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Standing Charge Rebates Trials - Qualitative Research

Final report

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1.Executive summary

Ofgem has been running randomised control trials as part of its Cost Allocation and Recovery Review (CARR) project. These trials aimed to explore the effectiveness of interventions designed to encourage reductions in peak-time electricity usage. The mechanism for doing this was linking daily standing charges' reductions to electricity usage during weekdays between 4-7pm ('peak hours'). The trials took place between November 2025 – March 2026 in collaboration with two energy suppliers: British Gas and ScottishPower.

The trials involved a range of interventions and incentives offered to those using below a determined baseline or national threshold of peak energy usage percentiles. Those who met the determined usage thresholds were offered a reward. This reward involved rebates on standing charges. For British Gas, the trial also tested the use of different communication frequencies, and social impact and system-level savings message framing.

Following the completion of the trials earlier this year, Ofgem wanted to conduct follow-up qualitative research with those who participated. Ofgem commissioned Thinks Insight & Strategy to capture the views of trial participants and understand their experiences of the trial. The fieldwork took place within 1-2 months of the trial ending, during April and May 2026.

1.2 Research objectives

The objectives of the research conducted by Thinks Insight & Strategy were to:

- Assess consumers' comprehension of how the trial proposition was communicated, in order to support future improvements and maximise participation.
- Explore consumers' lived experiences of participating in the trial, including their end-to-end consumer journey and the reasons behind their decisions and behaviours.
- Examine motivations for participating or not participating in the trial, the impact of different communications variants and frequency, and evidence of any sustained behaviours.
- Explore consumers' attitudes, awareness and perceptions of the trial proposition, including perceived acceptability, benefits, drawbacks and perception of fairness, to inform future policy design.

1.3 Key findings

Engagement with the trial:

- **There was strong participant understanding of the overarching trial objectives from the outset.** Across both suppliers, participants were clear from the initial communications that the trial aimed to reduce pressure on the grid by incentivising customers to shift usage away from peak hours. However, most were not clear on the details of the discount structure, and that this would apply to standing charges, specifically. Notably, this lack of understanding did not appear to dissuade participants from engaging with the trial as many had the mentality that every bit of potential savings matter.
- **Financial savings were the primary motivation for behaviour change.** An 'every little helps' mindset amidst cost-of-living pressures meant that even small savings

were appealing. Although only a secondary motivator, supporting the grid and wider societal benefit did strengthen acceptability of the trial for several participants.

- **Engagement with the trial was heavily influenced by household composition and lifestyle.** Participants' ability to adapt routines and behaviours and make the most of the trial proposition was often determined by household dynamics – with families with young children least able to flex routines around peak hours.
- **Where behaviour was reported to have changed, this mainly focused on shifting large appliance use away from peak hours.** Using washing machines and dishwashers at different times felt less disruptive to routines than other types of electricity use (e.g. children's electronic devices, dinner preparation). There are indications that trial communications also prompted these types of behaviour changes, with appliances highlighted as 'high usage' on supplier emails.
- **Many participants reported continuing behaviour changes after the trial ended.** Having established new routines, most felt able and willing to continue these behaviours longer-term. While a minority assumed that they were still receiving discounts, several reported having formed a new habit and felt positive that it also contributed societal benefits (supporting the grid).

Effectiveness of trial communications:

- **Across the trial period, communications cut-through initially but recall dropped considerably over time.** Participants reported generally being unable to recall communications about the trial beyond the initial email. However, this did not appear to negatively impact behaviour as most participants reported consistently moving the usage of larger appliances to off-peak hours. It should be noted that although participants did not report engaging with mid-trial communications, it is possible that participants were reminded to continue moving their usage through seeing these emails in their inboxes but do not consciously tie this to their continued engagement.
- **Visibility of savings strengthened engagement and motivation, however, this was not clear for all participants.** Those seeing their savings broken down via supplier apps or PPM credit were more aware of how much they were saving than those on direct debits. For the latter, the (relatively small) trial discounts did not feel clearly identifiable on their bill, particularly as these participants tend to just focus on the 'final figure'.

