifying the small flush
- switching to eco programmes – long run time

Should campaigns focus more on occasional behaviours than frequent behaviours?

Some behaviours to reduce water use and sewer misuse are frequent while others are occasional, as discussed above. Examples are shown in the Table 1 overleaf.

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[13] Post | Feed | LinkedIn

Table 1: Example behaviours by frequency

	Example occasional behaviours	Example frequent behaviours
To reduce water use	Fit a water efficient showerhead Fit a water butt Fix a dripping tap	Take shorter showers Don't leave the tap running unnecessarily
To reduce sewer misuse	Get a sink strainer Get a bathroom bin Buy reusable wipes	Scrape food scraps into the bin Bin wipes instead of flushing them

Many of the occasional behaviours have a lasting benefit. Therefore, there is an argument for focusing on occasional behaviours that are long-lasting[14], particularly to make the most of times when people are most willing to make changes, such as during drought.

Should campaigns focus on visible behaviours?

On the whole, water use and FOGs/unflushables disposal happens in private. Focusing on visible behaviours or making behaviours visible has two benefits. First, this will help to shift perceptions of what is normal, not just change individual behaviour. Second, visible behaviours are likely to spread through social diffusion and word of mouth, so amplifying the effect of campaigns.

There are several ways of making water use and FOGs/unflushables disposal visible:

- Promote behaviours/products outside the home that can be seen by neighbours and passers-by, such as doorstep FOGs collections, water butts, and drought tolerant planting. For example, front lawn turf replacement programmes in California which replace water-intensive lawns with more drought-tolerant planting have been shown to shift social norms and prompt people living nearby to change their gardens too[15].
- Promote behaviours/products inside the home that are noticeable to visitors. For example, following a retrofit campaign designed to prompt word of mouth marketing, it was found that bath buoys which are large, colourful and very noticeable, prompted discussions with visitors (unpublished client research). It is possible that eg distinctive bathroom bins for unflushables and jars for FOGs might have a similar effect.
- Offer signs that provide visible evidence of invisible behaviours eg signs used on lawns in the Denver Water case study.

Are certain behaviours 'off-limits'?

Water industry campaigns have tended to avoid promoting certain target behaviours which are seen as 'off-limits', such as showering or flushing the toilet less often. It was

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[14] As discussed by the Behavioural Insights Team in their blog *Will green tech save us or must we all change our behaviour?* (Nov 2021)

[15] Community Based Social Marketing Vol. 1: Case Study Review » California Water Efficiency Partnership (calwep.org)

assumed that people might see them as unhygienic or might feel that campaigns about them are intrusive so might object.

However, it is worth questioning this assumption. Some of these 'off-limits' behaviours are in fact already fairly widespread ie many people are already comfortable with them. For example, a recent survey suggests that two fifths of people do not flush the toilet each time they use it[16].

Rather than treating these target behaviours as off-limits, it is worth considering how to avoid campaigns feeling intrusive. For example, they might feel acceptable if promoted by messengers other than water companies (perhaps this is why sanitary product campaigns tend not to be run by water companies), with humour or using behaviour change techniques that make clear how widespread they are already.

4.3   Target audience

Why focus on specific target audiences?

There is no hard and fast rule about whether targeted or general population campaigns are preferable. To get most bang for buck, it often makes sense to target specific audiences which most need to change i.e. those who have high consumption or are particularly prone to incorrect FOGS/unflushables disposal. However, general population campaigns are useful when, for example, the target behaviour is relevant to a wide range of people (eg four-minute showers or disposing of FOGs in the bin) or when it is not clear who the target audience is/what distinguishes them.

Having identified a target audience, accepted wisdom is that campaigns tailored to them are likely to be more effective. This is because different audiences are likely to respond to different motivations, listen to different messengers, and have different media consumption habits. Even within general population campaigns, tailoring can be helpful to better reach particular sub-groups e.g. young men.

What is currently done and how well does it work?

Targeting – what is done?

Water companies generally run general population campaigns on water use and FOGs disposal. However, campaigns on unflushables are more often targeted, probably because the target audience is more obvious, ie women disposing of sanitary products, parents disposing of wipes. Recently some campaigns have gone beyond the obvious target audiences, eg with wipes campaigns targeted at young men (City to Sea's 'Be a Good A*hole'[17]) and young women (Northumbrian Water's makeup campaign[18]). A

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[16] Panelbase MiniPoll™ : After you have used your toilet at home just for a wee/to urinate, how often do you flush? (May 2022)
[17] Be a good a**hole - City to Sea - Meet our talking a**hole
[18] I choose to Bin the Wipe (nwl.co.uk)

handful of recent water use campaigns have also been more clearly targeted, such as Southern Water's paddling pool infographic[19]. Campaigns run by other messengers are generally targeted at their customers, members, or audience.

Generally campaigns target their audience based on demographics and attitudes and much less often based on behaviours. However, interviewees suggested that more targeting based on behaviour would be worthwhile, following the example of Amazon and other effective retailers. Examples of each approach are summarised in Table 2.

<u>Tailoring – what is done?</u>

Tailoring has been done in various ways, eg through choosing different messages, messengers, and media. Even within general population campaigns, there is sometimes some use of tailoring. For example, Water's Worth Saving has a section focused on gardening[20], to appeal to keen gardeners, as well as general water saving tips designed to appeal to a wide audience.

How well does targeting and tailoring work?

As the case studies show, both general population campaigns (see for example the Denver Water case study) and targeted campaigns (see for example the Unmentionables case study) can be effective. We did not come across any evidence showing, for example, that groups that were little influenced through a general population campaign were influenced more through a targeted and tailored campaign. However, there is some evidence of the need for targeting and tailoring:

- In message testing research, participants sometimes feel that certain messages are not aimed at or relevant for them. For example, when testing messages for use in shorter shower campaigns, an affluent participant commented that when he saw cost saving messages, he assumed they were not intended for him[21].
- Along similar lines, in an evaluation of advice given during a home visit campaign, a few women in a Southeast Asian community mentioned that advice to wash up in a bowl felt culturally inappropriate and not something they would consider[22].
- Several interviewees commented on how important it was to identify through research that young men are a key group of wet wipe users. If they had not found this out before running a campaign, they would have targeted the obvious users, eg parents, which would have missed young men who tend to respond to different messages, tone and messengers.

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[19] Save water in hot weather (southernwater.co.uk)
[20] Gardening - Waters Worth Saving
[21] Unpublished water company research
[22] Unpublished water company research

Table 2: Examples of targeted campaigns

Way of targeting	Examples
Based on demographics	**Parents** Southern Water worked with Mumsnet to inform parents and discuss their questions about disposal of wet wipes.
	Men
	• City to Sea's 'Be a Good A*hole' campaign[23] was designed to appeal to young men who use wipes, through the use of language and humour.
	• South Nevada Water Authority's campaign 'Don't make us ask you again'[24] targeted men who leave the sprinkler running for ages, again using humour, showing them being kicked in the crotch and bitten by dogs.
Based on attitudes, concerns, and interests	**Concerned about bills** In the current cost of living crisis, there is considerable focus on ensuring water bills are affordable. Water saving advice is presented as money saving advice, and provided by messengers who are trusted to help on these issues, such as Which? and Money Saving Expert.
	Interested in wildlife Several environmental and wildlife focused charities, such as the Wildlife Trusts, have provided water saving advice to their members, as way of helping to protect nature[25].
Based on behaviours	Some water companies contact households in areas with frequent blockages to discourage sewer misuse and contact households with unusually high water use to suggest they look for leaks.
	Some water companies and their suppliers contact households based on, for instance, previous products they have ordered to suggest what else they might be interested in.

City to Sea Be a Good A*hole

South Nevada campaign

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[23] Be a good a**hole - City to Sea - Meet our talking a**hole
[24] Nevada ads use humor and a kick in the crotch to sway water-wasting guys - Los Angeles Times (latimes.com)
[25] How to conserve water | The Wildlife Trusts

What are the current challenges, debates, and risks?

How can high water users be influenced?

Interviewees repeatedly mentioned the difficulty of changing the behaviour of high water users. There are several challenges:

- accurately identifying households with high per capita consumption (PCC), partly because occupancy changes, and partly because it is often based on unreliable occupancy data
- not knowing the causes of high water use besides leaks, ie the typical behaviours that underlie it and the reasons for them - however, research is underway to establish this, as it is likely that there are different sub-groups with different high water use behaviours
- Not knowing how to motivate them - affluent high users are seen as particularly challenging because they tend not to be influenced by financial motivations

Unfortunately there is very little good evidence yet on campaigns as to what works with this important target audience. The report points to a few approaches that have been shown to be helpful: social comparison messages highlighting that their water use is unusually high (see Section 4.5), and supply pipe flow restrictors (see Section 4.9).

Are general population campaigns risky?

The main reason for running targeted and tailored campaigns is to increase effectiveness and value for money. It has been suggested that this might also be a safer strategy because there is a risk that some campaigns might risk offending those who are not the target audience. We did not come across any evidence that campaigns on personal behaviours such as sanitary product disposal caused offence. However, risqué humour sometimes did, such as the South Nevada campaign referenced above, as discussed further in the emotions section.

What is the value of children as a target audience?

Many programmes are run in schools, in England and Wales as well as internationally, mainly focusing on reducing water use and sometimes also touching on sewer misuse[26]. Children's behaviour tends not to be problematic and they have little control over several aspects of household water use and FOGS/unflushables disposal. But they are seen as an important target audience because it is often assumed that what is learnt in school stays with children as they grow up, and also influences parents. Generally programmes are not designed primarily to effect long term behaviour change and influence on families, nor have programmes been evaluated to see how long term or widespread the impacts are. However, there have been several recent campaigns that have addressed these challenges, including:

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[26] Schools programmes are a large topic and were reviewed fairly recently Water efficiency education al programmes (waterwise.org.uk) so this review only looked at them briefly.

- City to Sea worked with schools to reach teenage girls, before they have formed problematic sanitary product disposal habits - research suggested that habits formed at this age are likely to persist into adulthood[27]
- Smartwater New Zealand has prepared (and is due to trial shortly) a shorter showering programme - children learn about showering at school, then ask family members to commit to taking shorter showers and place reminders of this commitment, as well as timers in the shower
- Skewb Climate developed a Minecraft game for children to teach them about the water cycle, water resource problems, and efficient use of water - it can be used at school as well as home[28]

- recognise that there is no 'silver bullet' campaign that will work well for all target audiences - instead tailor campaigns to different target audiences, focusing on behaviours, motivations, and messengers that are suited to them
- focus particularly on target audiences with most room for improvement and most openness to change

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4.4   Behaviour change techniques

Why consider a range of behaviour change techniques?

Many techniques can be used for promoting behaviour change. A recent report identified almost 100 (see Table 3 below)[29]. Many of these have proved useful to change other types of behaviours so could potentially be useful for reducing water use and sewer misuse. Many also fit easily into communications campaigns.

Table 3: Behaviour change technique taxonomy

Type of behaviour change techniques	Examples
Goals and planning	setting a goal, making a commitment, planning how to perform a behaviour
Feedback and monitoring	self-monitoring behaviour, receiving informative or evaluative feedback
Social support	joining a group or having a buddy to provide encouragement or practical support with behaviour change
Shaping knowledge	instructing on how to perform the behaviour, carrying out behavioural experiments to try out a new behaviour
Natural consequences	informing about the environmental, social, or health consequences of a behaviour

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[27] Rethink periods - City to Sea - Our free, nationwide schools programme
[28] Minecraft link-up schooling new players in net zero transition - Utility Week
[29] Michie, S., Atkins, L. and West, R., 2014. The behaviour change wheel. *A guide to designing interventions. 1st ed. Great Britain: Silverback Publishing.*

Comparison of behaviour	modelling a behaviour, drawing attention to how a person's behaviour compares to other people's, or providing information about whether others will approve or disapprove of a behaviour
Associations	providing prompts and cues
Repetition and substitution	repeat a target behaviour until it becomes a habit, replace an unwanted behaviour with a target behaviour, set an easy-to-perform task then make it increasingly difficult
Comparison of outcomes	prompt to imagine a future outcome of changed vs unchanged behaviour, compare the pros and cons of changing behaviour
Reward and threat	provide a reward/incentive or punishment
Regulation	conserve mental resources
Antecedents	change the physical environment to facilitate performance of a target behaviour or create barriers to an unwanted behaviour
Identity	frame the behaviour in a way that appeals more; draw attention to discrepancies between current behaviour and self-image
Covert learning	prompt to imagine the negative consequences of an unwanted behaviour or the positive consequences of a target behaviour

What is currently done and how well does it work?

Several behaviour change techniques have been fairly widely used in campaigns to reduce water use and sewer misuse. Many campaigns inform people about the consequences (see Section 4.5). Other behaviour change techniques include:

- making commitments e.g. Unblocktober[30].
- conserving mental resources by providing simple memorable advice eg Sydney Water's wet wipe campaign that told people to only flush pee, poo and paper (a mantra adopted in other campaigns later)
- Modelling a behaviour eg how to videos showing how to fix leaks – see 'Fix a Leak' Week case study
- Providing information about whether others approve or disapprove eg Sydney Water's 'Turn it Off Bob' campaign[31]
- Providing prompts and cues, eg see Water Night case study

Some techniques have been used in ways that seem less than optimal. This is the case with, for instance, commitments. While campaigns sometimes ask people to commit to a new behaviour, these commitments are rarely made public nor followed up, both of which increase impact[32].

Some techniques that have proved useful for changing behaviours in other spheres have very rarely been used to change water use and FOGs/unflushables disposal. For example:

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[30] Unblocktober | A month to Save Our Sewers and Seas
[31] Turn It Off Bob - Sydney Water - YouTube
[32] McKenzie-Mohr, D., 2011. *Fostering Sustainable Behavior: An introduction to community-based social marketing*. New Society Publishers.

- Planning how to perform a behaviour (implementation intentions) helps turn vague intentions into specific plans. This has been shown to support behaviour change in numerous pro-environmental behaviours as well as behaviours in other fields[33].
- Frequent reminders (eg daily or even several times daily) via, for instance, using text messages, have been shown to work well for establishing a range of new habits in other fields, especially health and education. Many people are now familiar with daily reminders from apps, such as health, exercise, language learning. In this vein, Affinity Water ran a very small-scale shorter shower text messaging trial, in which staff volunteers signed up to receive daily reminders for a week, just before the time they normally shower.

What are the challenges, debates, and risks?

Will techniques that work in other areas work for water use and FOGs/unflushables disposal?

It is not yet clear what behaviour change techniques are helpful and under what circumstances. However, it seems reasonable to assume that techniques that have been effective for many other behaviours are likely to work for reducing water use and sewer misuse.

Social influence is very important for changing behaviour. Because water use and FOGs/unflushables disposal mainly take place in private, techniques that use the power of social influence are likely to be particularly important e.g. using social comparisons, social support, and public commitments.

> Make more use of a wide range of techniques that have been shown to be effective for behaviour change, including frequent reminders, helping people make their intentions concrete, and following up on commitments to change.

4.5   Motivation/reason to change behaviour

Why mention motivations/reasons to change behaviour?

People need a reason to change their behaviour, to reduce water use and dispose correctly of FOGs and unflushables, so it is helpful for campaigns to suggest a reason.

There are many possible reasons to choose from. Using powerful and compelling reasons will help to make a campaign more impactful. The water industry's reasons for trying to reduce PCC and sewer misuse tend not to be the most compelling, as discussed below. Some reasons for change (eg social motivations) are effective in many contexts;

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[33] Gollwitzer, P.M. and Sheeran, P., 2006. Implementation intentions and goal achievement: A meta-analysis of effects and processes. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, *38*, pp.69-119.

whereas others appeal to particular people or are only suitable for particular behaviours (eg shorter showers and garden watering).

What is currently done and how well does it work?

<u>What motivations are used?</u>

Most communications campaigns aim to give people a reason to reduce water use and dispose correctly of FOGs and unflushables. A wide range of reasons have been used, including those summarised in Table 4 which aims to give a flavour of activity. Some are used more than others, as discussed.

Table 4: Typical motivations

	Reducing water consumption	Not flushing unflushables	Not putting FOGs down the drain
Conforms to social norms	• use water efficiently if others do	• don't flush unflushables if others don't	• don't dispose of FOGs down the drain if others don't
Help nature or the environment	• low flows in rivers affect environment and wildlife	• plastics affect environment and wildlife	
Help other people	• water for future generations • shorter showers mean fewer family arguments	• be a good neighbour by not blocking drains • don't contribute to noxious fatbergs that can be dangerous for staff to clear	
Save money	• using less water reduces water bills • using less hot water also reduces energy bills	• dealing with blocked drains can be costly • avoid fine for blocking drains • using reusables instead of single use products (e.g. wipes, sanitary products) can cost less in the long term	• dealing with blocked drains can be costly • reusing fat for cooking saves money •
Save time/effort	• some water-saving behaviours save time e.g. using dry shampoo, taking shorter showers, watering the lawn less	• period pants are convenient	
Better for health	• shorter showers and less frequent hair washing can be better for skin/hair	• not using astringent wipes can be better for skin	• cooking with less fat can be better for health

	Reducing water consumption	Not flushing unflushables	Not putting FOGs down the drain
	• shorter showers mean less condensation and mould		
Other impacts	• water is available for other important uses, from agriculture to sport • water efficient gardening can lead to more beautiful gardens • aerated taps feel good • carbon savings		• convert waste cooking oil into biofuels • less food waste in drains attracts fewer rats

A few motivations tend to **dominate** water company communications: protecting precious water resources and reducing water bills (relevant where people are metered); more responsible disposal of unflushables and FOGs to reduce sewer blockages and fatbergs. However, other messengers often use other motivations and more recently the water companies have increasingly done so. These include:

* **Saving money on energy bills (water use only):** This motivation has been used for some years but has been a particular focus recently, with the high cost of energy bills. Many campaigns have used it in the winter of 2022-2023, including those run by water companies, consumer organisations, and organisations providing energy saving advice.

