

ARCoES project: Willingness to Pay (WTP) for a continuous electricity supply – Domestic Users Focus Group (Group 1 Liverpool)

Meeting held March 2014. Transcript of meeting

ARCoES WTP for continuous electricity supply: summarised introduction from Facilitator's script for Domestic Focus Groups

Project: Valuing the electricity demand of domestic customers in Northwest England

This one-page summary aims to give background context to the transcripts to the two focus groups, both used the same script. This summary forms the first part of the focus group (group 1) transcript file archived at end of the ARCoES project.

Summarised Facilitator script

Introduction

Good evening and welcome to this focus group

You were invited as a domestic user of electricity and we are particularly interested in the use of electricity in your daily routine at home and the value you place on the availability of 24 hour electricity electricity supply in your home.

Scenario for 'what it is worth to me?'

We are going to start off with a short exercise to show that we all value common items differently, and value them differently under different scenarios. We are not asking about what the item would cost, but how much it's worth to you. ... exercise ...

Paying to avoid power cuts – what is it worth to you?

We want you to keep in mind that the questions and discussion about your routine around electricity are leading towards a similar type of valuation. This time you will be deciding how much a constant electricity supply is worth to you and your household. The first few questions will give you the opportunity to think how you use electricity throughout the day and week, and the effects of a blackout on your household's routine.

End of introduction from Facilitator's script.

Focus group location: Liverpool

5 Participants; 3 female; 2 male

A (female, working, householder), E (female, working, shared accommodation), C (female student, shared accommodation) J (male student, 2 in household), R (male, working, 2 in household).

Facilitators / researchers

Main Facilitator: Mary, second Facilitator: Karyn, Note-taker: Heather (did not speak except for introductions).

Transcript of meeting

Introduction and opening words

Karyn: welcomed participants, told them to ask for clarification at any time.

Mary: the project is valuing the electricity demand of domestic customers in the Northwest of England ... thank you for coming along to the group and welcome to the group. You have been invited as a domestic user of electricity and we are particularly interested in the use of electricity in your daily routine at home and the value you place on the availability of 24 hour electricity, the electricity supply in your home.

...

We've placed name cards in front of each of you so that we can remember each other's names. Just to start off can we go round the room one at a time and please tell us your name, the number of people in your household and if there are any children or elderly people in the household.

R: R, two people in the household, no children or elderly people.

J: J, same, two people, no elderly.

C: I'm just trying to count the number of people. C, four people, ..., so there's five.

E: E and there's three.

A: A and there's five and the youngest is sixteen.

Karyn: great.

Question 1 Generate own electricity?

M: thank you very much. Right, I'd like to start the questions with the daily routine in your households. I'd like you to just think about your and your household's daily routine at home. Now it might be more or less the same every day, it may vary at weekends if you work Monday to Friday, or it might not have a general routine at all. Within this routine, think about your use of equipment requiring electricity and there might be some that are not

obvious, for example most gas central heating uses electricity as part of the clock and an integral part of the system. So if we can break this down to different parts of the day to go through it with the questions.

M: but just before that, do any of you generate your own electricity?

Various participants: No (general laughter)

Question 2 Early Morning routine

M: Think about your early morning routine. OK, so think about a loss of power supply during the early morning, think about what can't you do that you normally do and how would you feel about it? So, for example, would it be no bother, so tolerable, if you couldn't have that early morning cup of tea or coffee? Would it be OK, for example you would be happy with a glass of cold squash instead? Would it seem so intolerable that you couldn't have a hot drink that you would find a way of getting a hot drink, calling into a café on the way to work? So, what is it about the early mornings that you would really miss and what would you be OK with? Do you want to start us off, A, please?

A: Yes, first of all it would be the shower, wouldn't be able to shower. The tea you could get round, I could go without cup of tea. But then it's the straighteners, I have to have the straighteners. You've seen my hair (to H, A laughs) and it's not good, so the're just the couple of things that would have to be tolerable if it was just for a couple of hours. The're just for getting out the house. And then there's the house alarm, powered by electricity. If there was no-one at home I'd feel a bit unsafe not putting the house alarm on when I'm leaving. But that would just be for the morning time. It would get steadily worse if it went on during the day.

M: Well, we're looking a morning at the moment, how do other people feel?

C: Well, very similar there with getting ready, and even putting different lights on if you're doing make-up, you know, the little stand-alone lamps and things like that. It would be very restricting, with regards the hot beverages, if I knew I couldn't have one I'd probably pop to the shop to get milk, coffee and things and bring them to work with me. Because if I didn't have one, it's like part of your daily routine, you have to have one to start the day. I also like to leave my phone on to charge right up to the very last minute. So if realised that that wasn't charging I think that would aggravate me as well (laughs).

J: I think that the shower would be the key thing for me, I think there is other things like I put the radio on in the morning. Not being able to have a cup or tea or some toast would be tolerable, probably would start the day in a bad mood. I could grab a coffee elsewhere, but, it would throw me out of sync for the rest of the day. The shower is the main one, it would be quite intolerable (laughs).

Karyn: no, don't make light, because if my routine is thrown out of kilter, I get like a bear. So would you actively feel at odds with yourself if you can't do what you want in the morning?

J: Things like the radio, no, not necessarily. I think the shower would be the main one. I probably wouldn't leave the house (general laughter) until it came back on. But certainly, not having a coffee in the morning, well, you wouldn't want to encounter me.

E: I think for me it's more not turning a light on in the morning, because it is very dark and we've got blackout curtains, and if it was winter, say, I'd struggle to navigate my way around the room. But I normally leave it until I'm in work to have a coffee and breakfast. I start work at eight so I just nip out straightaway, my housemates, however, it would have a massive knock-on effect for them because they are both dentists. There's certain things they have, they have their porridge in the morning, they have tea, coffee, and if they couldn't have that then they probably wouldn't have anything. [For me] it wouldn't be an issue, but for them it would be quite impactful on their day.

M: and how about you, R

R: well I'm not a morning person. My morning routine is quite short and I don't drink that many hot drinks anyway, so that wouldn't be an issue. Only the lights, I guess. I'd have my phone charging overnight, so if that was OK I could use that as a bit of a torch (general titters). But I tend to leave getting up until as late as possible. So, if I need a shower, I can leave that until later in the day. As far as the morning is concerned, I don't think there would be many issues. The only problem I would have, I don't know if this counts as within the household, I live within a block of flats and I have my car within a car park, and the door to the car park is, you know, electric.