Perceptions of the trial proposition:

- **Most participants were supportive of the overarching trial proposition.** They felt that reducing electricity usage during peak hours in exchange for a discount was a fair and appealing prospect – with the added public benefit of reducing pressure on the grid.
- **Overall participants were content to receive some form of discount on their electricity bill and were not as engaged with how the discount was calculated.** However, although participants did not spontaneously mention how the discount was calculated, when prompted by researchers on how fair they thought it was to discount standing charges most participants thought that discounting unit rates would benefit consumers more. This was due to the fact that participants perceived that they have greater 'control' over this part of the bill and could receive higher savings linked to their usage. However, a minority of participants were actively in favour of

discounting standing charges; these participants tended to report frustration around standing charges so believed a discount on that part of the bill was fair.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research design and sample

In order to explore participant experiences of the trial in depth, we used a **qualitative research approach, conducting 36 in-depth interviews (60 minutes each)** with household energy consumers who had taken part in the trials. This consisted of:

- 16 British Gas customers, and
- 20 ScottishPower customers

Below is an overview of how the trial was run across each supplier (**Table 1**). Within this, we note 6 different ‘treatment groups’ (4 British Gas and 2 ScottishPower) which were defined for this research. These were used to segment participants and ensure a spread of experiences of the trial communications and discount structures within the research.

Table 1: Overview of trial proposition and treatment groups

Category	British Gas	ScottishPower
Treatment groups	1, 2, 3, 4	1, 2
Communications	Group 1: Monthly comms + environmental message 1 Group 2: Monthly comms + environmental message 2 Group 3: Monthly comms (no environmental message) Group 4: Fortnightly comms	Groups 1 and 2: Fortnightly SMS reminders and monthly round-up summary
Discount structure	Participants' electricity usage was compared against a baseline of non-participants' usage in their region during peak times (4-7pm on weekdays).	Participants' electricity usage was compared against fixed national thresholds during peak times (4-7pm on weekdays).
Discount offered	Customers in the top 30% of peak energy users received no reward, while the bottom 25% earned the maximum reward. Discounts varied on a sliding scale in between. Maximum discount increased from 50% of the	Group 1: Up to 50% rebate on daily standing charge. Group 2: Up to 100% rebate on daily standing charge. Daily bands: ≤0.9 kWh (maximum reward), 0.9-1.8 kWh (medium reward), 1.81-3

	standing charge (months 1-3) to 100% (final month).	kWh (minimum reward), ≥3.1 kWh (no reward).
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Across the sample, we included participants with a mix of energy usage, tariff type, location, household composition, and Priority Services Register (PSR) status. A full sample breakdown can be found in the Appendix.

Discussions in the interviews covered: participants' trial journey and lived experience, actions taken as a result of the trial, the impact of supplier communications and incentives, and perceptions of the trial proposition.

Participants were recruited from British Gas and ScottishPower customer lists of those participating in the trials and were screened to ensure a spread of characteristics and treatment groups across the sample.

2.2 Analytical framework and reporting approach

The COM-B model¹ was chosen as the behavioural framework for this research, due to its widespread use and ability to provide a comprehensive, systematic approach to identifying the capability, opportunity, and motivational factors that act as barriers and enablers to specific behaviours. The key components of the COM-B model are outlined in **Table 2** below:

¹ Michie, S., van Stralen, M. M., & West, R. (2011). The behaviour change wheel: a new method for characterising and designing behaviour change interventions. *Implementation science : IS*, 6, 42. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-6-42>