> With the current concern about energy bills, **focusing on energy savings** by using less hot water is likely to resonate. This could be done by working with the range of organisations that provide energy saving advice to ensure that cutting back on hot water use is routinely included in their advice. Research is needed to find the best way of conveying this important but as yet unfamiliar message.

* **Impact on nature and the environment:** Several sewer misuse campaigns highlight the impact of plastic unflushables on wildlife and the environment eg campaigns run by environmental organisations like the Marine Conservation Society (MCS), Natracare's 'It's time to Sea Red'[34] and Scottish Water's 'Nature Calls'[35]. Likewise, some campaigns to reduce water consumption make the link between water use and wildlife/the environment, for example The Rivers Trust's 'River Revival' campaign[36], and Colorado River District's 'It's the same water: conserve it' campaign (below).
* **Social motivations**: This includes showing people that others are taking desirable actions by using statistics to convey social norms (discussed further below); emphasising that "If we all save a little, together we save a lot" (Watercare Auckland);

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[34] Plastic Free Periods - It's time to Sea Red - YouTube
[35] Nature Calls – Bin the wipes - YouTube
[36] 5 Easy Ways to Revive Your River: Water saving at… | The Rivers Trust

asking people to share steps they are taking or display water saving messages (eg Denver Water). It also includes encouraging people to take action to care for others, eg mentioning the dangers to staff who clear away fatbergs (Thames Water/Museum of London's Fatberg exhibition)[37] and encouraging customers to be a good neighbour by not blocking pipes (Thames Water).

Colorado River District campaign poster

The following motivations have been **used but only in a handful of campaigns:**

- **Saving money, besides on water and energy bills,** eg Hubbub's TapChat highlights longer lives for clothes[38] and Women's Environmental Network 'enviromenstrual' campaign[39] explains that it is possible to save money in the long term by switching to reusable sanitary products, although the up-front costs are higher.
- **Saving time (water use)** Saving water is often seen as effortful and time-consuming but Hubbub's TapChat points out that it can take less effort and save time, eg by doing the laundry less often. Procter and Gamble has developed water saving products that make chores easier, eg avoiding the need to soak dishes. It suggests that the most effective way to promote these products, and thereby reduce water use, is by emphasising that they solve everyday problems, rather than by explaining that they save water.
- **Fines (unflushables)** Northumbrian Water's 'Bin the Wipe' campaign threatens people with fines for flushing wet wipes that cause blockages[40].
- **Conversion of FOGs to biofuel (FOGs)** Yorkshire Water's Fats to Fuels campaign tries to convey the value of used cooking oil being converted to biofuels by showing how many cups of tea could be boiled using the electricity generated.
- **Rats (FOGs)** Rats play a minor role in South West Water's Think Sink campaign leaflet which shows just a small pair of ears in a sewer[41].
- **Carbon savings** Triton's shower calculator mentions carbon impacts, as well as water and energy costs[42].

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[37] Fatberg! Exhibiting the Monster of Whitechapel | Museum of London
[38] Busy Bee water saving tips | Hubbub Foundation
[39] Environmenstrual - Wen
[40] Bin the Wipe (nwl.co.uk)
[41] Think Sink! (southwestwater.co.uk)
[42] Electric Efficiency - Save Money, Water, Energy (tritonshowers.co.uk)

Some campaigns use several motivations, rather than just focusing on one. For example, Affinity Water's 'SOS'[43] began with a focus on 'save our streams' ie environmental motivations, and has been expanded to mention saving money too, in order to engage a wider range of customers.

How well do these motivations work?

As with the other elements, there is little research available comparing the effect of different motivations used in water use and sewer misuse campaigns. So it is not yet clear which are most effective and how they should be used for best effect. However, there are some useful insights about the effectiveness of different motivations.

Research shows that environmental problems are often not seen as personal, imminent or real[44]. This has been found not just with drought but with a range of environmental problems such as climate change. While focusing on avoiding these problems can have some effect on behaviour change, it is limited. So focusing mainly on protecting water resources and avoiding major sewer blockages/fatbergs is unlikely to achieve the large-scale behaviour change needed to solve the problems. These motivations should therefore not be relied on and alternatives should be considered, as the water sector is increasingly aware[45].

While there is no single 'magic bullet', social motivations are generally very powerful. This is why they are highlighted as one of the central foundations of behaviour change in the Behavioural Insights Team's 'EAST' approach[46]. However, their impact is often underestimated by organisations creating campaigns. Also social norms messages tend not to be used correctly in water use and sewer misuse campaigns so are likely to backfire – a serious problem, as discussed below. Other approaches to using social influence, such as campaigns that encourage word of mouth, are only occasionally used – see the Unmentionables case study. Various social motivations, eg reducing family arguments over long showers, have barely been used at all as far as we are aware, and research would be useful to find out whether they are effective.

Tapping into general pain and pleasure points, ie matters that worry or annoy people or experiences they find enjoyable, is likely to be particularly effective – a widely recognised behaviour change principle. Examples of this include:

- This winter, water companies report that saving energy and reducing energy bills was a powerful motivation for cutting hot water use eg shower times, although messages using different motivations were not compared directly.
- Saving time and effort is important to many people. For example, the 'Skip a Week' garden watering campaign in South West Florida drew attention to the convenience

[43] Stream Experience (affinitywater.co.uk)
[44] Why People Aren't Motivated to Address Climate Change (hbr.org)
[45] For example, a sprint at Northumbrian Water's Innovation Festival in 2022 found that framing water saving in the context of other benefits to be more effective.
[46] EAST: Four Simple Ways to Apply Behavioural Insights | The Behavioural Insights Team (bi.team)

and time-saving of watering the garden less often, with campaign posters showing people relaxing in the garden. Almost 20% more survey participants watered every other week after the campaign, of course not entirely attributable to the focus on time-saving benefits[47].

Southwest Florida 'Skip a Week' garden watering campaign

What are the challenges, debates, and risks?

How should social norms be used in communications?

Social norms messages, ie telling people that a target behaviour is widespread or widely supported, are effective in many contexts, including water use. For example:

- giving feedback that a household's water use is higher than similar households has been shown to reduce consumption, particularly for high water users[48;49]
- positive feedback is sometimes needed for households using less than average, so that they are not tempted to start using more
- messages about how many people turn off the tap while brushing teeth were effective at increasing the number who do this behaviour in Anglian's experiment with Colgate[50]

Unfortunately, messages of this type are often used incorrectly in water- and sewer-related communications. Communications often report that the undesirable behaviour (eg incorrect disposal of wipes or wasteful water use) is widespread. Research in other contexts has shown that messages like this tend to backfire and actually encourage more of the undesirable behaviour[51;52]. This happens because people believe that if others are

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[47] Community Based Social Marketing Vol. 1: Case Study Review » California Water Efficiency Partnership (calwep.org)

[48] Schultz, W., Javey, S. and Sorokina, A., 2019. Social comparison as a tool to promote residential water conservation. *Frontiers in Water*, *1*, p.2-9;

[49] Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) et al; *Water Conservation Pilot Campaign: Lawn Watering Reduction* (2018).

[50] Seger, C., Bogelein, S., Meleady, R., Lede, E., Sexton, N., Brown, A., Castelvecchi, S., Davies, W. and Barnett, P., 2019. Turn off the Tap: Behavioural messages increase water efficiency during toothbrushing. *Institute of Water Journal*, (3), pp.42-47.

[51] McKenzie-Mohr, D., 2011. *Fostering Sustainable Behavior: An introduction to community-based social marketing*. New Society Publishers.

[52] How Can Governments and Businesses Avoid the 'Big Mistake?' - Behavioral Scientist

doing it, it must be normal, acceptable, and therefore fine for them to do. It is essential that this does not happen in water use and sewer misuse campaigns.

So what should a campaign say if a target behaviour is not widespread? It would be advisable to focus on a related positive matter with majority support e.g. how many people wish to avoid blocked drains or how many people who tried the target behaviour in a trial liked it. What should a campaign say if an area's water use is higher than other areas? Again focus on a related positive issue, eg if water consumption has reduced recently, mention this. While it seems likely that such approaches would work, it might be worth testing them in a small way before roll-out.

Individual vs collective motivations – which works better?

Both collective and individual motivations have been used to good effect – see, for example, the [Auckland drought campaign](#) that used collective motivations and the [Folkestone and Dover retrofit campaign](#) that used personal motivations. Research would be helpful to understand whether one is more powerful than other, and under what circumstances each is effective.

Might motivations that have worked for promoting other pro-environmental behaviours work for water use and sewer misuse?

It might prove effective to tap into motivations that have worked for promoting other types of behaviour change, and research on this would be worthwhile. For example:

- The fear of rats was behind a highly successful food waste collection on the Nightingale Estate in London. The estate had a severe problem with rats caused by food waste stuck in rubbish chutes. Over 80% of residents participated in the food waste collection (well above typical participation levels) because it promised to solve the rat problem. It seems possible that reducing rat problems could be a potent motivation for not putting FOGs down the drain, particularly in areas where rats have been a seriously problem recently.
- An interviewee mentioned that in food-related campaigns, a focus on the pleasure of food has been effective at changing behaviour. We understand that a new FOGs campaign is currently being considered, highlighting that reusing fat for cooking tastes good.

What can be done to win 'hearts and minds'?

Interviewees were keen to find ways of conveying the underlying reason for using less water in ways that are meaningful to people. They hoped that, if communicated well, the messages could not just 'win hearts and minds' but ultimately change behaviour. They also suggested that even if it had limited impact on behaviour change, it is right to keep people informed.

Serious water shortages tend to be seen as a problem in the distant future or as affecting other parts of the world. So 'winning hearts and minds' boils down to finding ways to make drought and its consequences feel important, personal, imminent, real, and

believable, while at the same time avoiding alarming people in a way that the messages backfire (see the discussion about [fear-based messages](#)).

Several approaches have been tried when discussing water resources and in other contexts; research is now needed to understand which work. Approaches tried in campaigns on water use include:

- Showing impacts that might not normally be associated with water shortages. For example, Manchester City and Xylem's 'The End of Football' film emphasises that water scarcity could have a major impact on something people love dearly (football) within a generation[53].
- Drawing attention to local problems, such as low levels in reservoirs or rivers (eg South West Water's recent Colliford reservoir campaign[54]).
- Using experiential approaches, such as having people visit to engage with the environment and see the problems for themselves (eg Affinity Water's SOS campaign[55]).
- Drawing on approaches used for other environmental issues, interviewees suggested that it would be helpful to have a documentary explaining and showing problems around water resources, along the lines of Blue Planet and Seaspiracy. It has also been suggested that naming rivers that are affected by drought might increase concern and willingness to reduce water use, in the same way that people are more willing to help a single person in distress than a larger group (the 'identifiable victim' effect)[56].

However, it is worth bearing in mind that it is possible to substantially reduce water use (and also sewer misuse) without 'winning hearts and minds'. There are many other reasons to change behaviour that have been used with success, as discussed above.

	• Don't focus on reasons for taking action that seem distant and impersonal (eg demand outstripping supply in the future). Instead give reasons for taking action that feel immediate, personal, and important including addressing important pain points, ie issues that ordinarily bother or concern people. • Don't suggest that many people are wasting water and disposing of FOGs/unflushables incorrectly. This is likely to backfire, suggesting this is acceptable and normal, and encouraging more people to do the same. Instead emphasise that many people do, support, and enjoy behaviours and products that reduce water consumption and sewer misuse. Social norms messages when used in this way have the potential to be very powerful.

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[53] [Manchester City and Xylem present: The End Of Football - YouTube](#)
[54] [Customers in Cornwall help Colliford hit 30% capacity (southwestwater.co.uk)](#)
[55] [Stream Experience (affinitywater.co.uk)](#)
[56] Behavioural Insights Team and Accent (2020) *In helping customers consume less water, what works?* A review of solutions from the water and other industries for South East Water and Southern Water.

4.6   Message tone/emotion

Why use emotion?

Using emotion in campaigns, rather than presenting flat factual information, can have many benefits, both for helping to reach/engage people and for changing behaviour. The main benefits include the following:

- **paying attention -** adding emotion can help ensure that people pay attention to messages that might otherwise be dull or overly familiar
- **boosting acceptability-** positive emotions, such as humour, can soften difficult messages
- **shifting perspective -** for example, emotions can encourage people to look at their water use and FOGs/unflushables differently, in a way that encourages them to change it
- **increasing word of mouth -** people are more likely to share messages that make them feel, for example, surprise and awe

However, there are also risks associated with using certain emotions. Below, we discuss how best to avoid emotion in campaigns backfiring in these ways.

What is currently done and how well does it work?

It has recently been suggested that emotion is very much underused in campaigns promoting sustainable behaviours. There certainly are a large number of water use and sewer misuse campaigns that have not used it. However, a considerable number have used emotions, both positive (including gratitude, awe, surprise, humour) and negative (including fear, guilt, threat and disapproval), sometimes on their own and sometimes in combination.

Some emotions are used more than others. For example:

- Water company communications about water use are increasingly focusing on feel-good emotions, such as gratitude and joy (eg Anglian's 'Love Every Drop', and Affinity Water's 'Save Our Streams'), and less on negative emotions, such as fear and disapproval.
- In contrast to water company communications, media coverage about both water resources and pollution is overwhelmingly negative and fear-based. For example, during the 2022 drought, numerous articles focused on water lost through leakage, while far fewer discussed action being taken by water companies and individuals to address the problems. This widespread use of fear is potentially problematic, as discussed below.
- Surprise and awe are used only a little. However, campaigns that give a feel for the size of fatbergs have surprised and captured the imagination, perhaps explaining why there was so much media coverage of these stories.

Emotions have been used in ways that could result in a variety of effects. Note that we were not able to find evaluations for most of these campaigns so cannot confirm what impact emotion had on the audience. Some of the potential impacts of using emotion include:

- **Paying attention** Within one month, over 3 million people watched Yorkshire Tea's Tiny Kettle video repeating the well-known and potentially dull advice to only boil enough water for a cup of tea[57].
- **Boosting acceptability of difficult messages** Sydney Water have a comedian calling out bad behaviour and telling people to turn off water in in their 'Turn it off Bob' video series.[58]
- **Shifting perspective** Humour has been used to help people to see some of their ordinary habits as unnecessary, eg Denver Water's campaign encouraging people to water their lawn for less time; and Sydney Water's 'Many Ways to Save' series[59]. Awe has been used to help them see the value in something they ordinarily take for granted, eg Conservation International's 'I am Water' video[60]. Pride has been used to help make mundane everyday actions feel important and worthwhile, eg WaterCare Auckland's superhero posters. Fear has been used to help people take problems more seriously, eg Manchester City/Xylem's End of Football video[61].

What are the challenges, debates, and risks?

Should fear be used?

When faced with the frightening prospect of, for instance, imminently running short of water, people can feel hopeless and see little point in taking action. Fear-based campaigns can also exacerbate climate anxiety, already a serious/widespread problem.

However, there is evidence that fear can be effective at changing behaviour under certain circumstances, for example with a risk that is real and imminent. For example, in Cape Town there is evidence of a substantial reduction in water use that previous communications had not achieved when 'day zero' warnings were used[62].

To avoid fear-based campaigns backfiring and leading to inaction, guidelines suggest making clear what effective actions people can take to help alleviate the threat.

Should humour be used?

There are many campaigns on water use and sewer misuse that use humour, and a growing body of evidence that they can work well and have many benefits[63]. Hubbub

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[57] LOOK! A TINY KETTLE! - YouTube
[58] Turn it off Bob - YouTube
[59] Water Efficient Puppy - YouTube
[60] Nature Is Speaking – Penélope Cruz is Water | Conservation International (CI) - YouTube
[61] Manchester City and Xylem present: The End Of Football - YouTube
[62] Tools of Change - Case Studies
[63] Borden, D.S. and Suggs, L.S., 2019. Strategically leveraging humor in social marketing campaigns. *Social Marketing Quarterly*, *25*(3), pp.193-208.

reports that by turning what might otherwise be a dull water use survey into a fun 'personality quiz'[64], there was a long queue at a university freshers' fair to have a go. See also the case study on Denver Water's Use Only What You Need campaign.

However, funny campaigns can sometimes viewed as entertainment, rather than being taken seriously enough to change behaviour. They can also cause offence.

To help ensure efficacy of campaigns and avoid them backfiring, it is therefore important to use humour with care and test communications material thoroughly before launch.

Should threats and disapproval be used?

There is a risk that a threatening/disapproving tone can alienate people, making them less inclined to pay attention or take action as requested. As a result, water companies are making less use of this tone.

One recent exception is the use of authoritative and threatening tone in enforcement type messages. Northumbrian Water's recent 'Bin the Wipe' found that letters using this tone were very effective at reducing flushing of wipes. Northumbrian Water is now considering whether a similar tone might be effective when contacting customers in the top 5% of PCC to offer a home visit, although there is no actual threat of enforcement or fine. However, it is not yet clear whether tone alone will be effective without the threat of a fine, and whether customers might object. This approach will need to be piloted in a small way to start with.

What is the value of surprise and curiosity?

There seem to be many opportunities to surprise people, such as shocking statistics about the current state of the water environment[65], the size of fatbergs, the amount of water lost through leaky loos. Other less obvious examples include water companies offering unexpected products and services.

Surprise need not relate to the message itself. For example, a highly successful campaign, 'Drop the Dot', was run in Jordan[66]. This campaign created interest in the 'teaser' phase, by posting a slogan which read 'Don't underestimate the value of the drop' but without the diacritic marks on billboards and social media. Many organisations posted it too, and at the same time removed the diacritic marks from their names. This aroused a great deal of curiosity and discussion, and led to the hashtag trending on Twitter. After three days the main

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[64] What type of water user are you? Take the #TapChat quiz and find out! (riddle.com)
[65] Public views on the water environment - CCW
[66] Social Media for Social Good: Raising Awareness of Jordan's Water Crisis | by USAID Water Team | Global Waters | Medium

campaign was launched, explaining Jordan's serious water shortage. Having got people's attention through the teaser, they paid attention to and learnt about this potentially dry subject.