Karyn: Of course. (general mmms).

R: so, if I couldn't get the car out of the car park, well I'd have to think of a new way to get to work.

Karyn: and ? that.

R: and I'd probably end up being late.

Karyn: and that's not something I'd thought about with parking here.

Mary: yes, that is relevant.

Karyn: excellent.

M: OK. I'll just briefly summarise. Several have found it more or less intolerable if they couldn't have their early morning shower, also hair, make-up, without lights, straighteners. People charge phones overnight, so if it hadn't charged properly that might be a problem.

Difficult to navigate in the dark, and one or two things we don't think about, some people like hot drink and toast, or porridge, and disruption to the routine would be a problem. [Electronically-operated} car parks - that we hadn't thought about - would be a problem. Does that more or less summarise the early morning?

Karyn: yep. Do you think it would lead to arguments within your house with other people, that you know, you'd be just bashing up against each other?

? female: yes

? female: definitely

A: Mmm. Especially the shower situation. That would definitely cause problems, because we all tend to want to be in there around the same time. So I think that would tend to cause problems, and just the inconvenience, I think you're not expecting it and it would definitely cause friction.

C: I think with my parents, but not now with my flatmates. I dunno, you're a bit more restricted in not having arguments (laughs), so I think you would try and see the humourous side of it, anything.

Karyn: but that's welling down your frustration. Yes, it's quite interesting.

C: Yes, and as soon as you get in the car, put the music on (titter).

Karyn: very, very interesting. Good.

Question 3 Evening routine

Mary: can we move onto your evening routine? So you're probably out in the day, working or whatever, so think about your evening routine. How would a power cut affect your evening routine? So what wouldn't you be able to do that you normally do and how would you cope with it? If you could rate the loss of power for each aspect as sort of tolerable, intolerable, or borderline between these, how would you rate them? And then I would like to ask you to consider whether you would consider going out to eat or socialise instead of staying at home? So if you could have a little think about the evening routine and how much you would miss if there was a power cut in the evening.

E: Me, I quite frequently go to the gym after work, and then I will go home and shower straightaway because I'm gross. If I couldn't shower I would feel really frustrated because it's intolerable and I'd have to go to the gym and shower there. Weirdly, the electricity in our house does frequently trip which causes friction within the household because often someone is in the middle of cooking and the power just cuts. So, it would be someone in the shower and someone cooking, and it just won't work. We do find that highly intolerable at that time and if you're doing something, I'm just working on my laptop and the power went I'd just deal with that and probably go out somewhere for the evening. But if I'd sort of

settled into the night and I was underway doing something, and it cut, then it would be intolerable and I'm a bit of a mess.

Mary: Hmm. Could I just ask about it tripping? Do you mean it sort of flips and you have to reset ?

E: You have to .. I live in a flat and you have to go out of the flat, get a key out of a lock, go to the main tripboard, flip our switch, take the key back and go back into our flat. We've realised it's definitely an earthing problem within the building. The landlord should fix but hasn't really got round to it.

Mary: OK, thank you E.

Karyn: That's really annoying if you're in the shower. (general laughs)

E: It's kind of linked to the shower and central heating. We find ways around it, but it happens.

Mary: and does all the electricity go off, or is it (E nods to first option) ...

C: I think, for me in the evenings, using several devices at the same time. And I don't know what my passion is for charging things but I have them charging. So, say if I'm using my tablet on charging, my phone will be charging, and I'll have the TV on as well just for background noise. And then lights on so that as well, and you know, you've had a stressful day you just want to have a bath or a relaxing shower and listen to music at the same time. So I think I use a number of different devices and if they weren't ... Well, I say that, actually, in the house I lived in before this, to begin with there were a lot of us living there and they went away because they were all international students and moved back home over the summer. So I was all by myself a good few months, and one day the alarm was going off, the burglar alarm, and I didn't know the code for it or anything. I didn't ask my landlord, I just tripped one of the switches on and it cut all of the electricity on the top floor of my house and I never communicated with the landlord about it. Like, the shower and things still worked. I don't know if it was powered downstairs, but none of the lights upstairs worked at all. (Laughs) So I had to have a bath, like, in the pitch black, and I never, never texted my landlord. You know, you just sort of make do. It became like a way of life and when my sister came round she said it was literally ridiculous, two seconds to send your landlord a text but I just never bothered with it. *** 15.57 *** Until the Japanese boy came back first from his summer and said, 'Why are the lights not working upstairs?' (laughter all round) and I said, 'I don't know actually I hadn't noticed' (laughter all round) but, so, I say it's an inconvenience but there are ways around it, like candles around the bath and generally what you said about the phone as a torch, and generally there are ways around it. Yes, it's not ideal.

Karyn: so, there's ways around it, but do you find them slightly ridiculous?

C: yes, that was a ridiculous situation. Err, and as you say, using your phone as a torch, like, it's not ideal. Though some phones have those special torches to use, don't they, for those situations. But, like candles, romantic in some situations (laughs), but not when you are by yourself bathing and just using it to see (laughs and all laugh). (silence / background noise a few secs)

Mary: so, what about the rest of you? Do you have a regular evening routine with cooking and studying or .. or watching tv?

Jo: highly dependent on it. I think if there was no electricity I would have to go down the pub or go out. Nothing to eat, there is nothing else to do in my flat except watch tv or go on my computer, particularly so if work and it cut out and I kind of lost work or something like that. But, yes, I think I would have to leave, there would be nothing else to do. I don't have candles either (laughs), I really would be stuck. So if I had to charge my phone, then ..

C: (emphasising with J): I know

Jo: I'd be bumping into walls.

C: (emphasising with J): mmm

R: I think I would be the same, ermm, I mean, even our heating, we don't have any gas. So, literally, everything is the electricity. Probably get quite expensive, because, you know, out in the pub or going somewhere to eat, spend a load of money. You wouldn't be able to use your fridge or freezer. So, we tend to stockpile food, you know, buy a load, go shopping once every fortnight or something, ermm, and you wouldn't be able to do that, so, I think the evening would be a bit of a nightmare.

Karyn: it would be a more hand .., hand to mouth, you can't plan?