Table 2: Overview of COM-B model components

COM-B element	COM-B elements	Definition
Capability <i>Whether a person can perform a behaviour</i>	Physical	Having the necessary bodily skills, strength or stamina to perform the behaviour
Capability <i>Whether a person can perform a behaviour</i>	Psychological	Having the necessary knowledge, understanding, or mental skills
Opportunity <i>Whether the external environment allows the behaviour to happen</i>	Social	Whether the behaviour is socially accepted or felt to be normal
Opportunity <i>Whether the external environment allows the behaviour to happen</i>	Environmental	Having the correct resources, feedback mechanisms, and environmental cues to enable the behaviour
Motivation <i>The internal processes that drive behaviour</i>	Automatic	Includes emotions, habits, impulses, and instincts; for example, stress can cause automatic behaviours
Motivation <i>The internal processes that drive behaviour</i>	Reflective	Involves deliberate thinking, such as beliefs, intentions, goals, and evaluations of what is good or bad

We took a deductive design approach when using the COM-B model in our research: we purposefully designed the interview discussion guide around COM-B in advance. By doing this, we identified these elements within participants' experiences and coded responses from participants into Capability, Opportunity, Motivation, and possible sub-factors. Analysis in this report has also been conducted through this lens.

2.3 How to read this report

Throughout this report, the findings of this research have been structured around the participant journey across the trial. It includes the following sections:

- **Understanding and joining the trial:** discussing participants' initial awareness and understanding of the trial through the communications and their motivations to participate.

- **Engagement with the trial:** exploring the audience and sub-group factors that influenced participants' ability to engage with the trial, the main behaviour changes and how engagement evolved throughout the trial period.
- **Incentives, fairness, and value perceptions:** understanding perceptions and satisfaction with the discount and overall fairness and acceptability of the trial proposition.
- **Lasting impacts and future interests:** exploring how the trial influenced participants' sustained behaviour changes and future interest in energy trials.

Behavioural and communications analysis have also been integrated throughout with box-outs pulling out insights and research implications.

Overall, there was little variation in participants' experience of the trial based on their supplier group, how they pay their bill (e.g., Prepayment Meters [PPM]), and/or any potential vulnerabilities. Where differences were present, they have been highlighted throughout the report.

2.4 Limitations of the research

The following considerations should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings:

- **A small, qualitative sample** – these findings are based on 36 participants and provide depth of insight across a sub-set of trial participants. While this remains a robust qualitative sample, caution should be taken in generalising findings to the wider trial sample.
- **Reliance on self-reported behaviours** – behaviour change reported may be subject to recall or social desirability bias and so not entirely accurate.
- **A voluntary sample** – participants self-selected to engage in the research interviews, thus the sample potentially skews towards consumers who are more engaged overall.
- **Demographic skew** – some segments of the population were more represented in the participant sample compared to others, including: women (22/36); white participants (28/36); participants aged 35 and above (31/36); participants who are in a couple with no kids (16/36); and participants who pay their bills through direct debit or standing order (26/36).

3. Understanding and joining the trial

This section will explore participants' initial awareness and understanding of the trial through supplier communications and their motivations to participate.

3.1 Initial awareness and understanding

Almost all participants understood the core trial proposition

Across both suppliers, most participants remembered the core idea behind the energy trial, that was set out in initial email communications: to reduce pressure on the energy grid, and that electricity usage should be managed during 'peak hours'. Specifically, participants understood that they would receive a discount on their bill if they reduced their electricity usage from 4 – 7pm on weekdays.

"I remember getting an email saying 'you can sign up for this trial, if you try to use less between 4 and 7 then you'll be given an incentive of a cheaper price'... It was clear, really easy, there wasn't loads of information to scroll through."

- ScottishPower, Low usage

Overall, participants reported feeling pleased they had taken part in the trial as they valued the opportunity to save money on their electricity bill. When prompted by the researchers on whether they understood they could have opted out of the trial, most participants reported not realising they could have opted out, but even if they had, they would not choose to opt-out. This was attributed by the participants to the fact that they had skim-read the initial email, and mainly had focused on the possibility of a discount. Those who read the email in depth did report understanding they could have opted out but again chose not to because they wanted to try and save money.