> Fear-inducing articles dominate the media coverage of water resource and sewage issues. This could lead to a sense of hopelessness which in turn could lead to inaction. It is essential to find some way of giving people a sense of what they can do as well as explaining what the water sector and others are doing to address these serious problems.

4.7 Providing information

Why provide information?

Several knowledge gaps and misconceptions about water use[67] and disposal of FOGs and unflushables can act as barriers to behaviour change. Some examples are summarised in the table below. They include not knowing what action to take or how to do it, or thinking that there is no need to take action as current behaviours are not problematic. Addressing these barriers by raising awareness and addressing misconceptions can reduce water use and sewer misuse.

What is currently done and how well does it work?

<u>What information is currently provided?</u>

There have been campaigns that focus on addressing these knowledge gaps and misconceptions, such as those in the table below. There is evidence that providing specific information can help to change behaviour.

For example:

- Research to inform 'Skip a Week' garden watering campaign[68] in southwest Florida (see also Section 4.5) identified that people believed that lawns would die if they limited how much they watered. This misconception was addressed in the campaign, and beliefs and behaviour changed as a result.
- Similarly, research to inform Queensland's Target 140 campaign identified several misconceptions, including not realising that water supply levels were critical. This was addressed using images of dry reservoirs and daily updates on reservoir levels as part of daily weather reports.[69]

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[67] See for example Water UK urges public to add 'saving water' to New Year's resolutions, as vast majority of Brits have no idea how much water they are using | Water UK

[68] Community Based Social Marketing Vol. 1: Case Study Review » California Water Efficiency Partnership (calwep.org)

[69] Creating positive habits in water conservation: the case of the Queensland Water Commission and the Target 140 campaign : University of Southern Queensland Repository (usq.edu.au)

However, typically information campaigns are not clearly focused on specific information needs. Campaigns on water use often aims to educate or increase water literacy, for example giving a long list of activities in the home and saying how much water they use, rather than highlighting the main uses of water. In contrast, campaigns on sewer misuse often give too little information, for example not explaining that washing up liquid and hot water do not stop FOGs from building up, or not explaining how small sewers actually are (as shown in Table 5b below).

Table 5a: Example knowledge gaps and misconceptions about water use

Knowledge gap and misconception	Example campaign
Not aware of some important sources of water waste e.g. leaky loos	Fix-a-leak week in the USA gives information about the prevalence and amount of water lost from various types of leak.
Not aware of what uses most water in the home (e.g. not aware how much water toilets use) so do not know where to focus efforts	Auckland drought campaign provided this information.
Not aware of how much energy is used in hot water consumption, so do not see cutting back on hot water as a way to save energy	NEA gives information showing that an electric shower uses a lot more energy per minute than, for example, a fan heater, kettle, or oven[70]
Do not know how to save water, besides the handful of frequently mentioned 'top tips'	Water's Worth Saving[71] gives a wide range of gardening tips to enable people to keep their garden looking good even during dry weather
Do not understand why there is a need to save water, except when clearly in drought	Several UK water companies have been trying new ways of communicating about these issues during winter 2022/2023.
Do not understand how water can run short because of the water cycle	Many water company campaigns explain about the role of the water cycle.
Believe shortages are mainly due to leakage or supply side issues	Many water company campaigns explain that the problem is partly due to demand side issues.

Table 5b: Example knowledge gaps and misconceptions about FOGs and unflushables

Knowledge gap and misconception	Example campaign
Do not understand even small amounts of FOG disposed of makes a difference, particularly because they believe sewers are very large	Southern Water produced a leaflet containing a cut-out showing the actual size of most sewers, to convey that they are smaller than people generally imagine.
Do not know what should not be flushed	The MCS/Natracare[72] campaign draws attention to the problems of flushing sanitary products, an issue which has been much less addressed than disposal of wipes.

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[70] Electricity-Consumption-Around-the-Home.pdf (nea.org.uk)
[71] Water UK; Water's Worth Saving campaign (2020)
[72] Plastic Free Periods - It's time to Sea Red - YouTube

Believe that putting FOGs down the drain is fine with hot water & washing up liquid	Anglian Water's Lottie's Vlog explains that using washing up liquid and hot water does not solve the problems associated with pouring fat down the sink[73].
Do not understand the difference between 'fine to flush' and 'flushable'	Several campaigns explain the difference between 'fine to flush' and 'flushable' wipes.

Information is also sometimes provided in ways that are far from ideal:

- it is presented in ways that are unlikely to engage people and change their behaviour eg communications are sometimes dry and information heavy, and they come from sources that might not be trusted or listened to
- information is provided without any support for actions so that people know what to do but might not be willing or able to act
- it sometimes does not come from sources that are trusted and listened to or in formats that are more engaging and persuasive (e.g. stories not just facts)

However, there are also examples of good practice, such as the following:

- Which? is seen as a trustworthy source of advice on consumer issues, on the side of consumers with no vested interests. They have a wide reach, eg at the end of June 2022 they had 750,000 subscribers to their newsletters, and during 2021/2022 they had 3.2 million views to their sustainability hub. Which? provides a range of information that could support households to reduce their water consumption, including clear advice on whether to wash up by hand or in a dishwasher; information about what dishwasher cycles mean including advice on using the eco-cycle; dishwasher reviews which could support people to choose a more efficient appliance; and advice on how to choose a water efficient showerhead[74].

Which? research reveals how little water dishwashers use compared to hand washing

Our tests show even the least water-efficient dishwasher still only uses half the amount of water compared to washing by hand

Our in-depth testing has found that dishwashers are, on average, four times more water efficient than washing by hand per place setting.

- During the most recent drought, Sydney Water agreed that weather presenters would discuss water resources during their forecasts at the end of news bulletins. They had a wide reach and an audience that were already paying attention. In a weekly segment, they talked about reservoir levels (for example, highlighting how low they were and whether they had dropped in the last week) and behaviours (e. reminding people what restrictions covered or encouraging them to take a four-minute shower), typically in just 10-15 seconds. This continued for 18 months and only stopped when reservoirs were full.

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[73] Lesson 8 - Lottie's vlog - YouTube
[74] How to save water around the home - Which? News, Which? research reveals how little water dishwashers use compared to hand-washing - Which? News, Dishwasher programs explained - Which?, Dishwasher Reviews | Compare Dishwashers - Which?, Updating Bathrooms on a Budget - Which?, Eco Shower Heads Buying Guide - Which?

What are the challenges, debates, and risks?

There is considerable debate around the value of campaigns that centre around providing information. The key issues are summarised below. They highlight important pitfalls and offer pointers for how to avoid them.

<u>Is giving information helpful? Why do information-intensive campaigns often fail?</u>

Campaigns on sustainable behaviours have traditionally focused on giving information. Such campaigns have been shown to have limited impact on behaviour[75]. There are many reasons for this lack of impact, such as not believing the information, or not being willing or able to act on it. So it is often stated that giving information alone is not enough to change behaviour.

But specific information in specific circumstances can help change behaviour as the examples above illustrate. Whether information is helpful depends on three factors: whether people know it already (knowledge differs a great deal); whether not knowing is acting as a barrier to behaviour change; and whether they notice, understand, and believe it (which depends partly on how information is given, how and by whom).

It is important to be aware that relying mainly on information-intensive campaigns is risky. However, giving the right information, under the right circumstances, in the right way can change behaviour.

<u>What information do people want?</u>

To ensure that people take an interest in information and act on it, it helps to give them information that is actually of interest to them. They are likely to welcome information that answers their questions (eg which uses more water – washing up by hand or in a dishwasher?) or helps solve problems they face (eg what can they do to reduce their energy bills; what can they do to keep their lawn and garden looking good during temporary use bans). They are likely to be less interested in information when it is not clearly relevant or useful to them, except out of curiosity and/or if presented in an engaging way, eg through weather presenters or as part of a documentary.

This is linked to timing and moments of change (eg moving house or getting a water meter) and is discussed further in <u>Section 4.11</u>.

There is also evidence that people want to know about serious problems, such as the predicted water supply deficit. For example, in research for CCW they were surprised not to have been informed about how serious the situation was[76]. As several interviewees commented, it is ethical to give people a clear understanding of problems.

<u>Can giving information be unhelpful or counterproductive?</u>

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[75] McKenzie-Mohr, D., 2011. *Fostering Sustainable Behavior: An introduction to community-based social marketing.* New Society Publishers.
[76] Saving Water: Helping customers see the bigger picture - CCW

Giving information can be counterproductive in several ways:

- **Providing too much information:** Information overload might lead people to ignore it all or might make it difficult for them to spot the nuggets that have the potential to change their behaviour. For example, people often comment that they are overwhelmed by information so tend to ignore the leaflets that come with their water bills.
- **Giving information that feels unfair or unreasonable:** Some information can put people's backs up, for instance, finding out about leakage when being asked to save water. Conversely giving information about what water companies are doing to protect water resources is likely to be helpful, by creating a feeling of reciprocity[77].
- **Telling people there is a problem without giving them help to address it:** For example, learning how much water toilets use can be frustrating or disheartening if people are not also told how they can reduce it[78]. It could be argued that it is not only ineffective but actually unethical to draw people's attention to a problem without helping them solve it.

> Go further than just highlighting problems and causes by addressing barriers to action as well, eg through myth busting and positive social norming.

4.8   Media/format

Why does media/format matter?

Media/format influences reach and impact of campaigns in several ways. First, people are simply more likely to pay attention to some formats than others. For example, they might engage with dull or familiar messages if the format/media catches their interest. Second, some formats engage people more deeply or for longer which can help them understand and absorb complex messages. Third, some formats encourage discussion, so reach can be amplified through word of mouth and social norms can be changed as well as individual behaviour.

What is currently done and how well does it work?

What media/formats are widely used?

Most campaigns use fairly standard media and formats. Posters, videos and social media are widely used. Water companies also routinely use a mixture of letter (including sometimes the outside of envelopes), email, SMS, and postcards to their customers.

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[77] Behavioural Insights Team and Accent (2020) In helping customers consume less water, what works? A review of solutions from the water and other industries for South East Water and Southern Water.
[78] Unpublished water company research.

Interviewees talked about the need to fit the format to audience (for example, preference for emails and letters is related to age); and circumstances (for example, neighbourhood posters had more impact during recent lockdowns, while people were walking more than usual).

Interviewees emphasised the importance of showing, not just telling. In line with this, most campaigns use visuals, not just text. Interviewees also emphasised the value of stories compared to facts or statistics. Some campaigns followed this recommendation, eg Sydney Water asked customers to share stories about how much it had cost them to deal with blockages caused by wipes, as part of their wipes campaign. However, stories are not widely used and there would be value in using them more.

<u>What more unusual media/formats are used?</u>

A range of imaginative campaigns have been run using more unusual media/formats, such as those listed below:

- **Surprising, unusual and eye-catching formats** designed to make people take notice of and remember potentially dull messages. For example, water-filled suitcases on an airport luggage reclaim in the Balearics, to draw attention to low rainfall in this location[79]; Affinity Water had a well-known comedian telling chalk-stream related jokes while standing in a chalk stream[80] and a chalk artist drawing on pavements; and City to Sea had people sitting on toilets in public to engage people in conversations about wet wipe disposal.

- **Games designed to keep people engaged** long enough and deeply enough to understand and absorb sometimes complex messages, and encourage discussions. This includes completely new games, such as Anglian Water's 'Unmentionables' game designed to be played by groups of women to learn about and discuss disposal of sanitary products. It also includes existing games adapted to include water-related material, for example, a Minecraft game to help children learn about the water cycle and how much water different activities at home use[81].
- **Entertainment and leisure learning**, to engage people with the issues outside the hurly burly of everyday life, where they have time and interest to stop and think. For example, the Museum of London's fatberg exhibition; Channel 4's documentary on

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[79] Govern Illes Balears; Can a suitcase make you think? (2019)
[80] Sandi Toksvig performs comedy in a river: Stand up for Our Streams - YouTube
[81] Minecraft link-up schooling new players in net zero transition - Utility Week

fatbergs and sewers; and several US campaigns that include gardening courses that focus on saving water.

- **Experiential campaigns** to enable people to see the problems with their own eyes and/or try the solutions for themselves. For example, several environmental organisations, including Surfers Against Sewage and Thames 21, organised beach or river cleans which inevitably involved picking up many flushed plastic products. Water Conservancy in Australia runs Water Night, an evening during which people are encouraged to use water as little as possible, to give them a sense of how much they ordinarily use and to have an opportunity to focus on their water use and try using less. Unblocktober uses a demonstration showing that wet wipes do not break down, as part of their schools programme[82]. CCW has developed 'Walking with Water', providing walking routes to help put people in contact with the water environment and make the connection with the water they use[83].
- **Reminders attached to products** to ensure that the message is present where the target behaviours take place. For example, WaterCare Auckland had four-minute shower reminders placed on shampoo bottles, Yara Valley had a reminder about fatbergs on toilet paper wrappers, and several English water companies have provided tea towels and fridge magnets, to help get water saving messages into homes.

None of these innovative approaches was widely used. In some cases, this was probably beneficial as surprise/novelty had value in itself, making people take more notice and promoting word of mouth. But other approaches could be more widely used. For instance, interviewees suggested that more TV programmes on the issues would be valuable, for example a documentary on water resources, and TV chefs talking about correct FOGs disposal.

How well do they work?

Many of the campaigns discussed above were not evaluated or evaluations were not available. However, evaluations were available for the 'Unmentionables' Game and Water Night and showed that these unusual formats can have wide reach and impressive impact. There was also less formal evidence for the value of other unusual formats. For example:

- the Skewb team who trialled the Minecraft game with children reported that having finished the trial session, the children asked if they could please continue playing[84]
- visitor numbers for the Museum of London increased while its Fatberg exhibition was on display[85]

What are the challenges, debates, and risks?

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[82] Unblocktober | A month to Save Our Sewers and Seas
[83] Walking with water
[84] Minecraft link-up schooling new players in net zero transition - Utility Week
[85] Fatberg boosts museum numbers - BBC News

Just entertainment?

Echoing the debate about the use of humour (see above in above in Section 4.6), it has been argued that games and TV shows can make the issues fun and interesting but might just be viewed as entertainment rather than changing behaviour. In addition, these ordinarily fun media/formats might become boring when addressing issues so they might not have wide appeal.

While these arguments might be true in some cases, there is some evidence to the contrary. For example, as discussed above there was clear evidence from the Unmentionables game that behaviour change is possible through playing a game (see case study) and through the Minecraft game that it is still very enjoyable when discussing these issues[86]. Interviewees also pointed to the influence of TV programmes, such as Blue Planet on concern about plastics, as evidence of the power of entertainment. There is considerable interest in using TV and films to influence attitudes on related issues such as climate change[87].

What is needed to achieve wide reach?

With several of the unusual formats, their reach went beyond the individuals who took part in an event. For example, Thames Water/Museum of London's fatberg exhibition generated a great deal of press coverage in this country and internationally, and Affinity Water used clips of the comedian telling chalk-stream related jokes on Facebook throughout the following summer. With some of the unusual formats, particularly the experiential campaigns, it is likely that they appealed mainly to people who are already fairly interested in the issues. So thought is needed about how to engage a wider audience. Interviewees suggested perhaps combining them with leisure activities with wider appeal, for instance combining a litter pick with a riverside nature walk.

What happens when the novelty wears off?

For innovative formats, part of their value is their novelty, so they might lose value when their novelty wears off. For standard formats, eg photos and text with shock value, it is also possible that their impact will reduce when used a lot but we did not come across any evidence on this issue.

- Don't rely on statistics and facts. Instead make more use of real stories and examples, to make the issues more engaging, memorable and real to them, eg around how much leaky loos cost or how much it costs to deal with sewer blockages.
- Use unusual and eye-catching media and formats to bring potentially dull and familiar messages to people's attention, and to engage people for longer and in ways that support them to change their

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[86] Minecraft link-up schooling new players in net zero transition - Utility Week
[87] Climate Culture Entertainment Lab – Rare

> behaviour. This includes using eye-catching events, absorbing games, and opportunities to try out behaviours.

4.9   Other interventions alongside communications

Why are other interventions needed as well as communications?

Using other behaviour change interventions in campaigns alongside communications has two main benefits over using communications alone:

- there is a limit to how much communications can reduce barriers and motivate people and, therefore, a limit to how much behaviour change can be achieved through them alone - other interventions can be used to reduce the barriers or increase motivations further
- other interventions can attract attention, so that people take more notice of a communications campaign

Of course communications can also help get the most out of the other interventions eg increasing uptake and use of products or services (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Combined impact of communications and interventions
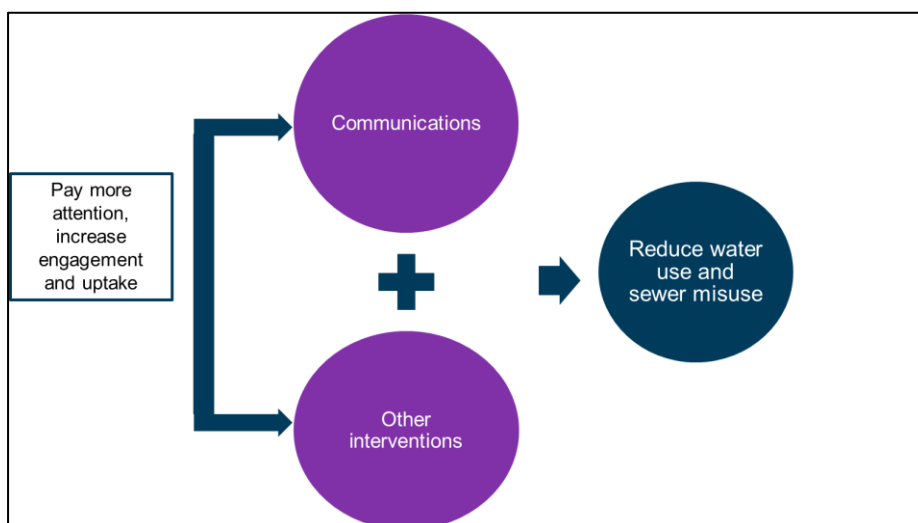
> Use other interventions alongside communications to draw attention to messages that might otherwise be of little interest, increase motivation and reduce barriers.