R: yes, exactly. And you couldn't even cook either. If you did go, you would buy things like bread or sandwiches. It would probably get a bit old quite quickly.

Jo: and you've had them for lunch.

R: yes, exactly.

Jo: I've, I've a part time job in a butchers and I, like, stockpile my freezer with meat I get from theirs. Yes, I think, if my freezer conked out, I'd be pretty stuck. Having a feast ..

Karyn: or the cats would ... (J and Karyn laugh).

A: the evening with me, I have the washing machine on. So I'll do some washing, then clothes in the drier, or on the radiators. But if I can't have the heating on ... so wouldn't be able to dry anything, wouldn't be able to wash anything. The fridge-freezer would go off, the

clock radios. Errm, so you could go to bed and read with candle-light (laughs). It would be novel at first (some laugh), but you've got to eat.

Karyn: it's everything your mother told you not to do. Don't read with dim light.

A: well, the central heating system, so it would be cold.

Jo: even things like the electric toothbrush. (pause). After a while you'd get tired ...

Mary: well, a couple of you have mentioned you'd have to go out to get something to eat or just to get warm. So think about your household, because I know there are different numbers of people in the household, how much would you be prepared to pay for an evening meal and some drinks, or whatever you wanted to do? To be somewhere warm and to have some food, just a rough ballpark figure, between the household? Any ideas what you would consider reasonable for the evening?

C: literally like about £10 per person. I think you would begrudge spending it because ...

E: you would be forced out rather than wanting to go. And it's getting ready in the dark and you'd be looking for things.

Jo: not necessarily being able to relax because you're coming back to the same situation. (murmurs of agreement)

C: especially if you say, like your freezer, if you stock up, and you know you've lost money on that, or you spent money on that, that you can't get back, you'd begrudge it. You might be like (pauses) F it!, and treat yourselves and have dessert as well just to compensate for the inconvenience.

Karyn: but that's one evening. What if it's the next evening as well? Do you think your willingness to go and treat yourselves would decrease?

C, R and J: yes

J: yeah, I think after a week I'd be living in the Roxby building. Microwave meals.

C: (also has Roxby access) searching through cupboards (laughs).

Karyn: so we'd like you to think about not just one evening, but if it's to go on for a few days. Just think of all the people in the south of England and the southwest and the electricity was off for a number of weeks.

C: I think I'd try and schedule in going to a friends for tea the next day, and then a friends the next day, and then maybe a distant relative that you haven't spoken to for a while ... (laughter)

A: but if you had gas you could still cook. So you could prepare a meal and have it by candlelight.(general laughter)

Karyn: do you think you would be motivated to head down to Clas Olufson and buy a little Bunsen burner rather than going out. It's say, day 3, and the electricity still isn't reliable, do you think you would head down to Clas Olufson and buy one of those two-ringed appliances because you would begrudge paying so much?

C: I don't think I knew they existed (laughs). So I wouldn't have ever thought of that.

A: gas cooker, so But I'd still be hard pushed to go and buy a Bunsen burner thing.

Karyn: you know, like the little camping thing. Just think of that.

Jo: I think you can eat out relatively cheap. I don't think I would really. I'd get increasingly frustrated as time went on, especially not knowing, not knowing at what point it was going to get fixed. But I think I could cope. I think anything after a week would get really tiresome. I think if it was, say, a week I could make the most of it and go to friends' houses, and eat out, and probably buy.

A: I think it's if you didn't know when it would end ... It's just the if you thought, well, it's just for a week, then do, but if there's no end ... (mmms from others)

Jo: hmmm. If you knew you were going to get compensated for not having the elects for a week ... a week of no electricity, you could save your receipts, send them off to npower. Then, err, I think I wouldn't mind so much.

A: you can but hope.

Karyn: that's really interesting that you said that you would actually leave the house. You would actively be outside of your own home. If the electricity's off Is that something you really would do? If you suddenly thought there's four days without electricity, I would move home to my parents, or I'm going to a hotel, or .. would that be the first thing that comes to mind? To actively leave your own home?

C: I would, but I wouldn't go to the extremes of a hotel, because financially I wouldn't be able to justify it. You're asleep for like ten hours, then you're out every day, but I would try and, like, keep myself busy and go to places where there are free electricity. You know, even places like Macdonalds where I'd plug my laptop in, do my work and get a very cheap meal. Unhealthy but cheap. Then just try and use other peoples electricity and such (laughs).

Karyn: so it's a lot of 'out of the house' rather than coping within the house?

C: in agreement) h-hmm.

A: I'd try and cope within the house.

E: I think I'd do the same until it got dark, say, and then you just couldn't really do anything within the house, then I might go to the pub for a drink. But I think I'd muster through until maybe nine o'clock, go out for an hour and a bit, ...

A: I go to bed then. (general laughter)

(laughter and comments not picked up)

E: I'd have to go out, then come back just to sleep, so it wouldn't be too bad.

C: I think you would force yourself to go to bed earlier as well. It's darker, and especially if it's in the winter months. If it's in the summer and you've got your curtains closed, I'm pretty much oblivious to what the weather's like anyway. You'd just force yourself to go to bed earlier, partly out of boredom, and partly just because you could. Yeah, nothing to do (murmurs of agreement from some younger participants). As well .. 25min 15sec.

Jo: yeah, it's not necessarily the electricity, it's just what it represents in terms of help for in life. If you didn't have access.

C: Hmm. I can't help but think, it's so strange that we're going on about it when, that people lived without all these appliances before. Without tv, without hair straighteners, and without their radio alarms, and, like, their lamps to do their make-up, and stuff. They're ... I don't know ... It was a very different world back then wasn't it. (general laughter)

R: they also had other ways to light their house, wouldn't they? We all have electricity. So if you had other stuff, I don't know, say board games or cards, you wouldn't be able to see what you are doing, so you would go out, wouldn't you?

C: yeah. H-hmm.

Mary: If I could just, there's quite a lot there, so if I could just a brief summary. OK, there were one or two differences. People would probably go out, although some have gas and would say 'I could probably cook at home'. Fridge and freezer going off were problems to a number of people, and, if you wanted to do a load of washing in the evening, clock radio wouldn't work, you'd get cold without your central heating. Begrudge going out and spending on a meal, but possibly spend around £10 per person the first night, but that would decrease and you would get increased frustration over the week if the electricity was off for a week. You could try going round to friends or relatives for your tea. And you might go out of the home, some people might go out of the home, some people prefer to stay in the house if they could. You'd go to bed earlier, but the real comment was that you rely on electricity nowadays for so many things that you'd be lost without them. Is that a reasonable summary?