The trial's standing charge discount structure was less well understood

While the broad principle landed, how the discount was calculated (i.e. that the discount applied to the standing charge rather than to electricity costs in general) was widely missed. Most participants reported skim-reading the initial email, with their focus being drawn to the discount amount stated in the email header (i.e., 50% or 100%), how they could receive the discount (reducing electricity usage between 4 – 7pm), and the examples of appliances they could change their usage of. Details of what charge the discount applied to and how it would be calculated were reported as having been missed by participants or difficult to understand.

"[The discount] gets lost in the sea of information. I remember seeing [the emails] but I didn't see it as 'because you've done X, these are your savings.'"

- British Gas, Low usage

For several participants across both suppliers, the lack of clarity around how the discount was calculated led to initial assumptions that the presented discount (i.e. 50% or 100%) applied to their whole bill rather than just the standing charge. In these cases, it often led to participants feeling unsatisfied with their discount.

“I felt disappointed. As a percentage of the energy bill [the discount] worked out to be about 1% of the 3 months. Probably would've saved more if I had switched tariffs.”

- British Gas, Low usage

Some participants confused the proposition with existing supplier schemes or tariffs

A small number of participants interpreted the email as identifying peak hours as a discounted timeframe. These participants described using *more* electricity between 4–7pm in the early weeks of the trial.

“I have reduced rates on the weekend from 10am – 4pm... so for the Ofgem bit we started eating at 6pm because that was right in the middle of the Ofgem figure.”

- ScottishPower, High usage

This appears to have been driven primarily by confusion with other off-peak products the suppliers run amongst a few participants. This particularly present among a small number of **ScottishPower participants**, who conflated the trial with ScottishPower's existing Power Saver Hours offering when describing their recollection of the trial and what actions they took.

“[Assuming the trial was part of the Power Saver Hours] We picked our windows – we chose the middle of day, then selected some peak hours. That's when using it most, as my partner does the laundry midday.”

- ScottishPower, High usage

Communications spotlight: Impact of introduction communications

What worked well

- **Initial emails communicated the broad proposition clearly.** Most participants retained the 4–7pm peak window and the link between shifting usage and receiving a discount without prompting, often months after first contact.
- **Potential for savings was the most prominent message.** The financial benefit was the biggest headline takeaway along with simple framing around reducing pressure on the grid.
- **Visual simplicity supported understanding.** Graphics and the **ScottishPower** butterfly logo made the proposition understandable and memorable.

What didn't work

- **Detailed explanations were widely skim-read.** Participants engaged with the headline benefit but rarely with the detail of how the discount was calculated, leaving some with expectations that the discount applied to their bill in general rather than to the standing charge specifically.
- **Confusion with existing off-peak products emerged.** A small but notable group conflated the trial with Power Saver Hours or similar off-peak schemes.

Implications for future design

- ⇒ **Simplify explanations of incentives and rewards**, particularly the standing-charge link.
- ⇒ **Lead with clarity around what participants need to do** and what they will receive.
- ⇒ **Distinguish trial activity** visually and clearly from other supplier schemes.

3.2 Motivations to engage

Financial savings were the primary motivator for engagement

Cost saving was the dominant reason for engaging with the trial by shifting their electricity usage across both suppliers and all sub-groups. Most participants framed their decision in straightforward financial terms, that it was an opportunity to reduce their bill at a time when energy costs were front of mind. The cost-of-living context was raised by a number of participants as making any potential saving feels worthwhile, particularly those on tighter budgets or facing recent bill increases.

"[My motivation was] trying to save money and the cost of living. Just come off skirt end of December and I remember thinking it is cold, electric bills could be going up, if I put a bit in the pot now I can be warm later."