What is currently done and how well does it work?

<u>What is currently done?</u>

Campaigns often include both communications and other behaviour change interventions. A range of other interventions have been used, some mainstream and widely used, others innovative and so far rarely used. These include:

- **Products** Water companies in England and Wales commonly give away free products, typically shower timers, cistern displacement devices, showerheads, and gunk pots. Recently some unusual products have been offered such as dry shampoo to reduce the need for hair washing (Hubbub's TapChat), bathroom bins (Northumbrian Water[88]) and toilet tissue spritz, reusable face pads and hair catchers (Wessex Water[89]). A small but growing number of retailers use choice editing to limit products that customers can buy eg only stocking water efficient showerheads (Ikea[90]) and discontinuing single use wipes (Holland and Barrett[91]).

- **Services** Water companies in England and Wales commonly offer free home visits to fit products to reduce water use. Some also offer to fix dripping taps and leaky loos at the same time but there is potential to do this more. A few have recently run trials fitting supply pipe restrictors for households with high water use (see below). Water companies in the USA offer discounted turf and toilet replacement schemes. As yet there have been just a few doorstep FOGs collections in England and Wales, fewer than five run by local authorities as part of their food waste collections and only one run by a water company (now discontinued). There is an opportunity for this to be rolled out much more widely this year when all local authorities must have food waste collections in place.

> There is likely to be an opportunity to introduce more doorstep FOGs collections as more local authorities introduce food waste recycling schemes, when doorstep collections of food waste becomes mandatory this year. It would be worth exploring whether it will be possible to work with local authorities to support this in any way, and considering whether any learnings from current schemes (particularly Yorkshire Water's successful Fats to Fuels scheme) could be helpful.

- **Rewards and penalties** Water companies use temporary use bans to restrict outside water use when necessary, with the threat of penalties for noncompliance. Penalties have recently been introduced for flushing unflushables (Northumbrian Water). Water companies have also offered rewards, for example financial rewards or free use of a swimming pool in return for collective reduction in water use (Southern Water and South West Water).

How effective are such interventions at drawing attention to communications?

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[88] Bin the wipe | Behaviour Change : Behaviour Change
[89]89 See Wessex Water's Pollution Incident Reduction Plan for 2022-2023 Pollution Incident Reduction Plan | Wessex Water
[90] Save water at home - IKEA
[91] Holland & Barrett becomes first high-street retailer to ban wet-wipes | Holland & Barrett (hollandandbarrettcorporate.com)

While such interventions are rarely used with the explicit intention of drawing attention to communications, some have been very successful at doing so, such as the following two examples:

- Holland and Barrett's decision not to sell single use wipes resulted in extensive media coverage in this country, with articles in most of the major UK newspapers and magazines such as Glamour and Vogue, as well as internationally.
- South West Water promised a £30 cash rebate to all customers in Cornwall if Colliford Reservoir was restored to 30% levels by the end of the year. There was a considerable amount of media coverage, again not just locally but also in the national and international press. In other words, it encouraged people to pay attention to communications they might otherwise take little interest in, ie information about reservoir levels and the need to continue to save water in the winter. While the impact of a reward is likely to be short term, the impact of raised awareness of water shortages during winter might have longer-term impacts.

There is limited evidence on what factors determine whether other interventions generate interest and draw attention to campaigns. Novelty seems likely to play a role, as Holland and Barrett's decision received wider coverage than those of other larger retailers who did something similar afterwards. Clearly there is also a risk of generating negative publicity. So audience testing beforehand seems very much worth doing.

How effective are communications at driving uptake/use of services/products?

Uptake/use of services/products (such as home visits, water-saving devices) varies a great deal. While the small number of evaluations did not give clear pointers about what to do to boost uptake/use, behavioural science suggests that three principles can help: mentioning scarcity, emphasising benefits that matter most to the target audience and showing that people like them have used and enjoyed the service/product.

In a highly successful trial in the energy sector, Octopus Energy launched a giveaway of electric blankets[92], an example which supports the importance of these principles. Octopus Energy offered electric blankets (a desirable product) to people who had contacted them about difficulties paying their bills (so were likely to appreciate it). It also explained how much an electric blanket could save on their bills, and explained that there were a limited number available so recommended that anyone else should buy one.

These three principles were also applied in the unusually successful home visit programme run by Folkestone and Dover Water (now part of Affinity Water).

How effective are other interventions at changing behaviour?

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[92] Octopus Energy electric blanket scheme: https://octopus.energy/blog/free-electric-blankets-for-our-most-vulnerable/

It is beyond the scope of this review on communications campaigns to look at how well other interventions work at changing behaviour. However, other reviews have been carried out on some interventions[93].

What are the challenges, debates, and risks?

<u>Other interventions instead of communication campaigns?</u>

Other interventions can be more effective than communications to achieve certain aims. For example, removing wipes and high flow showerheads from the market would be far be more effective at reducing plastic pollution and water use than communications campaigns to encourage individuals to choose the alternatives. Also fitting smart meters to detect leaks would be more effective than encouraging households to check for them.

As a result, some people have argued that there is little value in communications campaigns on these types of issues. However, in the meantime, while wipes and high flow showerheads are on the market and before smart meters are rolled out widely, communication campaigns have a useful role to play in the following ways:

- They can encourage people to make better choices.
- They can explain the need for unsustainable products to be removed from the market and for smart meters to be installed.
- They can even help drive these changes. For example, campaigns can encourage people to support or even ask for these changes, eg Thames21's campaign which asks people to write to their MPs to ask for wet wipes to be banned[94]. The upcoming mandatory label for water use[95] is expected to lead to more efficient products on the market, partly through changing consumer choices and priorities.
- However, there are circumstances where other interventions alone might be more suitable. For instance, Northumbrian Water is considering using meter installation as an opportunity to offer and fit supply pipe restrictors which they have found work well for reducing consumption, particularly among high users, without affecting experience in the vast majority of cases. They are considering doing this as a default that customers would be able to opt out of – a powerful behaviour change technique. Under these circumstances, a high profile communication campaign might not be appropriate.

<u>Run by the same or different organisations?</u>

Communications and other interventions do not need to be run by the same organisation to work well together. There are plenty of examples of other organisations pointing to water company free products and services, eg Age UK pointing to free leaky loo fixes[96],

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[93] For example, Waterwise: *Water Efficiency Retrofitting: A Best Practice Guide* (2009); Anglian Water and the Centre for Competition Policy: *Price and Behavioural Signals to Encourage Water Conservation* (2017)
[94] Taking action against plastic in wet wipes to protect our rivers - Thames21
[95] New labelling to protect water supplies and cut energy bills - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[96] Age UK North Tyneside: *Free fix of your Leaky Loo* (March 2019)

Money Saving Expert pointing to free showerheads[97]. In addition, water companies sometimes point to services run by other organisations and they could do this more, eg it would be helpful if they pointed to advice offered by Which? and to local authorities' doorstep FOGs collections as part of their food waste collections.

4.10 Messengers

Why are messengers from outside the water industry helpful?

Having organisations from outside the water industry communicating about water use and sewer misuse can be helpful in many ways, both in terms of reaching and engaging a wider audience, and in terms of changing behaviour. There are several reasons for this:

- **Reach** Some organisations have very wide reach, and some reach audiences that might be difficult for water companies to reach themselves, eg those who are uncomfortable with authority, and those who are not bill payers.
- **Trust and attention** Some of these organisations are trusted and listened to more than water companies. This is partly because they are organisations whose advice people actively seek out. They are not seen as having a vested interest and/or are not seen as responsible for the problems.
- **Know how to communicate with and support the audience** For example, reframing the messages to focus on issues that are likely to matter to people.
- **Prompts** Products already present in people's homes can help get messages exactly where they need to be, to act as reminders while people are using water or disposing of FOGS/flushables.
- **Consistency** Water saving messages have sometimes competed with marketing from commercial brands so it is helpful to establish common aims and consistent messages.
- **Strength in numbers** Hearing the same message from numerous sources helps to reinforce it and make clear that it is not simply the view of one organisation or sector with vested interests.

What is currently done and how well does it work?

While the vast majority of campaigns are run by the water industry, it was encouraging to find a wide range of other organisations communicating about water use and sewer misuse, either initiating and running campaigns independently or working with the water industry.

Organisations communicating about these matters fall into six main groups, each with a clear link to the issue:

- **Product manufacturers** of toilets, taps, showers, toothpaste, shampoo, shower gel, dishwasher soap, sanitary products, and wipes seem particularly active in this space. For example, Unilever agreed to have 'four-minute shower' messages stuck on their

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[97] Money Saving Expert: Martin's 19 Green MoneySaving tips: From water-saving gadgets to getting paid to recycle (November 2021)

shampoo bottles as part of [Watercare Auckland's](#) drought campaign; Yorkshire Tea's 'Tiny Kettle' film encouraged people to save water by only boiling the water they need for a cup of tea[98]; a film from MCS/Natracare, a sanitary product manufacturer, discouraged flushing of their products[99] and a toilet paper manufacturer (Who Gives a Crap) had reminders printed on toilet paper wrappers on behalf of Yarra Valley Water (Australia)[100]. The Unified Water Label Association initiated a water label scheme for bathroom fittings[101] and the Bathroom Manufacturers Association have run campaigns such as 'Get Lavvy Savvy' to encourage people to spot and fix leaks[102]. Many individual manufacturers have also run campaigns on their water efficient shower, toilet and tap fittings.

- **Retailers** excluding unsustainable products from their ranges, eg Holland and Barrett stopped selling single use wipes and ran a campaign around the issue[103]; Sainsbury's and Waitrose promoted correct FOG disposal on behalf of WaterUK/water companies at Christmas[104] and Ikea has run a campaign encouraging people to collect water while waiting for their shower to warm up and to use it for watering plants.

- **Plumbing and drainage experts** have also run campaigns. The Chartered Institute of Plumbing and Heating Engineering (CIPHE) has worked with its members on water saving campaigns[105]. Lanes for Drains, drainage specialists, run the annual Unblocktober campaign to discourage behaviours that block drains[106].

- **Consumer support organisations** support people in various ways on issues that concern or bother them around water use, sewer misuse and related issues, eg saving money, dealing with problems in their home, finding products and fittings that work well. They include Money Saving Expert, Citizens Advice[107], Which? Mumsnet, and Age UK[108]. For example, Martin Lewis, a consumer financial expert, explained how to save money on energy bills by installing free water efficient showerheads – see [case study](#).

- **Environmental organisations** Many are concerned with the consequences of water use and sewer misuse on the environment and have run campaigns on these issues. They include Waterwise[109], Wildlife Trusts[110], RSPB and National Trust,[111] which have run or been involved in campaigns on water use; and Marine Conservation Society,

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[98] [LOOK! A TINY KETTLE! - YouTube](#)
[99] [Plastic Free Periods - It's time to Sea Red - YouTube](#)
[100] [Yarra Valley Water » Studio Binocular](#)
[101] Unified Water Label [The Water Label | Setting the European standard for water-efficient products (europeanwaterlabel.eu)](#).
[102] [Get Lavvy Savvy campaign launch - Bathroom Manufacturers Association (bathroom-association.org.uk)](#)
[103] [Holland & Barrett becomes first high-street retailer to ban wet-wipes | Holland & Barrett (hollandandbarrettcorporate.com)](#)
[104] [Fighting the festive fat | Water UK](#)
[105] [Water Poverty | CIPHE](#)

[106] [Unblocktober | A month to Save Our Sewers and Seas](#)
[107] [20 ways to save (1).pdf (citizensadvice.org.uk)](#)
[108] [Free fix of your Leaky Loo (ageuk.org.uk)](#)
[109] [campaigns – Waterwise](#)
[110] [How to conserve water | The Wildlife Trusts](#)
[111] [Top tips on saving energy at home | National Trust](#)

Keep Scotland Beautiful[112], Litter Free Dorset[113], Thames21[114] and Surfers against Sewage which have run campaigns to reduce sewer misuse.

- **Government and regulators** Defra, Ofwat, and CCW have all been involved in campaigns. For example, Defra is due to launch a mandatory water label[115], and CCW has committed to leading water industry campaigns.

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[112] [Beach campaign success amidst bathing water quality improvements (keepscotlandbeautiful.org)](#)
[113] [Love your Beach – Litter Free Dorset](#)
[114] [The Unflushables - Thames21](#)
[115] [New labelling to protect water supplies and cut energy bills - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](#)

Figure 3: Ikea advert

> Did you know
> Our showerheads and taps reduce the amount of water used, while keeping the pressure just right.

Figure 4: Still from 'The End of Football'
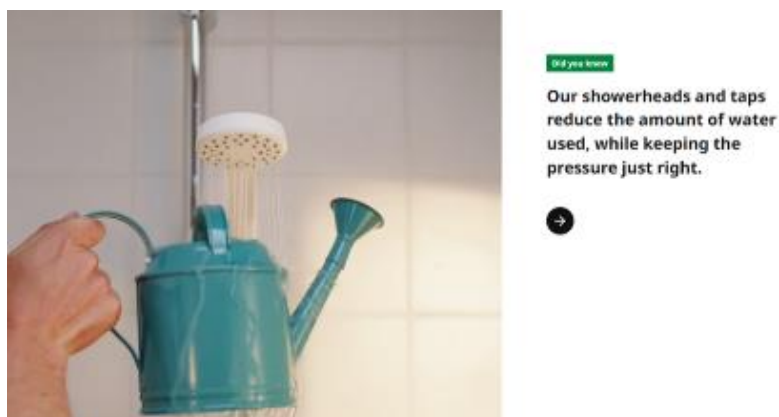
However, some of the messengers were more surprising, with less obvious connections to the issues. For example, Manchester City worked with Xylem on 'The End of Football' film[116] and Museum of London ran an exhibition about fatbergs[117].

There are also some noteworthy gaps. For example, TV cooking and home improvement programmes have not discussed the issues, as far as we are aware. They can drive impressive changes in behaviour so it seems a missed opportunity not to work with them, particularly as they promote other types of sustainability (eg the Hairy Bikers' electric bikes) and some have expressed an interest (eg Kirstie Allsopp who has already tweeted about reducing toilet flushing[118]). The only example we found along these lines was celebrity chefs taking part in a campaign on behalf of Irish Water and Clean Coasts, but not actually on TV[119]. It is also notable that fats manufacturers do not seem to be involved in promoting FOGs disposal.

There have been a handful of organisations outside the water industry involved in the issues long term, eg Colgate's US 'Every Drop Counts' campaign[120], and BBC South West weather forecast has mentioned water resource issues for more than 20 years[121]. However, typically they are involved in short term campaigns, eg Waitrose was involved in just one Christmas FOGs campaign with WaterUK. This is not necessarily a problem

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[116] Manchester City and Xylem present: The End Of Football - YouTube
[117] Fatberg! Exhibiting the Monster of Whitechapel | Museum of London
[118] Kirsty Allsopp's Twitter post (July 2022)
[119] Lilly Higgins and Kwanghi Chan share their advise on how to Think Before You Pour this Christmas by Clean Coasts - Exposure

[120] Colgate Announces Environmental Progress of "Save Water" Campaign (multivu.com)
[121] For example, weatherbraine on Twitter: Latest SW water reservoir levels (April 2023)

as short term high-profile campaigns can be very impactful, eg Holland and Barrett's campaign around no longer selling disposable wipes[122].

Many campaigns run by organisations outside the water industry are not evaluated, evaluations are not publicly available because of commercial sensitivity, or they are evaluated for other purposes besides looking at behaviour change (eg sentiment or sales). It is also impossible for these organisations to look at the impact on water use or blockages, unless working with water companies. Nevertheless, there are examples of substantial reach and impact which illustrate the potential of messengers outside the water industry – just a couple of examples are given below:

- **Reach** The reach that some achieved was often impressive and sometimes extraordinary - for example, Yorkshire Tea's 'Tiny Kettle' campaign had 3.1 million views in 1 month.
- **Behaviour change** More than a quarter of people who saw the 'Wasting Water is Weird' advert, sponsored by Kohler, Lowe's, Bosch, and Procter & Gamble, said they had changed their water use as a result[123].

Please also see case studies on Money Saving Expert's role in promoting free showerheads and Fats to Fuels, delivered by a Bradford-based charity on behalf of Yorkshire Water.

What are the challenges, debates, and risks?

<u>What can be done to ensure wide reach?</u>

While a large following helps ensure a large reach, it does not guarantee it because reach also depends on other aspects of the campaign. As with other campaigns, the devil is in the detail. For instance, two of Manchester City/Xylem's videos received dramatically different number of views. Although the messenger was the same, the campaigns differed in message, tone, and production values. While 'The End of Football'[124] has had almost 2 million views on YouTube, 'Be a Water Hero'[125] has had just 15k. We came across many other examples of campaigns from organisations outside the water industry, with a large audience, that simply did not take off. Even organisations with a large following sometimes take steps to extend the reach of their campaigns. For example:

- Yorkshire Tea have developed a large social medial following through a series of enjoyable videos so their audience is eager for any new videos. However, Yorkshire Tea also used weare8.com, a social media platform with a social and environmental emphasis, to expand their reach for the 'Tiny Kettle' video[126].