General 'yes' / mmm)

Mary: Thank you.

Karyn: may I also add that we're really speaking, we've focused a lot on the things we couldn't do without physically. If the infrastructure is gone. I know some evenings, when I go home my sole ... is to lie on the couch. It's not, sometimes it isn't to watch tv because I've had a very stressful day, or I'm very tired, and if something gets in the way of that, and If I come home and there's no lights, I would really feel that it's very, very difficult to be able to cope. I might go out. That is my evening ruined. Do you see? ... mmm .. How would you feel emotionally about it? You know you spoke about frustration: I'm not able to do this, I'm not able to do that, but how would it throw your sense of being?

E: I feel I could cope. If I've got a plan in my head about how I'm going to spend my evening, and then it's thrown , a spanner in the works, then I'd definitely feel uneasy and it would take me a little time to reassess how I was going to spend my time and that to make the most of my time and not just sit there and go 'this is just really annoying'. I'd get myself doing something.

Karyn: OK, so if you could all think of just not missing out but how it would make you feel as well. And, you are in households, but you do not head the household as such, you co-rent, but A, you are head of household, so if something goes wrong, you have four people that would turn to you. Do you find that, would you find that, personally not just your own frustration that you would have to take on, but the frustration of those around you as well?

A: yes, slightly, but then we recently had an incidence. We thought, we discovered the fridge-freezer was tripping all the electrics in the house. If you left the door open for more than ten seconds, everything went off. We located in to the fridge freezer, so that was frustrating and it became funny in the end, because everytime we opened it we were doing countdowns to make sure everyone closed it quick. And we were walking round with a torch. We knew where the torch was and had to keep tripping the switch again. But if it all went off, and I think it was for a long period, I suppose everyone would complain to me. But then we just would, we just sort of all get on with it in our house. (30mins 02secs). We put the blame ... we just, we just get on with it. Just hope for the best.

Karyn: And within your shared households, is there any belief that a household leader should have to put up with everyone else's frustration?

C: Well I live with one boy and the rest of us are girls. So probably just stereotypically, I would say that I'm quite ... , like ..., I wouldn't care as much as others, I think that they'd get really het up about it. But I've been thinking about when I've been given an ??? of sofa, I'd been thinking about a day I'd come back from work, like at the radio station, and if it was on a night we'd all planned to go out and we all had to get ready, I'd literally refuse to go out just because it would destruct my getting ready process so much. I wouldn't be able to have a cold shower or anything, you know. It's psychological, you know that you haven't done your hair properly or such. I wouldn't go out if I hadn't done my hair properly. I need to do my make-up. Vain as it sounds, you know, when you've had like a horrible week and want

to, like, spend loads of time getting ready, and if you can't do that. Even when you are pre-drinking round with your friends and you're listening to music, the whole digital side of it enhances the experience and stuff. And then you've got to think about when you come back from your night out. You don't want to be sort of falling over things and, yes, you can't have your hangover food unless you buy in before and stuff. Yes, that would annoy me more than if, sometimes, because you come back from a busy day at work, like, as you said, all you want to do is lie down on the sofa, and technically you can do that without the lights on and all your appliances and stuff. But if it's when I'm getting ready for a night out, it would infuriate me.

Karyn: good.

Question 4 & 5 Daytime routine and weekend routine

Mary: OK. Can we move onto daytime routine. I'm really just asking, and also tie it in with your weekend routine. Do you normally stay at home in the day or are there days when you are at home? What would be the effect in the daytime of a power cut? Would you stay at home or go elsewhere? And what would you do for a lunchtime meal?

C: is this during the week or at the weekend?

Mary: well is suppose this is moreDoes anyone stay at home in the day during the week? (mumbles of no's.) No. So it would only be at the weekend. So what would you do about your weekend lunchtime routine?

C: Sunday – carvery (bit of laughter). I would actually, I'd appreciate that. But you'd just think it was so expensive. It would get that, I know you can still prepare some meals in, but you like having hot meals and things like that, especially if it's horrible weather. You don't want to just have a sandwich or something. Umm. So, yeah, you'd probably eat out just once over the weekend, I would. With my housemates, we wouldn't be able to justify eating out for lunch, then for tea, and next day for lunch and tea as well. We'd just do Sunday Carvery and other than that make do with what we'd got.

Karyn: and think about how you organise your weekend. A lot of people do their washing for the whole week, or they catch up on paperwork. Or they do their hovering at the weekend. Think about how that would disrupt what you do over the course of a week as well.

Mary: do you organise yourselves like that to have weekend jobs that require electricity, use of appliances at the weekend ...?

A: yes. Ironing usually at the weekends. So, daughter's uniforms for the week ahead, husband's shirts so they, as he works away, so I do on Sundays. So if I couldn't do that for the week ahead, and the washing machine is constantly on at home. So that would really And the dishwasher, you could get by without that but it's extremely monotonous.

Mary: so how would you feel if you've got all these things planned to do at the weekend?

A: it would annoy me because I'm a bit of a tidy freak. So that would really bother me as I could see it mounting up. I could see that pile of ironing getting bigger and bigger. And if I can't clean or Hoover, I'd think I have to do that during the week, and work ... I wouldn't want to do it, it would really frustrate me.

Karyn: it would double your week-load?

A: it would. I work shifts. Sometimes I start quarter past eight and I don't get home and I don't get home until after nine. And if I'm doing a few days, I wouldn't be thinking of the job ahead of me.

Jo: I don't think it would be destructive for me, but I think with having the student life-style it's more flexible, so Sunday is, like, my jobs day, so I do my laundry and shopping and everything like that. But I think I could easily catch up another day. I could go to uni on Sunday, and do work then, and catch up on Monday or Tuesday, do my jobs then if the electricity can be restored. But I think that reflects the lifestyle I have, it definitely makes coping easier. But if I had a nine to five job and I had to have shirts and things like that ready it would be a lot more frustrating, I'd be anxious.