- ScottishPower, Medium usage

Participants adopted an "every little helps" mindset toward savings

Even where the eventual discount was small, participants tended to view it positively in principle. This mindset was strongest among older participants and those on lower usage bands, who often saw small savings as a worthwhile by-product of behaviour they were largely

doing anyway. For these participants, the proposition felt low-risk and aligned with existing habits rather than something requiring meaningful change.

"I have the approach that every little helps. Anything that is going to help [reduce costs] is going to make me happy."

- British Gas, Low usage

"I was happy as it wasn't a big deal. The £5 discount reflected the changes we made as it wasn't a big deal."

- ScottishPower, Medium usage

Supporting the grid and wider societal benefit was not a primary motivator, but did strengthen acceptability

Grid resilience and a sense of 'doing one's bit' emerged as meaningful secondary motivators, particularly among older participants, who often framed participation in terms of national interest or collective responsibility. For some, the trial was a way to contribute to a concern they had already been thinking about, often prompted by media coverage of grid pressure or national energy security.

"We're obviously having an energy crisis. People take energy for granted and flick switches on, don't realise Coronation Street finishes and everyone puts the kettle on so surges in demand. It makes sense to smooth that out."

- ScottishPower, High usage

Where this 'societal' framing appeared, it tended to coexist with the financial motivation rather than replace it. Participants who articulated the grid benefit most clearly were also typically those who described the financial saving as modest but worthwhile.

"My first thoughts were 'this is so sensible that you try to reduce the peak demand'... social conscience — if you feel there's some little way you can help, then why not. If everybody opted out there would be no progress."

- British Gas, Medium usage

Environmental motivations were rare and typically reinforced rather than drove decisions to shift behaviour

Environmental motivations were mentioned rarely and were generally framed around reducing energy consumption to lower the household's carbon footprint, or as part of a wider commitment to sustainability. Several participants explicitly linked the trial to other environmental behaviours they were already doing, such as recycling or using more energy-efficient appliances.

"Felt no different than recycling — I wanted to contribute to the environment."

- ScottishPower, Low usage

On the whole, most participants approached the trial as a 'why not' low-effort opportunity, rather than a major commitment

The trial was often described by participants as a 'why not' low-cost opportunity, as the behaviours they were being asked to change felt manageable, with a possible upside and little perceived downside.

"One of those 'oh yeah I should do it', so we did it just to reduce energy and save money. We thought it might be useful."

- ScottishPower, High usage

4. Engagement with the Trial

This section explores audience and sub-group factors influencing participants' ability to engage with the trial, the main behaviour changes and how engagement evolved throughout the trial period.

4.1 What shaped participants' ability to engage?

Alignment between the trial proposition and participants' existing routines was the main influence on engagement with the trial

Across both suppliers, the alignment between the trial proposition and existing household routines was the largest determining factor for engagement. Retired and/or smaller households, who could shift major appliance usage without disruption engaged easily. Whereas families with young children, whose evenings were structured around children, dinner timings or care responsibilities, faced the greatest barriers to engagement.

To illustrate the level of change required to effectively engage with the trial, the **COM-B model** was used to categorise participants into three groups: minimal change required, medium change required, or maximum change required to their routine. These are outlined below:

1. Minimal change required to routine

More likely to be a single person or couple household. These participants may have worked outside of the home from 4 – 7pm or had routines that started after 7pm. This is outlined below in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Barriers and enablers for those requiring minimal change to routine

COM-B element	COM-B element	Barriers	Enablers
Capability	Physical	N/A	No physical disabilities or health conditions that required specific electricity usage.
Capability	Psychological	N/A	Did not have to remember to make changes.
Opportunity	Social	N/A	Often single so had complete control over their electricity usage. Those in couples had aligned schedules which did not require compromise.
Opportunity	Environmental	N/A	Worked outside the home during 4 - 7pm

COM-B element	COM-B element	Barriers	Enablers
			hours. Heating and hot water both used gas rather than electricity. Some participants did not own large electricity-heavy appliances such as dishwashers or tumble dryers.
Motivation	Automatic	N/A	Current habits and routine aligned with using electricity outside of peak hours - either due to preference or taking part in other energy saving schemes.
Motivation	Reflective	N/A	Some participants identified as knowledgeable users who track their energy usage closely to begin with.