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[122] Holland & Barrett becomes first high-street retailer to ban wet-wipes | Holland & Barrett (hollandandbarrettcorporate.com)

[123] Wasting Water is Weird – Bosch, Kohler, Lowe's, Procter & Gamble | Our Work (sheltongrp.com)

[124] Manchester City and Xylem present: The End Of Football - YouTube

[125] Manchester City and Xylem present: Be A Water Hero - YouTube

[126] LOOK! A TINY KETTLE! - YouTube

- Manchester City has a large fanbase but also worked with a Tiktok influencer to boost views on the 'End of Football' video[127].

<u>What can be done to ensure that messengers benefit?</u>

It is important to be aware of the potential risks and benefits, particularly for commercial brands, to help ensure that they wish to become involved and to stay involved long term. During campaigns around water use and sewer misuse, organisations monitor closely their impact on sales, media coverage, and sentiment in comments on social media. There are examples of campaigns with positive and negative impact for the organisations or individuals involved. For example, Holland and Barrett's media campaign when they stopped selling wipes was phenomenally positive for them. It generated a huge amount of media coverage, boosting the reputation and profile of this niche retailer in the natural beauty business.

Figure 5 below sums up the potential risks and benefits:

Figure 5: Risks and benefits for messengers outside of the water sector promoting water use and sewer misuse messages

Potential risks	Potential benefits
- seen as outside their brand/remit – risks alienating customers/supporters eg seen as bossy to tell people what to do - association with toxic brands/issues - accusations of greenwash - distraction from the issues they normally focus on	- increase sales, eg of water saving products - bring in new customers eg younger generation with more focus on environment - boost reputation and profile - address negative PR around their products

<u>Independence or partnerships – which is preferable?</u>

In some cases, messengers run their own campaigns, independent of the water industry. In these cases, water use or FOGs/unflushables disposal is often just one of the issues they talk about, sometimes clearly secondary to other issues. Examples include Wildlife Trusts highlighting how to save water along with other ways to care for wildlife[128] and Tesco highlighting how to save water along with ways to ensure clean laundry and save money[129]. This is not necessarily a problem and in fact, having these issues discussed alongside or as part of something people are more interested in (eg wildlife or household cleaning products), might mean they pay more attention.

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[127] Manchester City and Xylem present: The End Of Football - YouTube

[128] https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-conserve-water
[129] The Homecare Shop - Tesco Groceries

In other cases they run campaigns together with the water industry. The 'Love Water' campaign, led by Environment Agency, Water UK, and Ofwat had a very long list of partners from outside the water industry[130]. While this approach might convey that many organisations with many interests support the campaign, it also seems possible that it loses some of the value associated with the partners, eg the trust that comes from someone other than the water industry talking about these issues, or their ability to frame the issues in a way that their members or followers are interested in. Research is needed on this issue to inform future campaigns.

> Encourage and support organisations outside the water industry to communicate about the issues – because many are listened to and trusted by a wide audience and can frame communications in a way that is meaningful to them. But make sure they keep their voice, identity and independence.

> The following seem particularly clear opportunities:
> - weather forecasters discussing water scarcity and actions to take to save water
> - DIY chains and TV home improvement programmes promoting water saving maintenance and fittings
> - food-related messengers such as supermarkets and celebrity chefs promoting correct disposal of FOGs
> - the beauty industry, including retailers and press, discouraging the use of unflushables

4.11 Timing – moments of change

Why does timing matter?

Campaigns are likely to have more cut through at times when people are more willing and able to change their behaviour due to current circumstances[131]. In particular:

- people tend to be more willing to change their behaviour when a problem is clear to them, therefore, it makes sense to run campaigns during drought or when there has been a blockage or fatberg
- the cost of living crisis has meant that people are looking for ways to reduce bills to save money
- major life changes (eg retirement, moving home, moving out of the family home, and having children) as well as changes to the home (e. getting a meter or redoing

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[130] Major campaign launched to encourage the nation to 'Love Water' | Water UK
[131] Targeting communications and support during timely moments of disruption is one of the recommendations from the Behavioural Insights Team guide *How to build a net zero society* (January 2023)

kitchens and bathrooms) can be 'moments of change' which are ideal for behaviour change. This is partly because these are times when old habits are broken, making it easier to form new ones. It is also because people are sometimes motivated by a change in circumstances, for example, wanting to save money due to reduced income.

It is advisable to use these times to promote actions that will last long term such as beyond a drought, blockage or fatberg, after the cost of living crisis or if personal circumstances change again.

What is currently done and how well does it work?

Droughts and blockages/fatbergs

Droughts, fatbergs, and major blockages are almost always used as an opportunity for communications to promote behaviour change.

Campaigns at these times are sometimes used to promote products and behaviours that will help ensure that changes are sustained after the immediate crisis ends. For example, many water companies offer and fit products such as water efficient showerheads and gunk pots that will continue to be used after the crisis is over. However, more could be done. For example:

- Focusing on new habits that will continue after the crisis has passed. The emphasis during droughts is still often on garden watering, partly because temporary use bans are still seen as hosepipe bans. It would be helpful to focus more on starting new water use habits that will continue throughout the winter, when water scarcity is no longer obvious. Watercare Auckland attributed the success of their drought campaign partly to the focus on shorter showering and other indoor behaviours, rather than just garden watering.
- Signing people up to new services at these times. We have not yet come across anything along these lines but suggest that, for example, shortly after a blockage or fatberg would be an ideal time to start a doorstep fats collection.

Personal circumstances

Some changes in circumstances have been widely used to promote changes to water use. In particular:

- **Getting a meter/metering programmes** Water companies often offer advice at this time, although it is not yet standard practice so perhaps more can be done.
- **Work to kitchens and bathrooms** Manufacturers, retailers and consumer organisations such as Which? provide advice to support and encourage people to choose water efficient fittings and appliances.

However, again more could be done, such as:

- Moments of change such seem to be overlooked as an opportunity promote changes to FOGS/flushables disposal. For example, work to kitchens and bathrooms seems

like a good opportunity to, for example, ensure there is a bathroom bin or a sink with fitted strainer.

- It is worth finding ways to tap into other changes in circumstances, such as house moves, moving out of family home, having children, and retirement.

Times of high water use/FOGs disposal

- Campaigns are sometimes run at times when people are expected to use more water (eg a campaign run by Smartwater New Zealand on a weekend when spring cleaning, including spray cleaning outdoors, often happens[132]) and dispose of more FOGs than usual (eg many water companies run Christmas FOGs campaigns).

What are the challenges, debates, and risks?

How to communicate between droughts and blockages/fatbergs?

While it makes sense to run campaigns at the time of droughts, blockages and fatbergs, it is also essential to promote target behaviours when the problem is no longer evident, eg when drought restrictions end, when it rains, or when there has not been a sewer blockage for some time. Many approaches have recently been tried or are currently being tried but it is not yet clear what works, so research is urgently needed on this issue.

Suggestions for keeping issues live when issues are no longer obvious include:

- **Focus on other motivations, rather than focusing on alleviating the problem which is no longer obvious.** For example in winter, focus on cutting down on hot water use to save energy, as the water companies have done to good effect this winter. United Utilities report that when they switched to including the energy saving message in their campaigns, it had more cut through, although they acknowledge that this might also have been due to the increased appetite to find cost savings during the cost of living crisis, not just the different message.
- **Educate to explain that the problem is long term**, eg not relieved by a little rain, even though it is only visible for some of the time. Examples of this include South West Water's low reservoir campaign, and infographics from water companies that talk about rainfall and water use across the whole year such as Southern Water's, below[133].
- **Encourage people to plan ahead, in case there are restrictions** Water's Worth Saving currently has 'winter gardening/ summer watering' advice, encouraging people to take steps now to have a beautiful garden in the summer, even if there is a drought[134].

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[132] Use Smart Water tips this Auckland Anniversary weekend | Smart Water
[133] Water's Worth Saving; Winter gardening to save summer watering (December 2022)
[134] Winter gardening to save summer watering - Waters Worth Saving

Figure 6: Southern Water's infographic
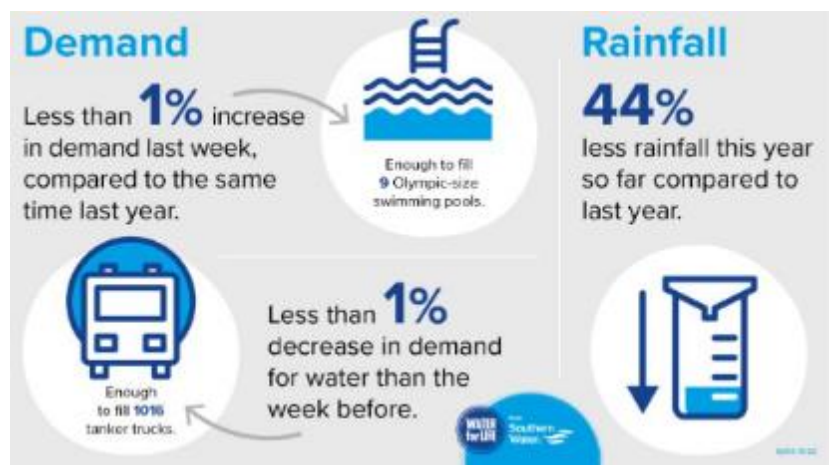
Are changes in personal circumstances really ideal moments of change?

There is some debate about whether people are in fact more willing and able to change during changes in personal circumstances. On the one hand, their old habits are less ingrained. On the other hand, people are sometimes overstretched at such times (eg when moving home or having children) so making changes to their water use and waste disposal might be low priority. Evidence from other fields is mixed. Also it is not clear whether any changes at these times last when personal circumstances change again. Studies have not been carried out long term to track what happens.

4.12 Timing – short term vs long term, frequent vs infrequent

Why does duration and frequency matter?

When considering how long campaigns should last, there is no single blanket answer. Both long term and short term campaigns have pros and cons.

Accepted wisdom is that long term campaigns with ongoing communications are needed to help keep the issues front of mind, to remind people to people sustain new behaviours they have adopted and to introduce new behaviours. However, the risk with long term campaigns is that people can lose interest.

The advantages of short term campaigns are discussed less in the existing literature, but there are several. Committing to short term changes can reduce barriers to participation, ie people are sometimes more willing to try a new behaviour for just a short time, which feels less daunting than taking it on long term. Short term availability can create a feeling of scarcity and offering products, services or special deals for a limited time is a well-established technique for increasing sales eg taking up the offer of a retrofit. It can also create a sense of urgency so that people do not delay taking action, eg fixing leaks.

The comparative advantages and disadvantages of long term vs short term campaigns is shown below in Table 6:

Table 6: Advantages and disadvantages of campaigns by length

	Pros	Cons
Long term	• sustain target behaviours • introduce more target behaviours • remind and keep front of mind	• lose interest
Short term	• reduce barriers to participation • create feeling of scarcity • avoid putting it off – focus the mind/encourage to do now	• new behaviours might not be sustained once the campaign ends • not necessarily available at the right time to help someone/when someone needs help

Likewise there is no single answer about how frequent communications should be. There is a risk that if they are too frequent, people could lose interest or get annoyed. However, when forming a new habit, frequent reminders can help to keep a new behaviour going until it solidifies.

What is currently done and how well does it work?

Long term vs short term

Campaigns vary a great deal in length. For example, they include single events, month-long challenges (eg Unblocktober asks participants to commit for just a month to changing their waste disposal behaviours[135]); campaigns that last a season or campaigns that last for several years. Some campaigns are a combination, focusing on short term themes within long term campaigns, as WaterSense does, or to start with a short term campaign and then ask people to sign up for the long term as the Water Conservancy does in its Water Night campaign.

Long campaigns take various different forms. This could be as simple as sending an email out to a mailing list regularly, or posting on social media. Alternatively, it could be more sophisticated, for example, as part of its SOS campaign[136], Affinity Water follows up with people who have signed up to suggest new behaviours based on what they have done so far.

Interviewees pointed out that what is often missing from long term campaigns is a sustained focus, to keep driving home key messages. Campaigns with a clear focus on a small number of behaviours long term were successful at achieving long term change This was the approach taken by Watercare Auckland in its two-year drought campaign, and by Denver Water in its 10-year campaign. They managed to retain interest by using

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[135] Unblocktober | A month to Save Our Sewers and Seas
[136] Stream Experience (affinitywater.co.uk)

a different image or strapline to introduce some novelty, while continuing to focus on the same important behaviours, and promote them with broadly the same motivations.

As discussed above, short term campaigns have two benefits: reducing barriers to participation and creating a feeling of scarcity and urgency. Short term campaigns occasionally emphasise these benefits, for example, Water Conservancy's 'Water Night' asks people to try using less water for one night only, and the Folkestone and Dover Water (now part of Affinity Water) campaign emphasised that retrofits were only available to the first 250 people who applied. However, neither of these benefits is used much. For example, signing up for a month is very rarely presented as 'just try it for a month and see how you get on'. There seems to be a clear opportunity to use them more widely.

Frequency

Campaigns also differ in the frequency of communicating about the issues. Generally campaigns err on the side of infrequent reminders. However, few have provided daily updates. They include daily feedback about collective water use as part of Auckland's drought campaign, and Affinity Water's daily text messaging trial to remind people to take shorter showers.

> - During obvious crises, when issues are high on the agenda, ensure that campaigns promote changes that can easily be sustained in the long term, eg by fitting products, encouraging people to try new behaviours or supporting them to develop new habits.
> - Do more to promote behaviour change when people are most open to change or even looking for help to change, eg when struggling with bills, dealing with a blockage or doing work to kitchens, gardens and bathrooms.

4.13 Location

Why does location matter?

There are two main issues to consider about the location: whether campaigns should be national or local and whether they should be located in specific places or simply in as many places as possible. These two issues are discussed below.

National vs local

There are pros and cons of both national and local campaigns, summarised below. It is clear that there is value in running both.

Local campaigns can have many benefits, whether run at regional level, water company level, or smaller areas. These include:

- Different communications are needed in dry and rainy areas, and areas that are more prone to blockages.

- Different communications are also needed in areas with specific attitudes and sociodemographic characteristics, such as affluent households with large gardens and high PCC.
- Local campaigns can tap into unique problems (eg chalk streams) and local concerns (eg low reservoir levels). People tend to be less inclined to take action on problems that are seen as distant, so tapping into local problems should boost behaviour change.
- Local campaigns might be seen as unique and 'tailored to suit us', again likely to boost participation.
- Local campaigns can involve local partners who know their communities and have established links with them, particularly valuable for reaching traditionally 'hard to reach' audiences. Some water companies also have a strong positive local identity themselves which tends to boost interest and trust in campaigns.
- As well as efficacy, there are practical issues to consider. Local campaigns, within a water company's area of operation, tend to be better funded because it is easier for water companies to justify expenditure that will lead to local savings.

However, there are often calls for national campaigns, for the following reasons:

- They can provide consistency to reduce confusion eg from one company saying the situation is serious while a neighbouring water company says it is not.
- They can provide a 'one stop shop' for advice and information, helpful for national organisations (eg consumer advice organisations) and articles in the national press to point to. They can also more easily form partnerships with national organisations.
- They can help to convey importance; that this is not just a small local initiative for a small problem but a large national initiative to address a large problem.
- They can avoid the need to reinvent the wheel, which is likely to be more cost effective, for example, by sharing campaign materials and research to inform the campaign.
- They can raise the profile of campaigns.

Display in specific types of places vs as many places as possible

When deciding where to display campaign communications, various different approaches can be taken. As with timing, there is no single blanket answer about what works best. All approaches have unique benefits and which is most suitable depends mainly on the target audience (specific or generic) and available budget.

- **Display as widely as possible** This can ensure wide reach and also helps convey a campaign's importance.
- **Display in places that the target audience frequents** For campaigns with very focused target audience, it makes sense to focus on places where they spend time.
- **Display in places where people are waiting** There is benefit to advertising in places where people have time on their hands so are more likely to pay attention to a campaign.
- **Display in unusual places** Research in other contexts has found that people are particularly likely to notice/pay attention to or remember communications when they are unexpected, surprising and seem out of place.

- **The public displays campaign materials** As well as getting the campaign displayed more widely, it conveys public support for it, and it acts as an overt commitment for the people displaying it.

What is currently done and how well does it work?

<u>National vs local</u>

Currently in England and Wales, campaigns run by those outside the water sector are sometimes national because the organisations running them are national, such as Which?, Money Saving Expert, and the Bathroom Manufacturers Association. Water industry campaigns are also sometimes national, run or led by Water UK, Waterwise, CCW, and Defra. However, there is more that could be done to tap into the potential benefits of national campaigns discussed above, such as helping to convey the importance by making clear this is a large national initiative.

Many more campaigns have been run at water company level or in smaller areas. Some make the most of the benefits of local campaigns (eg Affinity's SOS refers to 'your local water'[137]; and Yorkshire Water's Fats to Fuels works with a local partner). However, many do not, and this is an area for improvement.

There is evidence that campaigns at all levels can work. For example, the case studies include national (Money Saving Expert and Water Night), regional (Denver and Auckland), and hyperlocal campaigns (Folkestone and Dover Water in Lydd; Fats to Fuels in Bradford). Interviewees suggested that when national campaigns did not work well, it was not because they were national per se but because, for instance, they lacked sufficient funding or other elements of the campaign were not ideal.

As yet, there is no clear evidence about what is needed to get the best from local campaigns and national campaigns. However, the guidelines set out above, based on suggestions from interviewees and behavioural principles, provide some pointers. However, further research is needed. For example, a potential question for research is whether campaigns on the impact of water scarcity on nature are more effective when they are local (and talk about specific rivers) or when they are national (and talk about rivers in general).

<u>Display in specific types of places vs in as many places as possible</u>

Currently, most campaign communications are presented via outdoor displays, such as bus stops and billboards. While there are examples of displaying them in other places, this could be done more widely. Suggestions include:

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[137] Stream Experience (affinitywater.co.uk)

Figure 7: Sydney Water campaign

- **Display in places that the target audience frequents,** eg Sydney Water's 'Are you flushing kidding me?'[138] campaign was aimed at men, and posters were displayed in barbers and gyms.
- **Display in places where people are waiting** eg the Balearics suitcases campaign appeared in airports[139].
- **Displays where the action is taking place** eg messages about turning off the tap and what not to flush in toilets.
- **Display in unusual places** eg Denver Water displayed materials in places such as supermarket conveyor belts.
- Display of campaign materials by members of the public eg Denver Water's lawn flags.