Mary: what about the rest of you. Do you not have a regular weekend routine, for doing jobs and so on?

E: I mean, sometimes I like to have a cooked breakfast at the weekend. I like eggs. It would annoy me, but I'd get over it quite quickly because, if in the week I know it was likely there wouldn't be electricity, I wouldn't have mentally prepared to have eggs that morning. Obviously if it happened on the Saturday, then I'd be a bit miffed. But I'd say I don't have a set routine so I could always put things off for in the week or whenever the electricity came back. But I'm frequently out at the weekend anyway, so it wouldn't impact on my plans in that respect.

C: I think I do washing on say, like a Saturday or Sunday. Generally I give my room a bit of a tidy, but hovering is a bit of a seldom occurrence. If I did do it, it would be on the weekend. (some laughter) But then, like just then, if it really inconvenienced me and I had loads to get through, I'd like, nothing to wear for the week ahead, or really wanted to wear that dress on such and such occasion and I needed to get it washed, then I'd take off the Monday morning because I can do that. It's like flexible, but if I were in a 9-5 job I obviously couldn't do that and it would inconvenience me.

Mary: What about you, R, do you work Monday to Friday?

R: Yes, I work Monday to Friday. I don't say I necessarily have a weekend routine doing jobs. I quite like to enjoy my time off at the weekend and do other things. So if something needs to be done, like, you know, washing needs to be done, it just gets done when it comes up.

It's not necessarily saved for the weekend. The only thing would be, if, you know, the electricity was off for a prolonged period of time, then the laundry would start to pile up. And then, as you start to run out of clothes, work clothes, because I think my work clothes could last me about two weeks and they tend to get washed every week. But if I couldn't do that, I'd probably have to go looking for a laundrette or something, and that would happen on the weekends. Also, I'm the same that I like to have a cooked breakfast on the weekend sometimes. So if you knew you wouldn't have electricity you wouldn't plan for it, but maybe you'd plan to go out somewhere, have a cooked breakfast. A lot of that would depend on the weather, because sometimes you don't fancy going outside, you know, if it's not a nice day.

Mary: but those who like a cooked breakfast at the weekend, if you suddenly woke up and planned to do it and there was no electricity, how would you feel? You're not going to be able to do it unless you have a gas cooker (laughs). I presume you're both the same as you mentioned it?

E: Well, I'd be disappointed because I'd say that breakfast food is my favourite kind of food. I like pancakes, I like eggs, it would annoy me greatly, but then I also enjoy things like cereal so I'd just go down the shop and get some milk. It would be OK, it wouldn't be ruining my day, I'd get over it quite quick.

Karyn: well, hopefully no-ones weekend is about doing jobs (general laughter). There will be some sitting down at some point, in front of the tv, listening to the radio. Your cooling down after the week. If you had to go out straight away on a frosty morning, it's cold, the house is cold, it's in the middle of December, you haven't any plans, but you realise you have to go out. How would that make you feel? Would it be frustration or ...?

C: I think, I've had as it were, I think it's comparable, my tv's broken and it got fixed yesterday or the day before, a good two or three weeks since the landlord took it away. I don't really watch tv during the week, because sometimes I can be at the radio station until 8 o'clock, I've missed all the soaps so I use the weekend to catch up on them, the omnibuses, that's the word. When the tv's not there and I cannot watch them, that's the really frustrating bit. First of all you are behind on it and you want to watch it yourself, but all you have to do is log on Facebook and see all your friends faces, like, and that infuriates me a bit. But, as regards, what was the question, if I had to go out?

Karyn: if it was very cold and you had to go out. You can warm yourself, but would it frustrate you? Would you take the stiff upper lip? Or would you try and make the best of it? How would you cope?

C: Well, my house that I lived in before was, literally, freezing, and I used to go to bed and the next day in the morning and I had about 50 different layers, like slept in a bobble hat and things, so improvising. Yes, in my house everyone likes to do their own things, so we

won't necessarily do things together, so it seems like, you're forced to spend that time together. Like, 'Are you staying in because I'm going out because it's too cold', are you coming out with me sort of thing. It might be a nice bonding experience if nothing else.

Mary: you'd actually like that forced socialising, would you?

C: Totally, little things like that help to foster the bonds.

JO: you might of heard about my travails last year?

C: what was that?

Jo: the cold house. It was incredibly cold, it got to 7 degrees at one point which was colder than outside and you could see your breath.

C: that's when I was cold as well, wasn't it?

Jo: yes. I coped by staying at uni until ridiculous times just because we couldn't afford to actually have the heating on.

C: Because we have the 24 hour access, we can do that. Then obviously make ourselves numerous cups of tea ...

(some faint)

Jo: I think it's a kind of opportunity, it kind of helped, I got lots of work done, bonded with people who maybe I wouldn't. I'd want to go and crash out because I was really tired, but didn't go home because I'd have a better night. I think I could adapt, adapt relatively easily.

C: Because when I lived in that freezing house and I used to stay at uni until 11 o'clock at night and so on ... and now, like, my situation has changed because I'm in my fieldwork year now. But I could stay at the radio station 24 hours because they've got security, but I know I can go back to a nice, warm house. I look forward to that. If I knew I couldn't do that, it's like .., going home.

Mary: is that something you all feel, that you could adapt to very cold? Actually going home to a warm house is something you look forward to? You expect your house to be warm?

E: Our house at the moment is always cold, so we've set the heating to come on for two hours in the evening and it comes on at seven, and we sometimes are so happy that we actually exclaim how happy and it's countdown to heating time. And it's OK, you don't have to wear a big jumper. You can just walk round in your normal clothes. It sounds silly, but it's a cost thing. We don't see the point of paying for something when you can cope quite well. But once you put the heat on for two hours the house retains the heat quite well, so, yes, we do look forward to the heat.

Karyn: yes.

E: it's a comfort. It's a natural thing that you're more comfortable when you're warm.

Karyn: everyone says that they will cope, but it all sounds miserable. (general laughter). If you were to look back at this time in ten years, with the hindsight do you not think why didn't we put it on at six o'clock or why didn't I come home. When you're in, humans are very good at coping, but sometimes we confuse coping with actually being happy with the situation. But, do you think that you are putting up with it, but doing it at a loss to yourselves? But that's fine, that's admirable, I'm just trying to tease it out, do you think it's actively a loss to you? (45 min33 sec).