2. Medium change required to routine

More likely to be retired or families with older children. These participants may have worked from home and/or faced minimal barriers to switching up routines. This is outlined below in **Table 4**.

Table 4: Barriers and enablers for those requiring medium change to routine

COM-B element	COM-B element	Barriers	Enablers
Capability	Physical	One participant with a heat pump described being unable to change its running hours.	No physical disabilities or health conditions that required specific electricity usage.
Capability	Psychological	Other household requirements / priorities meant off-peak hours weren't always consistently remembered.	Those who were retired had more mental capacity to remember to shift usage.
Opportunity	Social	Had a partner or children who was less engaged / willing to flex usage.	Households who engaged in the trial together could remind each other to use less electricity.
Opportunity	Environmental	Participants with older pets needed to keep the heating on.	Owning an air fryer allowed participants to cook meals whilst reducing their electricity usage.
Motivation	Automatic	Current mealtime habits are during peak hours.	N/A
Motivation	Reflective	Amount discounted not seen as enough to outweigh household disruption (minority of participants)	Identity as a 'saver' and the belief that every bit counts encouraged participants to reduce as much usage as possible (majority of participants).

3. Maximum change required to routine

Most likely to be families with small children. Children and parents' routines meant most electricity usage is 4 - 7pm. This is outlined below in **Table 5**.

Table 5: Barriers and enablers for those requiring maximum change to routine

COM-B element	COM-B element	Barriers	Enablers
Capability	Physical	Some participants with health conditions or disabilities were unable to flex when they used their electric heating (these participants tended to be on the Priority Services Register).	N/A
Capability	Psychological	Other priorities and obligations meant there was less mental capacity to remember to flex usage.	N/A
Opportunity	Social	Parents were unwilling to inconvenience themselves and their children by flexing their children's schedules. Other members of the household did not remember to shift usage.	N/A
Opportunity	Environmental	Heating and hot water both used electricity so bathing and keeping warm were affected. Although participants with alternate electric sources tended to be more mindful of their electricity usage, this minority group of participants were unable to move their usage of these sources (e.g., heat pumps or solar panels).	Participants with air fryers were able to reduce electricity usage during mealtimes.
Motivation	Automatic	Current routines and habitual electricity usage falls during peak hours.	N/A

Motivation	Reflective	Potential savings did not outweigh the inconvenience of disrupting routines.	A view of 'every bit helps' encouraged behaviour change.
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4.2 Behaviour changes participants made

Most participants reported changing when they used large appliances such as dishwashers, washing machines, and tumble dryers

The vast majority of participants stated that during the trial period they moved their usage of larger household appliances to off-peak hours. These appliances included: the washing machine, tumble dryer, and dishwasher. Most participants reported being able to switch the usage of these appliances fairly consistently, however if usage of these appliances during peak hours was perceived as a necessity (e.g., dishes in the dishwasher being needed for dinner) participants stated they did not inconvenience themselves.

This behaviour was seen across all participant groups, including the 'maximum change required' group. There appear to be two primary drivers of this change:

- **Low impact on existing routines:** Most reported that they did not have a set day or time when they usually ran these appliances, so choosing a slot that was off-peak in exchange for a discount felt easy.
- **Prompted within trial communications:** These appliances featured as icons in the initial trial communications, which many participants recalled seeing and thus prioritised.

"We tried to cut back on the electricity, but we also tried to shift it away from those peak hours to save money... Actually, it worked quite well because instead of doing the washing after work, because I was working from home, I put it on during the day. So, there was less going on in the evening.

- ScottishPower, High usage

Notably, some **ScottishPower participants** reported that they already used these larger appliances during off-peak hours because they participated in the ScottishPower 'Power Hour' programme, where they received half-priced electricity during certain weekend hours. These participants had therefore already moved their usage of large electric appliances to the hours of this scheme.