What are the challenges, debates, and risks?

What purpose do national water sector campaigns have?

Several interviewees raised the question of what national campaigns can achieve over and above those of water companies. It was suggested that perhaps they should set the scene, educate and inform people, so that when water companies run campaigns, consumers are receptive to them. Also the approach used by WaterSense might be worth exploring, i.e. developing a standard model that local partners can adapt to their needs.

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[138] Sydney Water campaign to flush out blockages - Waste Management Review
[139] Govern Illes Balears; Can a suitcase make you think? (2019)

5. Example case studies of effective campaigns

5.1   Selecting case studies for inclusion

Having discussed the elements of campaigns in Section 4, in this section we focus on campaigns as a whole. The case studies[140] were selected to illustrate what effective campaigns look like.

The approach to selecting case studies was informed by the following considerations:

- We selected campaigns that had impressive results, addressed challenges that the water sector tends to struggle with or went well above the norm in terms of reach or impact. Examples include: sustaining PCC reduction during the winter and when water use restrictions ended, starting conversations as well as changing behaviour, achieving uptake with much less effort than usual and reaching audiences who are unlikely to be particularly engaged.
- We selected a diverse range of campaigns to reinforce the point that there are many different ways that campaigns can reduce water use and sewer misuse. Examples include: targeting different types of behaviours (everyday habits, maintenance, and fittings), using different ways of achieving wide reach and using different behaviour change techniques.
- Some were one-off or short term communications, and others long term multi-channel campaigns.
- All have at least some evaluation data on which to judge their reach or impact. Because thorough robust 'gold standard' evaluations are few and far in this area, we have considered evaluations, irrespective of methodological quality. This means that we have included campaigns that only report on reach; simply compare PCC or number of sewer blockages before and after the campaign; look at a campaign as a whole, rather than the communications specifically; and collect informal feedback from those who ran the campaign.
- Because our brief was not simply to repeat back to the water industry in England and Wales what they already know, we have not included water company campaigns, except where they are small-scale and/or from some time ago, so probably not widely known.

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[140] Information on the sources used for the case studies is provided in Section 8.1

5.2   Promoting free showerheads, Money Saving Expert, c. 2010 onwards

Money Saving Expert (MSE) is a website providing money-saving advice to consumers. It covers a wide range of subjects, including banking, insurance, food shopping, and utility bills. It suggests simple steps that people can take to spend less and it points them to money-saving products. Advice is provided on its website, in a weekly email, and through interviews (television, radio, newspapers) with its founder Martin Lewis.

The Sun < | HEALTH | DEAR DEIDRE | TECH | TRAVEL | MOTORS | PUZZL

Martin Lewis shares simple shower tip that could shave £70 off energy bill

Lynsey Barber
Published: 12:19, 13 Mar 2022 | Updated: 12:19, 13 Mar 2022

HOUSEHOLDS across the country are looking to save cash as bills are on the rise.

Now Martin Lewis has share a top tip for saving money on your energy bill – by using less water.

As part of its campaign to reduce energy and water bills, Money Saving Expert advises people to fit water efficient showerheads and points them to the free showerheads offered by water companies, through Save Water Save Money.

What does the campaign achieve?

Whenever Martin Lewis suggests fitting free water efficient showerheads in media interviews, this leads to 10,000 to 30,000 new registrations on Save Water Save Money's website. There is always a strong uplift in product orders following registrations, both showerheads and other products.

How does the campaign reach and engage people?

MSE and Martin Lewis have very wide reach.

- The website has more than 16 million users per month. The suggestion to fit a water efficient showerhead is permanently on their website.
- Martin Lewis is frequently interviewed on national television (eg Good Morning Britain) and in the national press. For example, his suggestion to fit water saving showerheads in March 2022 was reported in papers ranging from the Sun to the Independent, reaching a very wide demographic.
- Advice from MSE/Martin Lewis is repeated in a wide range of local newspapers and on special interest websites, further increasing its reach.

Advice from MSE/Martin Lewis is trusted as it seen as independent and on the side of the consumer. This has been demonstrated in various surveys as well as CCW's own messaging research (currently underway with the Citizens Forum).

How does the campaign change behaviour?

MSE/Martin Lewis emphasise that a water saving showerhead can save money on energy bills, a major concern for many people at the moment. They explain that it will not compromise the showering experience, a concern for some.

Importantly they recognise that reducing energy bills by using less hot water in the shower is often not familiar or intuitive. For example, Martin Lewis was quoted as saying

"Bizarrely one way to save on our energy bills is to use less water, because much of the water we use in our home has been heated, so we pay for it to be heated."

They also make it easy to order a showerhead by pointing to the Save Water Save Money website where customers of roughly 19 water companies are able to order a showerhead (and other water saving products) for free. This is much more straightforward for people than suggesting that they go to their water company's website to look for the offer of free products. Save Water Save Money provides a one-stop shop for many water company customers.

What was the role of research and evaluation?

- Pre campaign: Money Saving Expert researches what products and services to promote but, as far as we are aware, does not research how best to explain them. However, unlike many organisations running campaigns on saving water, giving advice to consumers is MSE's core role. So it already has a good understanding of consumer priorities (ie saving on bills in ways that are easy and do not feel like a compromise) and how to tap into them. Money Saving Expert reviews forum discussions for insights into what its audience is thinking. It is worth noting that the points it highlights when it promotes water efficient showerheads fit well with research findings on the issue, eg acknowledging that reducing water in the shower is not intuitively seen as a way to save on energy bills.
- Post campaign: Money Saving Expert can see click-throughs on its website. Save Water Save Money is also able to see the source of any new registrations so can see the impact of mentions by MSE/Martin Lewis.

How could the campaign be used more widely/in future?

It is expected that MSE will continue to promote free water efficient showerheads and other ways of cutting down on water, especially hot water. It could also mention other products and services now highlighted through Get Water Fit on Save Water Save Money's website (eg free leaky loo fixes) and new products and services as they become available.

What more could be done to increase engagement and impact?

- When offering water efficient showerheads and other products, water companies would do well to point to MSE/Martin Lewis's advice to boost trust in the offer and understanding of the benefits.
- MSE/Martin Lewis's reach and recognition are unique. However, there would also be value in seeking out and working with other trusted sources on consumer issues for particular age groups, ethnicities, and areas (eg local community leaders).

5.3 Home visit programme, Folkestone and Dover Water, 2009

In 2008, Folkestone and Dover Water (now part of [Affinity Water](#)) ran a small-scale metering programme with 1,450 customers in Lydd, a town in Kent. To support their customers and boost water savings, they trialled a range of measures shortly after meters were installed. This included providing information on bills and offering a retrofit home visit programme.

3rd June 2009

Dear [name]

Don't miss your chance to have a FREE leak, tap and toilet check in your property

Simply complete the boxes below, enter a contact telephone number, tear off the slip and send it back to us in the FREEPOST envelope enclosed and you could receive a FREE leak, tap and toilet check that could save you water and money.
(See over for details of what this includes.)

It takes only a few seconds to complete the form but could reduce your water, wastewater and energy bills into the future.

Act now so that you don't miss out!

What did the campaign achieve?

Uptake of the home visit offer was more than 17% from a single letter ie from a letter sent to all 1,450 households who had recently had a meter fitted, more than 250 applied for a visit.

This is much higher than usual for water company home visit programmes. The typical response from first contact tends to be 3-7% (according to informal feedback from water company colleagues). Water companies typically expect roughly 15% uptake following several contacts, sometimes including a phone call.

How did the campaign reach and engage people?

Folkestone and Dover Water simply sent a letter to customers. It was sent shortly after they had received meters, when people were generally paying more attention to their water use than normal, i. at a moment of change when they were likely to be particularly receptive.

It is also possible that the focus groups run beforehand might have created interest and built trust within this small community.

How did the campaign change behaviour?

The letter described the home visits as 'Leak, tap and toilet checks' to highlight what appealed most to customers in the focus groups, ie having an expert check their home for leaks, something that worried them now they were on meters. In other words, it offered something that customers really valued.

It also addressed specific barriers about a home visit (a new and unfamiliar service) that residents raised in the focus groups. It explained how easy it was to book, reassured them that no products would be foisted on them against their will and made it clear that products and service would be free.

The letter also tapped into basic psychological principles by highlighting that the number of visits was limited to 250, a technique that tends to increase interest in products and services.

What was the role of research and evaluation?

- Pre campaign: Before sending out the letter, four focus groups were run with customers to explore what appealed to and concerned them about the home visits. Key findings were built into the letter.

How could a similar campaign be used more widely/in future?

It is not possible to know what led to the unusually high uptake from a single letter but two points seem likely to have played a part as they distinguish this campaign from other home visit programmes:

- **Offering people what they really wanted**. Lydd residents who had recently been metered said in focus groups that they particularly wanted to check for leaks. While this is likely to have wide appeal, it is also possible that framing the home visit in a different way (eg a bathroom refresh or a check to save money) might have more appeal in other circumstances. Research with different target audiences would be helpful to establish this.
- **Conveying limited availability to increase desirability.** Generally with water company home visit programmes, there is no sense of limited availability, and offers of a home visit can be made repeatedly. Although home visits are readily available and generally not limited, it might help to offer a 'limited edition' home visit e.g. a particularly desirable product (such as garden plants or bath buoys) or a particularly desirable service (such as a water butt fitting service) that is available for a short time only.

What more could be done to increase engagement and impact?

- Word of mouth has sometimes been effective at boosting home visit uptake in small communities. Customers who have home visits could be contacted afterwards to extend the invitation on to their friends, with the 'golden ticket' approach that has been used to successfully build interest in other industries, while still retaining a sense of limited availability.
- It was clear from the focus groups that different people saw different benefits and problems with home visits. If more visits had been available, subsequent letters could have addressed the other benefits and concerns, to expand uptake.

5.4   Use Only What You Need, Denver Water (USA), 2006-2015

Denver Water is a water company supplying 1.5 million customers. In 2002, it experienced a drought and introduced restrictions for several years. In 2006, after the restrictions were lifted, it took steps to reduce water consumption long term. It set a target to ensure to reduce total water consumption to 22% of the pre-drought level within 10 years. They began the Use Only What You Need communications campaign, a multi-media advertising campaign, which ran mainly during the summer for 10 years. Other measures (eg restrictions on summer water use) were also in place at some points during the 10 years.

What did the campaign achieve?

The campaign quickly achieved a large reduction in consumption and maintained it long term.

- Total water use reduced by 21% within three months of the campaign.
- In some years, consumption was well below the target. For example, in 2014, total water use reached 1973 levels, although the city had 350,000 more residents.
- Consumption was reduced long term, with total water use at 22% of the pre-drought level in 2016.

The campaign developed a distinctive feel-good brand that people knew, liked, and identified with. For example, in a survey in 2009, 89% of participants were aware of the campaign. It also resulted in a 10% improvement in customer views about Denver Water's service.

How did it reach and engage people?

The campaign used fun, eye catching and thought-provoking adverts (eg on billboards, buses, and bus stops), installations (eg half a bench, just large enough for one person to sit on, and a stripped back car, with no unnecessary panels) and stunts (for example, using their 'running toilet' suit, which has been worn by many of their employees at various public events to raise awareness).

In the early years, it also reached far beyond traditional advertising campaigns. For example, the messages were displayed on supermarket conveyor belts. T-shirts and garden signs were given away free so that some customers displayed the message too which some were happy to do as they liked and identified with the campaign.

Informal feedback from those involved in running the campaign suggests that it got people talking, including about the ways that they save water.

How did it change behaviour?

People were not asked to make sacrifices, simply to avoid unnecessary water use. This was conveyed through the message 'Use only what you need' as well as the choice of behaviours, eg watering for two minutes less time (which would make no difference to the garden's appearance) and fix running toilets (leaky loos).

Humour was used to help people see their water use from a different perspective. For example, the 'Grass is Dumb' messaging pointed out that people could cut back on how long they water, without it making a difference to their garden.

The campaign improved water literacy in an engaging way, without the need for detailed written information or statistics. For instance, it used images of excess (oversized benches, big hair) to draw attention to the amount of water used compared to the amount of water needed for garden watering and it made people aware of the problem of running toilets (leaky loos) by having actors in toilet outfits running at sports games and other events.

Free T-shirts, garden signs and other giveaways might have helped change behaviour in several ways. They might have acted as a public commitment, a powerful behaviour change tool. Second, they might have conveyed a message that the public (not just the water company) believed in careful water use, thus shifting social norms.

What was the role of research and evaluation?

- Pre campaign: customer research showed, for example, the importance of language. The term "conservation" implied sacrifice and having to use less water than people wanted to. So the campaign opted to use different language that help people feel good about using less water. They tested the message before launch to check that people liked it.
- During the campaign: surveys were used to keep track of message awareness and support.

Could a similar campaign be used in England and Wales?

Several elements of the campaign have already been tried in campaigns here, although they have only been used in short term or small-scale campaigns and have not yet managed to build such a distinctive, well-liked, feel-good brand. At the moment, because of the relatively low levels of trust in water companies, a humorous water company campaign might not sit well, so it might need to be led by a different organisation.

What more could be done to increase engagement and impact?

After running 'Use Only What You Need' for 10 years, Denver Water decided to expand to a year-round campaign, rather than focusing on water use during the summer, to focus on supporting higher users to reduce their water use, by setting a target for water use and helping them to understand where they can cut back and to focus on efficiency, rather than conservation.

5.5   Fix a Leak Week, WaterSense, USA, 2009 onwards

WaterSense is a programme funded by the US Environmental Protection Agency that labels water efficient fittings, works with partners such as product retailers and water utilities and leads a number of consumer-facing initiatives. It has run Fix a Leak Week for one week each year since 2009. WaterSense partners across the USA and Canada work with their local communities to raise awareness about leaks and to support people to find and fix them.

What has the campaign achieved?

This campaign, coordinated by WaterSense but run by a large number of partners across USA and Canada, has a wide reach (see below). Run annually for 15 years so far, it continues to engage very large numbers of people each year. It has the benefits of a national campaign (scale, consistency of message) and a local campaign (partners can tailor their activities to their local communities).

How does it reach and engage people?

The campaign attracts attention in three main ways:

- **Social media -** partners post tips, facts, and events on social media, including a one-hour Twitter party to help get the hashtag #FixaLeak trending. For example, in 2019, this had 1,237 contributors, 3,257 tweets, and 15.9 million impressions.
- **Traditional media -** local papers also cover Fix a Leak week. For example, in 2016 there were more than 2,600 articles, estimated to reach a circulation of 223 million people. It even gets mentioned in national media, for instance a recent article in Washington Post and a recent interview on the Weather Channel.
- **Events -** partners run fun and eye-catching events, such as races with some runners dressed as toilets or leak detectives, and competitions for instance for a new water efficient toilet.

To widen engagement, material has been translated into Spanish, and activities have been designed to appeal to particular communities.

How does it change behaviour?

The activities and communications materials are decided on by each partner and so vary from area to area. However, in all areas partners draw attention to the need to check for leaks, something that research shows many are not aware of. They also motivate people to find and fix leaks by showing how much water can be lost, mainly through statistics and infographics, and occasionally through stories or demonstrations.

FIX A LEAK WEEK 2009
Demonstration Project in Phoenix

EPA officially launched Fix a Leak Week on March 16, 2009, at the home of Debbie and Dennis Jobin, longtime residents of Phoenix, Arizona. One week earlier, on March 9, EPA and its partners the Arizona Department of Water Resources, City of Phoenix, and Ferguson, set up a demonstration project in the Jobin's driveway to show just how much water is lost due to leaky plumbing fixtures in seven days.

The display included two toilets, two faucets, and a showerhead, each slowly dripping. Over the course of the week, the fixtures leaked more than 200 gallons of water, enough to meet the Jobin's daily drinking water needs for a whole year!

City of Phoenix, and Ferguson, set up a demonstration project in the driveway of a homeowner.

Fix a Leak Week Pledge

How long have you been ignoring that pitter patter

Importantly Fix a Leak Week makes finding and fixing leaks easy in several different ways, which helps reduce the barriers to taking action. Partners provide straightforward guidance on how to find leaks and they explain that looking for them takes only 10 minutes. They provide demonstrations/workshops and videos showing how to look for and fix leaks. They offer free toilet dye, free and discounted replacement parts (eg tap washers and toilet 'flappers') and free services to fix leaks for customers on lower incomes.

Having many partners across USA and Canada running many activities in one week helps to raise the profile of the issue and makes it clear that many are taking action on this important issue.

What was the role of research and evaluation?

- Pre campaign: a few partners carry out research to inform their campaigns and messaging. For example, Regional Water Authority in Sacramento recently ran focus groups to understand barriers and motivations to repair leaks, and to test responses to alternative advertising concepts. They found, for example, that the main motivation was preventing damage to property, followed by concerns over high water bills and the statistics they gave about water lost through leaks were seen as unrealistic overestimates

- Post campaign: The national impact of Fix a Leak Week on water savings is not formally evaluated and partners do not have the resources to follow up with individual customers to establish water saved through Fix a Leak Week. However, each year, WaterSense asks for feedback from project partners about their activities and media impact. The following examples give a feel for the impact of Fix a Leak week. Citrus County, a smaller water utility in Florida, runs programmes in schools (among other activities) and reported that in 2021, 210 students tested 316 toilets and identified 49 leaks with a potential water savings of more than 3,000 gallons a day. Irvine Ranch Water District, a utility in southern California, reported that in 2021 over 600 customers participated in their Fix a Leak photo contest by submitting a photo of themselves making a leak repair or completing their online leak repair programme.