E: I think when you say 'Oh, why wouldn't you put it on at six?', I'm frequently the only person in the house until 7 o'clock. I normally only have to be in the house half an hour, 45 minutes, I don't see that it's necessary to heat the whole house for one person. If I was living on my own that would be a different situation. I would still probably have a set time I'd put the heating on, but I don't require it, it's a nice luxury to have an extra bit of heat. So I'm more than happy to put a jumper on for that time.

Karyn: so, you're thinking about your household's bills, shared bills?

Jo: yes, that's fair. We had some disagreements last year because I lived in a house with four others, four guys, and some of us felt we should have had it on more, others had less money and didn't want to have it on. Yes, and I guess like, only one or two people in the house, and four people paying for it, it becomes that feeling of guilt that you just cope. You know you are costing someone else money at the same time.

C: last year, this is in the freezing house, you know you do the top ups, the meter thing. And, I like, always put on £5 at a time, then, like, the other housemates would put on £20 at a time. But, because I never knew what I was doing from one week to the next, like I could be away the whole week in the summer, I wanted to cover the time I was actually there. It was a huge house, really high ceilings and the room were really big, and it literally barely generated any heat. But in the one I'm in now the bills are included. But if it goes over we pay a bit more, but we've never been told we've gone over so far. My housemates rooms are all upstairs, apart from mine which is downstairs. I go and put it on (a garbled bit) because I absolutely hate being cold. It's a bad thing in the world for me, I hate being cold. I just put it on auto when they've gone upstairs, but they... yeah, we haven't been told off for being over yet, but if we did, I wouldn't do it, but while I can get away with it, I'll do it. They all have the same routine where they finish at 5 o'clock, whereas sometimes I come back at 8 o'clock and they've already put the heating on at five for a couple of hours, and then, like, my radiator's tepid when I get back. I just want to be nice and warm for when I get back and I just bash it on.

Jo: we had this situation, the year before last, with people, we had this heating on for say, like two hours a night, and then some people had, like, secret electric blankets and heaters

and it probably ended up costing us more than if we'd just had the heating on. Yeah ..., lot of disagreements. (laughter)

Karyn: and do you think it becomes fractious?

C: yes.

Jo: yes, definitely. Last year in particular, it was so cold, and then, like, we got quiet angry with each other because we felt some people were more responsible for us being cold than others. And then, also, it became like, one guy saying he couldn't afford for the heating to be on, but he has actually gone out three nights in a row so he doesn't need the heating on because he's never here. He's sponging off heating, all the nightclub's heating at our expense. Not bitter!

Karyn: no, we want to hear it.

A: no, it's similar in a family household too. We have the heating set in the morning for a couple of hours. Then in the afternoon, if I'm in I won't put the heating on. Because we have a gas fire, if I'm in one room, it's four floors and I can't justify heating the whole house. I'll be in and out of every room, but I'll just put one fire on if I'm sitting there. Then in the evenings, when everyone comes home and says, 'It's freezing', I put the heating on then to heat the house in an evening. But, it's just the cost of it too, and once the house is warm, I'll switch it off because I'm hot then. (laughter). Once I'm fine, it can go off.

Karyn: I know your daughter is here, but, does that cause problems, or are you on the same ...

A: no, it causes problems. (50mins 16)

Karyn: we'll just leave it at that. (more laughter). OK. So whilst you really dig down and work out what your electricity generates: your car parking, actually is part your heating, or being without it because of someone else's decisions can become quite fractious over time. That's really interesting.

Question 6 Length of power cuts

Mary: I'd just like to briefly go through, if the loss of the power was for different lengths of time, would that make a difference to your actions. I mean, we're assuming that you wake up and there's no heat and you don't know when the electricity is coming on again. What would you miss most if the electricity was off for one hour? And then you might want to consider different times off the day, what would you miss most? and say 4 hours a half day cut, 8 hours a full day, or 24 hours? So, a very short power cut, what would you miss most?

A: it depends on the time of the day.

E: the first thing in the day, I would want to turn the light on and get ready.

A: I don't use lights. I creep around in the dark (laughter). I'm like a bat.

(background of people saying 'lights')

Karyn: so lights.

A: hot water, heating. When I wake up I like to feel warm, otherwise I can't get out of bed. So I would struggle getting out of bed if it was into a cold room.

(general agreement)

C: I'd say that if it was in the morning, I'd like lights straightaway, because sometimes I get out of bed, put the light on, get back in bed and just adjust, So I probably wouldn't be able to get out of bed if it was dark.

Mary: so really it's the lights, and the warmth in winter? What about if we had a half-day cut? So you might want to think coming home in the evening and it's off. You don't know, so we've gone through the morning, you might want to think about the weekend?

C: anything to do with cooking appliances. Because if in the day you've had something like a sandwich in work, you really just look forward to having a hot meal. And really, unless you are optimistic that it might have started working by the time you get back, please be working, please be working, and you've planned what you are going to cook, and you realise it's not working, it would be really annoying.

Jo: I guess it's something seasonal as well. If it's winter, you use electricity a lot more than summer. I mean, ...

A: at the weekend, the thing that would bother me is the tv. I could get a takeaway, get some wine, and then if I couldn't watch House of Cards it would kill me (laughter). So we're just into that, and that is the routine. You know, you think we'll just settle down and watch a couple of back soaps, so I think it would be the tv. You could cope with the takeaway and bottle of wine, but ...

R: yeah, because, like you said, you could have a takeaway if you couldn't cook, but if you have no tv and no internet, you wouldn't, you know, have much entertainment in the evening. And also, depending on the time of year, the heating would be quite nice in the evening as well. But mainly so that you'd have something to watch.

Karyn: and all of you live in households of some shape or form. Do some of you shower in the evening and some in the morning. You know, you've divied up your time, so that you always know that if one showers in the evening that means I can always shower in the morning. But if the electricity goes in the evening, that means everyone has to shower in the morning. Do those sort of things occur? Or one would make her lunch in the evening, which means the kitchen is free for me to make my lunch in the morning. So is the way you set up

for the next day impacted as well? Do you break down your days like that within your household?