Could a similar campaign be run in England and Wales?

The Fix a Leak Week model could be applied easily in England and Wales.

- It could tie in with existing water company programmes. Having a national one week high profile campaign could help raise their profile and boost interest. For example, Fix a Leak Week could be used as an opportunity to highlight water company free 'leaky loo' fix programmes; and to contact customers with high consumption to recommend checking for leaks, or to offer a visit to do this.
- Partners that have worked with water companies in the past could help with engagement. For example, it would be helpful to team up with large DIY/home improvement chains to run demonstrations and offer discounts, and with consumer organisations that provide advice on saving money to promote free checks and fixes.

What more could be done to increase engagement and impact?

Stories are generally more engaging and persuasive than statistics. They are likely to be particularly helpful, given the distrust around statistics on water lost through leaks. So it might be helpful to ask people to share personal stories about the amount of water lost through leaks and the associated cost through social media, as WaterSense is starting to do.

5.6   Water Night, Water Conservancy, Australia, 2020 onwards

The Water Conservancy is a not-for-profit organisation that helps Australians to use water efficiently.   The Water Conservancy ran [Water Night](#) for the first time in 2020 to raise people's awareness of how often they use tap water. For Water Night, people commit to not use taps, showers and running water for one evening during National Water Week.   It has now become an annual event.

What has the campaign achieved?

Water Night gets participants started on the difficult process of breaking habits. For example, after the 2020 event, participants said they touched their taps 10% less.

It also increases water literacy. Feedback from Water Night shows that the knowledge about the amount of water used for different activities improved for almost a quarter (23%) of participants. This knowledge is important to help people understand which habits to focus on changing.

How does it reach and engage people?

During the 6 weeks leading up to Water Night, it is promoted through press releases, radio and cinema ads, Google ads, and social media. The Water Conservancy's main target audience is Gen Z (18-25 year olds) so it works with influencers in this age group to promote Water Night on TikTok and Instagram. In 2022, the Water Conservancy focused on the climate change connection to add water to the sustainability conversation through its 'Water – life in every drop' campaign. This helped boost registrations from 18-25 year olds.

How does it change behaviour?

Water Night aims to help people break their water use habits. It asks them to sign up not to use taps, showers and running water between 5pm and 10pm on Water Night. The event helps participants step out of their usual autopilot, to stop and think about their water use, for some people possibly for the first time ever.

Importantly through Water Night activities, the Water Conservancy teaches people a technique to help change their habits. It provides visual cues to act as reminders, ie wrist bands that they see when reaching to turn on the tap, and pictures to put over taps.

The Water Conservancy also educates and informs participants by sending emails and text messages during Water Night. These highlight what uses most water in the home, and explain why reducing water use is important.

Throughout Water Night participants post on social media. This provides a sense that others are taking action too, which could help to shift social norms.

Participants have the option to sign up for text messages after Water Night which provide regular water efficiency updates, important for helping to support habit change long term.

What was the role of research and evaluation?

- Pre campaign: a national survey showed that people take water for granted and use it on autopilot, without thinking (published in their report Australia's Relationship with Water). The research also suggested that Gen Z (18-25 year olds) was a particularly important target because they are the most wasteful with water and the least water literate. However, at the same time, they are very open to change due to their strong interest in caring for the environment.
- Post campaign: The Water Conservancy evaluated the impact of Water Night by asking everyone to take part in a survey when they signed up and then again two days after Water Night.

Could a similar campaign be run in England and Wales?

Water Night could easily be run in England and Wales. The Water Conservancy is keen to grow Water Night to become a global event and would like to explore opportunities and ways in which Water Night could be delivered through partnerships with similar organisations overseas.

What more could be done to increase engagement and impact?

- The Water Conservancy intends to work with more partners in future years to increase engagement. With the right partners on board, there is potential to substantially increase their reach (8,000 people signed up in 2020, 2,000 in 2021, and 5,000 in 2022) and importantly to reach more people in Gen Z (10% of participants in 2021) and more people who do not already pay attention to saving water.
- It would be worth giving some thought to what else might help to engage Gen Z, such as a light hearted approach like that used in Hubbub's TapChat that struck a chord with students.
- To help with long-term behaviour change, it would be worth considering (i) providing reminders that could be used long term, such as stickers to go on the toilet and shower, which generally use most water in the home, and (ii) asking participants to extend their commitment from one night to one week or one month.

5.7   The 'Unmentionables' game, Anglian Water, 2016

As part of their wider 'Keep it clear' programme on sewer misuse, Anglian Water tried several original and inventive approaches to change behaviour. They briefed the word-of-mouth marketing agency, Grapeviners, to generate conversations about the taboo topic of flushing sanitary products, to help 'flushers' become 'binners'.

The 'Unmentionables' game was a tongue-in-cheek, hen-party style game with truth or dare questions designed to provide information as well as encourage conversations among friends about whether they flushed sanitary products. The light-hearted approach, in the confidence of friends, allowed for social norming of this previously undiscussed behaviour. The aim was to encourage women who flushed to change their behaviour through newly-discovered knowledge and peer discussion.

What did the campaign achieve?

The campaign led to a very impressive change in self-reported behaviour: 89% who had previously flushed sanitary products said they no longer did so one month later.

Importantly, it got women talking during the parties about a topic that is normally little discussed, important for shifting perceptions of what others do and changing social norms. The event itself was also conversation worthy, sparking over 100,000 face-to-face conversations about flushing in the first month after the parties themselves.

How did it reach and engage people?

The agency running the campaign, Grapeviners, used a recruitment methodology which identifies people with the personality traits that make them more likely to spread offline word of mouth, ie 'real-world influencers'. Grapeviners identified about 90 of these influencers and asked them to volunteer to invite 5-10 women friends for a party, sent them the game and some chocolate, but did not tell them anything more about what they would be doing until they opened the box at the party. This generated interest so the participants were curious and ready to engage.

Because this was a fun social activity with friends, women paid attention and engaged for long enough to thoroughly learn about and reflect on their behaviours. Parties lasted on average 2 hours 45 minutes.
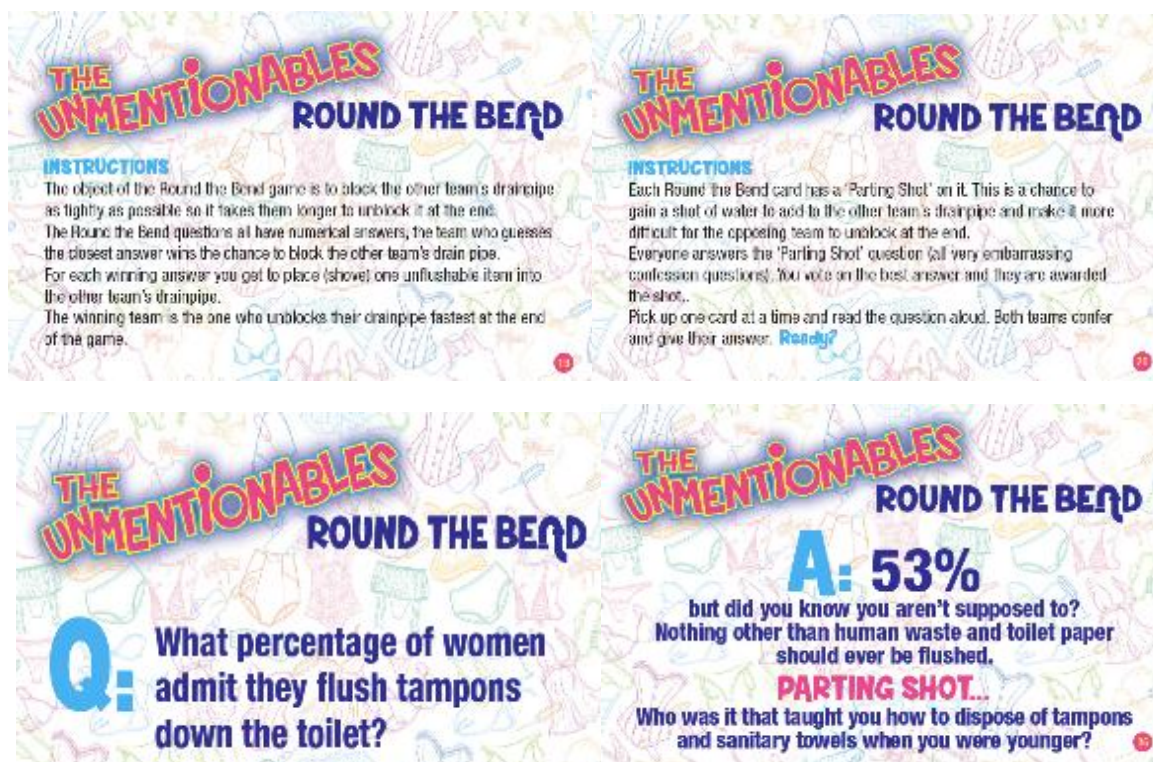
©Grapeviners Ltd

How did it change behaviour?

The game walked women through a series of silly and comical questions designed to open candid conversations, whilst educating on those topics. Each team was given a U-bend pipe, a pile of unflushables items, and question cards. The aim was to get the questions right and win an unflushables item to block the other team's pipe.

The game unearthed inadvertent errors 'flushers' were making, raising awareness of what should be flushed, something many were not aware of, in order to encourage players to stop flushing sanitary products.

Through conversations between women with different flushing habits, it provided an insight into what others do so shifted perceptions of what is normal and acceptable. These conversations might also have created a public commitment to change flushing habits, a powerful behaviour change tool.

After the party, participants were asked to share their experience on social media and the event started many face-to-face conversations. This might have reinforced the sense of having made a public commitment, as well as sharing knowledge and amplifying the impact beyond those women who took part.

What was the role of research and evaluation?

- Post campaign: Both hosts and guests who took part in the parties were asked to complete an online survey one month after the party asking, among other things, how they disposed of sanitary products before and how they dispose of them now.

Could it be used more widely?

- it took the water company's agency to initiate the parties - but this could be scaled up, without too much difficulty
- the same principle could be applied to other normally little discussed behaviours, such as water use behaviours in the bathroom like toilet flushing and showering

What more could be done to increase engagement and impact?

It is possible that the game could become something that people would choose to play, without the water company initiating the parties. But careful marketing would be needed, perhaps through word of mouth.

5.8   Fats to Fuels doorstep FOGs collection, Yorkshire Water, 2014-2020

In 2014, Yorkshire Water set up an [innovative scheme](#) in a blockage hotspot in Bradford. They worked with a local charity to set up a doorstep collection of used cooking fat for households in the area. Alongside this, they communicated about the importance of not putting FOGs down the drain. Please note that this case study is based on published information and we have not been able to verify some of the details below with individuals involved in the campaign.

What did the campaign achieve?

The scheme led to a very substantial reduction in blockages: from 85 in the three years before the scheme started to one in 18 months afterwards. With no other new initiatives run in the area, it seems reasonable to attribute this reduction to the scheme. However, it is not clear how much was due to collecting FOGs and how much due to awareness raising, ie how much would have been achieved with just one or the other.

How did it reach and engage people?

Yorkshire Water funded a local charity, the Karmand Centre, that had strong links with the community to run the scheme. The scheme was publicised mainly through events organised by the charity, although once up and running it was also publicised in local newspapers. The local community took part in the scheme enthusiastically, perhaps because of their close relationship with the charity.

85 households initially agreed to take part in the pilot. It seems that they became knowledgeable and vocal about not putting used cooking fat down the drain.

How did it change behaviour?

The scheme tapped into several motivations, such as: people taking part in the scheme felt that they were helping to reduce blockages in their area, helping a valued local charity because FOGs collected through the scheme were sold to raise money for the charity that ran the scheme and preventing their used cooking oil going to waste because it was converted to biofuel.

Importantly the scheme made FOGs disposal/collection easy. The charity provided containers to each participating household, then collected them weekly or fortnightly.

It seems possible that having the collection run by local people who knew the participating households may have increased a feeling of commitment to participate in the scheme.

What was the role of research and evaluation?

- During the campaign: Yorkshire Water kept track of the number of blockages in the area throughout the time that the campaign was running.
- Post campaign: PR19 customer research explored whether customers were interested in participating in schemes like Fats to Fuels (and various other schemes with environmental benefits). The concept of Fats to Fuels was very well received. It was seen as easy to understand, providing clear benefits to customers, having clear environment benefit and requiring little effort on the part of customers.

Could similar campaigns be used more widely?

There seems to be considerable enthusiasm for schemes along these lines, as shown by the PR19 customer research, the additional households who joined the scheme after the initial trial period and requests in other areas for similar schemes.

However, it is not clear how feasible it would be to run similar schemes in the long term. The Bradford scheme wound up in 2020. In the time it ran, it expanded somewhat from the initial 85 households, to include 1000 university students in 2015 and 500 households in 2017. However, Yorkshire Water did not replicate it elsewhere, perhaps due to practical barriers. There may have been financial barriers, as the Karmand Centre received additional funding from Power to Change, and worked with the University of Bradford to try to work out a viable business case for replicating the scheme.

It is not clear whether a scheme would be equally successful if run on a larger scale or in a different area, without a strong relationship between participants and the charity/team running the scheme. This is often a problem when scaling up small innovative schemes.

However, it is also worth considering whether any elements of the scheme that contributed to its success could easily be scaled up, eg for use in local authority doorstep FOGs collections, perhaps a separate container for FOGs and other food waste.

What more could be done to increase engagement and impact?

The results were very impressive and it is not clear whether anything else would be needed to increase engagement or impact, if running a similar scheme in future.

5.9   Drought campaign, Watercare Auckland, 2020-2022

In 2020 Auckland faced drought for the first time in 17 years. Watercare introduced restrictions on outdoor water use and began a drought campaign. This was a two-year multi-channel campaign, with numerous partners. It communicated the issues clearly and consistently for the two years and made use of several powerful behaviour change techniques.

What did the campaign achieve?

- The campaign achieved impressive levels of awareness of drought and the need to save water – above 70% throughout the two years.
- Water use reduced substantially. People reported that they had changed behaviour indoors and outdoors to reduce water use, although restrictions only applied to outdoor water use. Water use remained low even after restrictions and the campaign ended.

How did the campaign reach and engage people?

- The campaign was impossible to miss. The campaign engaged partners such as gyms, supermarkets, schools and foodbanks who helped by distributing shower timers and leaflets. Campaign messages were displayed in a wide range of settings, some mainstream, such as street posters and social media, some innovative, such as stickers on shampoo bottles (with the agreement of Unilever).
- To keep this long-running campaign fresh and ensure that people continued to take notice, the visuals and wording were changed every three months. For consistency, the same messages (eg four-minute shower) and sentiment (eg the value of collective action) were used throughout.

How did the campaign change behaviour?

The campaign focused consistently on a small set of behaviours that were carefully chosen because they were feasible for many households and had the potential to substantially reduce water use, including taking a four-minute shower, using the small flush whenever possible, using the eco setting on washing machines and dishwashers and fixing drips and leaks. It provided clear simple information about how much each could save.

The campaign gave a clear sense of collective action. This was conveyed in several ways, for example through the strapline 'If we all save a little, together we save a lot' and through posters of local people showing what action they had taken to save water. The water company also recognised that it was essential to talk about the action they were taking, such as fixing leaks, to engage a sense of reciprocity.

Collective feedback about water use was given, using a water dial that showed whether total water use was fine (green), needed to be reduced a little (orange), or needed to be reduced a lot (red). This was displayed on street posters as well as discussed on news bulletins.

The campaign provided positive reinforcement, for example through the 'water saving heroes' series of adverts that superimposed superhero costumes on people saving water at home. The water dial posters also provided positive feedback, eg 'Thank you Auckland! 4 billion litres saved.'

What was the role of research and evaluation?

- During the campaign: a monthly tracker survey was run to check that KPIs (key performance indicators) were being met. KPIs included the proportion of respondents who were (i) aware of drought and need to save water, and (ii) engaging in target behaviours. Total water consumption was also monitored.
- Post campaign: to supplement the robust quantitative data collected during the campaign, Watercare ran focus groups towards the end of the campaign, to understand how various elements of the campaign were perceived, to have ideas for future water saving campaigns.

Could a similar campaign be run in England and Wales?

Most of the campaign features could be applied in England and Wales. However, it might be challenging to have stickers put on products, eg shampoo bottles, as we are not aware of any precedent for this in England and Wales.

The last time that restrictions were introduced in New Zealand was 17 years before the campaign. So it was probably easier to inject a sense of crisis at the start than it would be in England and Wales.

OUR WATER USE

CURRENT DAILY AVERAGE

385M LITRES

WATER USE ON TRACK

Together, we need to limit our water use to **410 million litres** a day in Auckland.

WATER IS PRECIOUS   Watercare

What more could be done to increase engagement and impact?

Some customers mentioned in the end of campaign research that they did not like taking four-minute showers. A different approach (eg suggesting people shower as quickly as they can) might have been better received. But to the best of our knowledge, these different approaches have not yet been compared for impact so it is not clear whether using a more flexible, less prescriptive message would have been any more effective.

Also in the end of campaign research some customers mentioned that they would have liked personal incentives or a discount. But the daily collective feedback for Auckland as a whole (the water use dial) worked well. To the best of our knowledge, collective and personalised feedback have not yet been compared for impact so it is not clear whether offering personalised feedback and rewards would have been any more effective, and research on this issue would be helpful.

6. New campaign ideas

The best practice guidelines in this report could clearly be implemented in many different ways. The campaign ideas below are intended to suggest how the guidelines could be implemented. These ideas are intended as a 'starter for 10', ie suggestions that need further development or might spark alternative ideas.

6.1   Idea 1 - Encouraging people to use the small flush whenever possible

How will this reach and engage people?

People are often surprised at the amount of water used for flushing and see it as a waste. They are also often puzzled at the design of dual flush buttons and unsure which is the small flush[141]. Using water unnecessarily because of confusing flush buttons seems like something people would be interested in addressing. While campaigns along these lines have been run in a small way[142], this proposed campaign will scale up the attention.