C: I have my shower in the evening, just because my hair takes so long to dry. I haven't physically got enough time in the morning to sort it out. Everyone else has theirs in the morning. There's a shower downstairs and a bath / shower upstairs. When I first moved in, the downstairs one was all mine because mine's the only room downstairs. Then I always used to run upstairs anyway. I think I would be perfectly fine. I have as much time as I would like in the evening, but for them in the morning, sometimes they're knocking on the door 'hurry up, hurry up'. If none of them could do it, I genuinely think that three of them have got gym membership and they'd use the gym facilities to be honest.

Mary: what about other households. Do you have things you do in the evening to free up time for someone else to use such as shower or cooker in the morning?

A: both in our house, in the evenings and in the mornings. If it was off in the morning we would just stick to the evening shower and vice versa. Our shower is in constant use.

R: there's only two in our household so we don't get in each other's way too much. We're also both members of the same gym which is about 5 minutes walk away from where we live. If we really had to, we'd just go to the gym for a shower. Yes, you know, we don't get in each other's way, we don't have a set routine.

Jo: yeah, I concur with that.

Karyn: good.

Mary: so what if the electricity was off for 24 hours. It was off in the morning, and it was still off the same evening. So you thought, OK, I can have shower in the evening, OK, I can have a sandwich for lunch, what's going to happen then? How do you envisage it, if, come late at night and you still can't have a shower? The lights weren't on, the house was cold, and obviously you've got to come home and sleep?

A: everyone would be very miserable. At this point everyone would be moaning why haven't I fixed the electricity. (laughter) I think everyone would be getting a bit fractious. Because laptops, phones, hair, everything would have been on.

Karyn: alarms, things for the next morning?

A: yes. Everything would be a problem if that happened.

Karyn: and do you think that you would even want to go out with those people who are nagging you?

E: I think that in my household, I tend to bottle things up. There is one person who would be particularly irritating because she moans about everything. So I think that me and, there's

three of us in our house, so that one person would start to create a bit of tension. (58 min 13 sec) *** There would be some internal tensions .. one moaning .. all in it together ... get over it.

Karyn: humans are very good at coping ... how it makes you feel ...

*** rest not transcribed in full. Some quotes noted for supporting findings,

Notes and quotes to support findings.

Question 7 Items for use during power cuts

A: we have the torch hanging up from the last power cut we had. Candles anyway around the house, and we know where the matches are.

C: Candles ... but ... one house completely against using anything lit, she was in a house fire when very little. .. She wouldn't allow them (housemates) to put candles on my birthday cake. ... she would use a torch but I don't know if we've got one in our household. I don't think we've got one (torch) anywhere.

R: we don't have a torch. ... I think my phone would get used heavily [as a torch MD]. It would depend how long it was for, my phone battery would drain rapidly [when used as a torch].

J: I think I would be spectacularly unprepared. Don't have a torch, candles or matches.

Question 8 purchased for a power cut / Investment for longer cuts.

E: I've got a flask ... be prepared, that's ingrained into me ... you just deal with it.

C: would go out and buy food. ... more luxuries and like to treat ourselves ... sweets and chocolate and crisps overpurchasing to safeguard ourselves.

R: if it was a long period of time, you wouldn't just want to spend money going out to eat. ... probably invest in something (e.g. camping stove).

All urban dwelling. A has lived in the country (rural places) and 'coping there would be different ... and more difficult to cope'; E: rural in small village as a child; C: rural as a child; J: brought up in urban but small town; J: Kendal, so relatively rural; R: always urban.

E: re loss of internet – she coped and quite enjoyed it, others different (1hr 11 min).

Times when loss of power annoying: Loss of power and entertaining:

E: if I was entertaining someone. If I had friends coming up from London I'd feel like a really terrible host.

A: I'd feel the same if we had visitors

Power cuts when they have visitors / guests - very annoying, feeling of being a poor host / hostess.

Question 10 Planned power cuts

Planned power cuts. Does it make a difference if the cut was planned? How?

General agreement that easier to cope.

E: mentally prepare and deal with it

A: prearrange your day accordingly .

C: ... and it was for the following weekend ... arrange to go back home ... remove myself from the situation ...

Question 11 change topic to potential electricity shortfall

On a slightly different topic: (1hr 14min) there is a potential shortage of electricity generation over the next 10 years. There have been suggestions that, to ensure electricity supply to homes and vital services during peak demand times, factories would be paid to switch off electricity during these times. How do you feel about this suggestion? Would you consider your home electricity supply to be safeguarded? How would you feel?

A: spoke about pgm on tv whereby hotels switched air con off for an hour then asked guests if they'd noticed – they hadn't. (in London)

Feel this safeguards your supply? (1:15:34) * this section transcribe for quotes ****

E: I think it would actually make me more nervous. That if they are cutting things down, then eventually they say we are going to shut down electricity nationwide for an hour. ... I wouldn't see that they were doing that to safeguard me ... they are doing it to see if they can cope I would look on it as a bit of a warning.

R: it would make you realise there is a problem. Because if there wasn't a shortage, ... they wouldn't ask anyone to switch off. ... I don't think I would really feel safeguarded.

A: think it's the thin end of the wedge. ... a bit sceptical about it ..

J: .. it's going to have some effect

E: ... factories closed down ... impact on people's wages ... shops and lights left on 24 hours, they say it's safety thing, but I think it's unnecessary to light a whole shop when no-one's in it. (1hr 19). ... turn that off rather than affecting someone's business ...

Students: (change away from 24 hr access) – quite problematic ... used to 24hour libraries ...

Buying items for the home in this power cut scenario / generating electricity

E: ... my dad is quite keen on solar panels If you own your own home ... I'm a tenant

R: quite keen on it, but a tenant ...

J: (a tenant) .. I think I'd have a different outlook if I was a homeowner ... I guess if you had a young baby and children ... you'd feel less like 'I'll just cope' and more prompted to do something ...

Question 12 Financial

(1hr 23m)

Financial. Imagine that it would be possible to pay to avoid the borderline / intolerable loss of power. All things considered, for example, loss of heating, hot food and drinks, television, home entertainment etc, how much it is worth to you to have a reliable electricity supply? This is not a reflection of how much you pay for electricity, but how you value electricity in your daily routine. Theoretically how much would you be willing to pay to avoid what you consider to be the intolerable impact of losing power

Karyn: how much it's of value to you ...

J: in current circumstances, .. I don't think I'd pay anything ... I don't remember ever having experienced a power cut ...

A: I could live it [for 24 hours] , I could cope, but everyone round me couldn't ... How much would I pay to keep them quiet ...

C: 'for a special occasion, if you had friends coming up, then pay £20 to have this nice evening' ... 'but generally speaking I'm quite frugal' ... seek out alternatives ..

Karyn: [Value of compensation from npower / how much would you need to be compensated?](#) – for impact on household and e.g. walking out smelly in morning

R: depends on how much you think your time is worth ... took an hour out of your day instead of ten minutes to [do a task] then you'd think that hour of my time is valuable to me ... how much it would inconvenience me.

J: Let me throw out £5

C: £5? I was going to say £40 (for the household)

A: the figure that came to my head was £100 ... there's the household

J: for 24 hours?

A: there's five of us ... just to compensate everybody ...

Karyn: ... have to rely on 'public' infrastructure ... there will be a queue ... think about that ...

R: They write to you ... cut off for 24 hours ... they can give you £50 or stay on and no compensation ... then £50 (implies will accept)

J: £20

R: I wouldn't do it for £20

C: I'd do it for £5 (1hr 32.38) (laughter all round) I'd spend all day at the Roxby building ... I'd get £5 profit ...

J: I wouldn't say £5; £10 .. £10 I would, it would be worth it.

R: I wouldn't do it for the whole day for £10, it wouldn't be worth it.

Mary: what if at weekend and haven't got the option of going to the Roxby, a scenario without 24 hour access ..

C: £10 then ... I made do without electricity in top part of house On reflection it was depressing ... at time it was comical ...

Karyn: if you can't think how much, what is the least amount you would need? C has said **£5 for one day** ...

J: yeh, **£10 compensation** and I'd be happy with that... (C and J agree they are student-minded ...)

A: **£50 upwards ... that would take us out for a meal in the evening** .. (for household)

J: I think it (the low value) is a reflection of our circumstances (C & J are students) ..

E: (for her personally) .. **for the day, probably £10 - £15,**

R: ... energy companies make a lot of money ... I'd want to hit them hard ... we pay £49 per month direct debit for our electricity between two of us, so that's £25. I'd like to make a profit ... **so maybe £30 each.** ... so basically a month's free electricity ..

J and C: for one day?

R: ... because it is a big capitalist organisation ... you pay them a lot of money for a service ... you want to be compensated quite heavily because it is an unforeseen circumstance ...

Karyn: do you think £30 would cover the inconvenience for one day?

R: .. if a weekday and at work, would only cover the evening ... if a weekend try to get out of flat ... yes, I don't think I'd miss electricity too much for one day

Karyn: now it's 2 days in a row. Would you need more compensation? Would £30 per day be enough? Or £30 first day, £40 next day? How do you see as the inconvenience grows? C, do you think for 2 days still happy with **£5 per day**?

C: if I knew for only those 2 days, then 'yes'. ... **£7.50 at weekend** (laughter) ... treat myself with £5 Consider it £5 extra, **use other people's resources to charge my phone etc, so £5 profit**

Karyn: [asks A if £50 enough for 2 days]

A: £50 upwards for one day, after that it needs to be higher ..

Karyn: asks re increase over time and compensation for frustration, and if R wants more money for increased frustration or to get back at energy companies

R: depends on time period .. more frustration the second day ... **in terms of compensation per day, I don't think it would steadily rise or steadily fall** ... say if without electricity for a month, and you expected £30 a day. ... they're not going to give you £900 for the month are they? .. **you'd also adapt and by the end of the month you'd cope much better** ... but 2 days compared to one, you'd cope better with one ... You'd want a bit extra compensation

Karyn: now to spin it on it's head, you said you wouldn't expect the company to pay you £900?

R: no .. I'm only paying £49 a month,

Karyn: but not what you're paying, but how much of value to you ... over a longer period of time If you should say, 'if I give you this much money, I'd have electricity now' ?

R: for one or two days I don't think I would spend much just to get the electricity back ...

J: it would increase ... (R agrees) ...

C: it increases, then over time as you acclimatise ... you'd start being resourceful in different ways You're so used to it after an extended time period ...

Karyn: you think it would be inversely U-curved? You'd want more and more over a short period, then survival mode would kick in?

C: yeah

A: well there's certain things – cooking, fridge-freezer, ... 'but you would learn to cope with it in some respect' ... the pressure of everyone in household ... how much could afford to pay to get it back on ... I would feel being held to ransom ...

Karyn: if don't have constant electricity, goes back to hand to mouth.

(1hr 44min)

A: it's how much time you save with electricity ...

Karyn: so it's how much you value your time ... is it minimum wage? £8 per hour? Or do you think 'my time is worth more'? ,,

R: **'when you've got a job and income, you are more willing to give up some of that money for comforts and services'** ... more than minimum wage **'Your free time becomes even more valuable'** ...

Karyn: so should it be double minimum wage? Or more?

R: if earn min wage then double, if earn more ... more than earned.

A: I disagree My time not more important than yours (if she earned more)

R: no it'd not no-one's time is more valuable, it's how much it is worth to you ... if you had £1 million in bank, would you only spend £50 for one day to get electricity back on? I think you would spend a lot more ... you can afford a lot more (some mention that the students were happy with a much lower amount)

J: when I was working full time over summer ... I'd be more inclined to throw money at the problem . whereas as a student ... I'd be more willing to be inconvenienced for a bit of cash ...

E: it's relative to what you've become accustomed to ... [talks about the difficulty in naming an amount]

Karyn: some things don't have a market value, they have a sentimental value ... so think what value electricity? It's free, out there ... no big electricity generators ... **what would you price one hour of electricity at in your day?** ...

E: difficult ... I go back to my bill Break that down ... do the maths ...

A: it's like all the utilities, turning the tap on and there's water ...

C: (talking about someone moving to own place) he's scared of the bills, he's going to bring tablet and phone to work to charge so doesn't eat out of what he has to pay I can get away with charging things

Ends abruptly because out of time.

? Are there certain times of the day that electricity is worth more to your household than others? Which times and how much more or less? Consider how much you would be willing to pay to avoid the borderline / intolerable impacts of power loss over a 24 hour period.

Summarise the discussion.

Have we missed anything that you consider is important?

Thank you very much for attending and taking part in the focus group.