The campaign could be promoted by:

- involving a celebrity to front the campaign, perhaps Sarah Beeny who has already suggested that people flush less
- asking people to post photos of their toilet flush buttons on social media for 'toilet experts', perhaps from the Bathroom Manufacturers Association, to advise them about which is in fact the small flush
- getting large employers, gyms and other organisations on board, and giving them simple clearly designed stickers to put on their toilets to show which is the small flush
- this could be a fun and newsworthy campaign, if presented in a humorous way
- the campaign could be run for a short time, eg Flush-less February - doing it at this time also gives an opportunity to talk about the value of saving water in winter

How would it change behaviour?

- it would focus on a single simple but impactful behaviour that is relevant to anyone with a dual flush toilet, ie using the small flush whenever possible
- it would help people to work out which actually is the smaller flush – one of the main reasons they do not use the small flush at the moment
- it would explain the large amount of water that can be saved to give them an extra motivation to do so
- it could provide stickers as a reminder for people to put on/next to their flush, to help remind them to use the small flush until this new behaviour becomes a habit

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[141] Water Regulations Approval Scheme Ltd - Dual Flush (wrasapprovals.co.uk)
[142] Why plumbers should be key partners in raising awareness of dualflush buttons – Waterwise

What research is needed

Initially research is needed to find out how enthusiastic people are about the idea and to understand whether there are any barriers, besides not knowing which button to flush and forming a new habit to use the small flush. Then a small trial could be run to find out how well it works (eg whether there is an increase in the number of people who know which is the small flush and regularly use it) and what else, if anything is needed to support people to switch to using the smaller flush.

6.2   Idea 2 - Work with partners to highlight saving hot water and energy

How will this engage and reach people?

At the moment, many people are looking for any opportunity to save energy and are willing to change their behaviour to do so. As a result, there is a good opportunity to highlight that hot water is the highest use of energy in the home after space heating, so reducing hot water use, particularly in the shower/bath, can save energy. While the shorter shower message is often not well received, people might appreciate knowing that this is a way to achieve something they are trying to do, ie to save energy.

We suggest a consistent concerted effort to promote this message, across energy advice providers, energy companies, consumer advice organisations, shower retailers and manufacturers, and water companies. The campaign would aim to ensure that all energy saving advice routinely includes advice on taking shorter showers and fitting a water efficient showerhead; and all marketing around water efficient showerheads highlights the potential to save energy. This should make the message hard to miss.

How would it change behaviour?

For the campaign to be effective, it is important to ensure that the message is clear and persuasive (see below). It is also important to make the target behaviours (eg fit a water efficient showerhead and take a shorter shower) easier. This could be done by:

- providing a link for ordering a free showerhead, and also suggesting retailers of showerheads for customers who prefer more choice and are happy to pay
- pointing to advice from a trusted source on how to choose a suitable water efficient showerhead, eg from Which?
- offering free shower timers, offering free products to make it easier to take shorter showers (eg dry shampoo) and pointing to the range of such products that are available to buy (including higher end products from, for example, L'Oréal.
- use of free products could be maximised through several behaviour change techniques: let people know that they will be contacted in a week or two to find out whether they used the product and how they got on (public commitments) and ask people how they will use the product, eg who will fit the water efficient showerhead and when (implementation intentions)

- offering a free daily shorter shower SMS reminder programme for anyone who would like support and encouragement while forming a new shorter shower habit, along the lines of the trial run by Affinity Water (see Section 3.2)

The role of research and evaluation

- research is needed before launching the campaign to check that the message about saving energy by saving water in the shower is clear as it is not intuitive or familiar so is sometimes misunderstood
- it would be helpful to carry out a survey before and after, to check for awareness and understanding of the message, and self-reported shower time

6.3   Idea 3 - Reduce food waste in drains to deter rats

How will this engage and reach people?

Some pest experts discourage people from putting food scraps down the drain because it attracts rats (for example Rat Blocker: How to Stop Rats Going Up Your Drain Pipes). Just the occasional FOGs campaign (eg South West Water's 'Think Sink'[143]) mentions this issue and it is not the focus of any campaigns that we came across.

Reducing the rat problem and preventing rats entering homes seems likely to grab people's attention. Over the last year or two, there seems to have been increased concern about the growing rat population and about rats entering homes through the toilet. This has been reflected in articles in the national and international press (The Guardian, The Sun, National Geographic) as well as the local press. Using stories (eg about rats entering homes through the toilet) will make it memorable and something people will be more likely to share.

This campaign might be most effective in areas where the rat problem is particularly severe. It would certainly make sense to trial it in these areas first, to run a 'proof of concept' test, where it is most likely to succeed.

The information also needs to come from relevant credible sources, such as pest control or drainage companies. Perhaps it could be used as a theme for Unblocktober.

How would it change behaviour?

Reducing the rat problem seems likely to provide a strong motivation for not putting FOGs and other food waste down the sink. It seems more immediate, personal, and frightening than preventing fatbergs. Reducing the rat problem has been used successfully for promoting food waste collections in a few instances.

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[143] Think Sink! (southwestwater.co.uk)

As with all fear-based campaigns, when providing information about the rat problem, it is important to provide a simple solution. Therefore it is important to give clear advice about what to do with FOGs and food waste, and to make it easy. This could be done by, for example, giving a link to how-to videos of what to do with FOGs and food waste; giving a link to order anything that might help, eg free gunk pots and funnels.

The role of research and evaluation

Research is needed initially to explore whether people understand the link between FOGs disposal and rats, and whether reducing the rat problems is likely to motivate them. Then communications material should be tested, for instance in focus groups. The campaign should be trialled in a small area with a rat problem to see how it works (eg how many people report changing their behaviour, whether the number of blockages is reduced) as well as to assess the impact on the rat population, before rolling out more widely.

6.4   Idea 4 - Run a period pants or air fryer giveaway

How will this engage and reach people?

We expect that the offer of period pants, a desirable giveaway, will attract people's attention in a similar way to Octopus' electric blanket giveaway. We expect it to lead to word of mouth as well as social media and mainstream media coverage.

It might be worth focusing on blockage hotspots and/or low income households who might particularly value an air fryer.

How would it change behaviour?

Using period pants is likely to reduce use of single use sanitary products which will in turn reduce the number flushed away.

There is likely to be high demand for period pants. They have already generated a fair amount of positive coverage in the press (eg positive reviews in Which? as well as health and beauty magazines) which emphasise the many benefits for women (convenience, comfort, lower cost long term). Just giving away a few, as in the Octopus electric blanket giveaway, is likely to add to interest in the offer.

The buzz created by the giveaway is likely to boost purchase of period pants. Consequently, reduced use of single use sanitary products, and ultimately less in sewers, will not just be limited to the few who receive one from the giveaway.

The role of research and evaluation

Research should explore the likely response to a water company giveaway of a product without an immediate connection to their business. Could it result in negative PR, as the mailout of socks by an energy company did? How could this be avoided? Would it work better if run through a partner organisation that women see as working on such matters, eg a health or beauty magazine, rather than through the water industry?

This giveaway should be trialled in a small way to start with, to understand the extent to which period pants shifts people away from single use sanitary products, and to what extent it reduces flushing of sanitary products. It would also be worth looking at the long term impact to check whether use of period pants is sustained or whether it is just a novelty that ends up unused in a cupboard after a few months, and to measure the impact on blockages in homes of individuals who take part.

Alternative: air fryer giveaway.

There is considerable interest around air fryers at the moment as they are seen as desirable, novel, and a helpful way of saving energy. A giveaway of a few air fryers therefore seems likely to generate interest and discussion around FOGs disposal, currently a low profile issue. For many people, we expect that using an air fryer will be a more attractive proposition than collecting FOGs in a container to dispose of. However, it is not yet clear to what extent air fryers change cooking behaviour, reduce fat use, and reduce FOGs disposed of in the sink in the long term.

7. Conclusions

7.1 The current state of play

There has been a large amount of activity in terms of campaigns run by the water companies (and others) to encourage people to be water efficient and to avoid misusing the sewerage system. While traditional water company communications campaigns still dominate, there is increasingly a move away from them. The following innovations are particularly valuable and likely to make communications more effective:

- Innovative media and formats engage more people, for longer, and in ways that support them to change their behaviour. They include eye-catching events, absorbing games, and opportunities to try out behaviours.
- A wide range of organisations now communicate about the issues and can help to address challenges the water industry faces. For example, many of these organisations are listened to and trusted; they can frame communications in a way that is meaningful and important to their audience; and they often know how to influence them.
- Campaigns are starting to make more use of social influence, a potent motivator, for example by using word of mouth. There is also more focus on energy savings from using less hot water, topical at the moment, and this benefit seems to be explained more clearly than in the past, at least in some cases.
- Campaigns increasingly identify the sub-groups they need to target, either because their behaviours are problematic (eg young men as well as parents on wipes) or because they are open to change (eg teenage girls on sanitary products).
- Campaigns often use both communications and other interventions, as communications are sometimes not enough on their own and other interventions are needed to increase the motivations or reduce the barriers to behaviour change.
- Some campaigns used behavioural science principles and research/evaluation, to inform the design of campaigns, choose between different approaches, and improve their effectiveness.

However, there are some clear problems that need to be addressed as a priority:

- Communications often suggest that many people are wasting water and disposing of FOGs/unflushables incorrectly. This is likely to backfire, encouraging more people to do the same. When using social norms messages, it is essential to mention that many people do or support the behaviours that are being promoted, ie the social norm is saving water and disposing of FOGs/unflushables correctly.
- Campaigns tend not to promote behaviours or offer products and services that people are likely to feel positive about. Ideally behaviours/products/services that are attractive and easy (or at least one or the other) should be promoted as this makes the task of behaviour change much easier. Of course it is sometimes necessary to promote less attractive or difficult behaviours, and campaigns can usually go some way towards making them more attractive or easier.
- The vast majority of campaigns are not based on behavioural science. Therefore campaigns also do not make much use of the many behaviour change techniques that have proved valuable in many other contexts and can be slotted comfortably into

- communications, eg public commitments, implementation intentions, and frequent reminders.
- There are many different messages on these issues, conveyed in many different ways, and little consistency or focus on a few key messages.
- A concerted effort is needed to understand how to address the important challenge of high water users and how to engage people with saving water and maintain reduced water use outside droughts.
- Whilst there has been a huge amount of activity in terms of campaigns, for the most part, they are not effectively evaluated and there is little readily available information on whether any of these have resulted in the behaviour change being sought.

7.2   Implications

There is a clear need for more robust evaluation of individual communications campaigns. Only a small proportion of campaigns are evaluated at all and an even smaller proportion of campaigns go beyond simply measuring reach/opportunities to see on social media. Research and evaluation is very thin on the ground. This is a major obstacle for campaigns on these issues. Research and evaluation needs to be seen as an essential and valuable part of campaigns.

This suggests that clear guidelines for campaign evaluation that map out how, what and when to evaluate communications/ behaviour change campaigns would be useful for the sector to reach a wider audience and embed its messages more effectively.

Taking learnings from the organisations both in the water sector and other sectors (such as NGOs/ charity sector) that are delivering 'best practice' when it comes to insight and evaluation would be an effective way to improve the overall standard of water sector campaigns in the future.

The need for research has also been identified at a more macro level. CCW is currently conducting some research to explore the impact of messages based on the use of different emotions. There is still a need to better understand other aspects of behaviour, ie what would motivate high water users to use less and how to engage audiences at times when problems are not so obvious.

There is merit in an industry debate focussing on what purpose national campaigns are intended to serve over and above local behaviour change campaigns (for example, providing a one stop shop for advice and information, to provide consistency to reduce confusion or make clear that they are addressing a serious national problem), then working out how best to deliver them to achieve these purposes.

8. Appendices

8.1   Information sources for example campaigns

Promoting free showerheads, Money Saving Expert

This case study is based on the following:

(1) Information on Money Saving Website for example:

Energy saving tips | Money Saving Expert

Martin Lewis: It's time to tackle the forgotten utility - can you save £400/yr on your water bill? (moneysavingexpert.com)

(2) Media articles about MSE/Martin Lewis's advice, for example:

Martin Lewis shares simple shower tip that could shave £70 off energy bill | The Sun

Martin Lewis reveals shower hack that could cut £70 off your energy bill | indy100

(3) A discussion with Tim Robertson, CEO of Save Water Save Money.

Home visit programme, Folkestone and Dover Water

This case study is based on the following:

(1) An unpublished report about the focus groups research that informed the letter sent to customers.

(2) An application for Waterwise Water Efficiency Award, also unpublished.

Use Only What You Need, Denver Water (USA)

This case study is based on information drawn from Denver Water's website and numerous articles about the campaign written by others, including the following:

Use Only What You Need Photo Gallery | Denver Water

Use Only What You Need Video Gallery | Denver Water

Sukle Advertising & Design's 'Use Only What You Need' campaign for Denver Water inducted into OBIE Hall of Fame (media4growth.com)

A conversation about conservation - Brown and Caldwell

Strategically Leveraging Humor in Social Marketing Campaigns - D. Scott Borden, L. Suzanne Suggs, 2019 (sagepub.com)

Water | Free Full-Text | What We Know about Water: A Water Literacy Review (mdpi.com)

Is there business value behind changing consumer behaviour? | Guardian sustainable business | The Guardian

Denver water use dips to 40-year low in 2014 – The Denver Post

Stop Raising Awareness Already (ssir.org)

Efficiency is the new conservation | Denver Water

2022 Approved Budget | Denver Water

Fix a Leak Week, WaterSense, USA

This case study is based on the following:

(1) Information provided by Veronica Blette, Head of WaterSense.

(2) Information on the WaterSense website Fix a Leak Week | US EPA, including campaign summaries.

(3) Media articles for example

The incredibly stupid way that Americans waste 1 trillion gallons of water each year - The Washington Post

https://twitter.com/EPAwatersense/status/1507052008896962565

https://twitter.com/EPAwatersense/status/1504538674775662600

https://twitter.com/EPAwater/status/1504450046229626884

Water Night, Water Conservancy, Australia

https://www.awa.asn.au/resources/latest-news/community/engagement/do-australians-pay-enough-attention-to-their-water-consumption

This campaign is based on the following:

(1) A discussion with Chris Philpot, CEO of the Water Conservancy.

(2) Information on the Water Conservancy website, including research to inform the campaign and evaluation of it. Water Night (thewaterconservancy.org)

The 'Unmentionables' game, Anglian Water

This case study was based on:

(1) A discussion with Jane Bellard, Grapeviners, who developed the game

(2) A brief unpublished summary of the campaign, provided by Jane Bellard

(3) A summary of the campaign in https://scorewater.eu/download/SCORewater_D4.9_PublicAwarenessCampaignGuideline.pdf

Fats to Fuels doorstep FOGs collection, Yorkshire Water

This case study was based on material from the following sources:

yorkshire-waters-long term-strategy-august-2018-min.pdf (yorkshirewater.com)

Bradford hopes to expand new 'Fats to fuel' recycling project | Asian Sunday Newspaper

University of Bradford signs up to Yorkshire Water "Fats to fuel" recycling project - YORKSHIRE BUSINESS DAILY

[Fats that blocked drains are now used as fuel | Bradford Telegraph and Argus (thetelegraphandargus.co.uk)](#)

[appendix-5a-customer-and-stakeholder-engagement.pdf (yorkshirewater.com)](#)

[Turn fats to fuels to help fight the 'fatberg' issue | Oxford Mail](#)

Drought campaign, Watercare Auckland

This case study is based on a discussion with Rachel Hughes, Head of Communications, Watercare.

8.2　Organisations contacted

The following organisations were contacted and interviewed as part of the review:

- Jane Bellard and Miranda Rennie, Affinity Water
- Vittoria Danino, Anglian Water
- Rob Lawson, Artesia
- Martin Shouler, Arup
- Julie Doherty, Avon Wildlife Trust
- David Braine, BBC
- Andrew Schein, Behavioural Insight Team
- Tom Reynolds, BMA For
- Rachel Huxley, C40
- Wes Schultz, California State University San Marcos
- Claire Farrell, Citizens Advice Bureau
- Livvy Drake, City to Sea
- Marieke Muller, CIWEM
- Jack Hodgkiss, Hubbub
- Darren Bentham, IBM
- Pieter Cornel, Kantar
- Jacob Larkin, Lanes for Drains
- Laura Foster, Marine Conservation Society
- Helen Roberts, Met Office
- Jess Cook, NEA
- Tim Wagstaff, Northumbrian Water
- Nikki Dekker, Peterborough Environment City Trust
- Anna Feeney, RSPB
- Yasmin Sanders, Sainsbury's
- Tim Robertson, Save Water Save Money
- Victoria Nevin, Ed Barnes, and Ruta Blazeviciute, Skewb
- Michelle Templeton, SmartWater (New Zealand)
- Samuel Underwood, Southern Water
- Michael Casey, SportFive
- Argus Fung, Sydney Water
- Liz Gyekye, Thames 21
- Jen Felton, United Utilities

- Lina Khattab, University of York and Cairo University
- Susan Robertson, Visit Scotland
- Rachel Hughes, WaterCare Auckland
- Chris Philpot, Water Conservancy (Australia)
- Rachel Dyson, Water Resources East
- Veronica Blette, Watersense (USA)
- Jo Osborn, Waterwise
- Tony Harrington, Welsh Water
- Sarah Ward, Jack Middleton, Josie Purcell and Jenny Wytcherley, West Country Rivers Trust
- Jenny King, Which?
- Dani Jordan, WWF
- Randolf Waters, Xylem
- Ross Marchant, Yorkshire Tea
- Braulio Eduardo Morera, 50L home
- Peter Hadfield
- Janet Manning
- Clare Pillinger
- Jacob Tompkins
- Joanne Zygmunt

CCW

The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

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