"We're on the ScottishPower tariff where we've got eight power save hours a week, so I've got two on a Tuesday morning early so the washing machine and dishwasher will go on then. The same on a Thursday and then on a Saturday... that's when we load up the charging and dishwasher and washing machine."

- ScottishPower, Medium usage

Participants reported facing difficulties in changing other more routinised behaviours, such as mealtimes

Electricity usage that was more embedded into participants' routines, such as using an electric oven or stove to cook dinner, was harder to shift away from peak hours. Of the participants who did shift their usage, most were in the 'minimum' or 'medium change required' group, or they were highly motivated by the financial incentive of the trial.

"I was conscious, there was that period 4 - 7pm... But it didn't mean we were going to eat our main meal at three in the afternoon."

- British Gas, Medium usage

These participants reported either meal prepping during off-peak hours or using an air fryer instead of their oven. Participants stated this was because the air fryer was a more energy-efficient appliance that could be used for a shorter amount of time.

"We don't use the tumble dryer and the oven, we very rarely use now, we tend to use an air fryer instead for mid-week meals. Weekends are a bit different if we're doing something big."

- ScottishPower, Medium usage

By contrast, participants in the 'maximum change required' group (i.e., families with young children) were unwilling to disrupt the mealtimes they viewed as fundamental to their children's routines.

"I couldn't change cooking times for the kids – I switched over to the air fryer instead of the oven. But didn't feel able to push it due to family routines and preferences around eating early."

- British Gas, Low usage

A positive knock-on effect of the trial was that some participants reduced their overall energy usage

Although the requirements of the trial solely centred around reducing electricity usage during peak hours, some participants claimed that they had changed their energy usage more broadly. Several reported reducing their electricity usage outside of the 4 - 7pm window. They attributed this reduction to the fact that taking part in the trial had prompted them to think about their usage more consciously, with a few participants mentioning that they realised they could save money on their bill simply by not using as much electricity generally.

"The washing we've more or less taken out of the equation and put it away to the weekend. As far as saving electricity, that's just down to standard saving to try and not use as much as we used to because it's too expensive... Only way to keep electric bill down is to not turn it on in the first place."

- ScottishPower, High usage

A smaller group of participants reported reducing their gas usage as well as electricity. In most cases, particularly where participants' hot water and heating supply were run on gas, the

change (such as reducing heating or shifting showers) was driven by misunderstanding that the discount only applied to electricity.

“It [routine] did change in terms of going for a shower, I don’t know if the shower would have counted if that would have actually made any difference... I suppose it would be off the mains... it’s not an electric shower so that would be run off of the boiler therefore it would be gas.”

- British Gas, Low usage

Communications spotlight: Communicating behaviour change

What worked well

- **Specific appliances named in the comms (washing machines, dishwashers, tumble dryers, ovens) were consistently the most shifted across both suppliers.** Participants spontaneously mentioned these when describing what they had changed, indicating participants were led, at least in part, by the communications they received (as well as their existing routines). This was mentioned by participants before stimulus material was shown in the interviews to remind them of communications they may have received.
- **The examples chosen mapped onto achievable behaviour change.** Appliances that ran independently and didn’t require user presence were easy to change, and the comms broadly matched what most households felt they could shift.

What didn’t work

- **Behaviours not named in the comms were largely not shifted.** Other appliances or electricity use (e.g. hoovering) were rarely mentioned. This suggests that future trials would benefit from explicitly naming all behaviours desired in the comms themselves.
- **Confusion between gas and electricity.** Some participants assumed the trial covered both fuels and reduced gas use.

Implications for future design

- ⇒ **Carefully consider which appliances are highlighted in comms**, including a breadth of examples and their impact.
- ⇒ **Be explicit that the trial applies to electricity only**, with worked examples that distinguish electric from gas equivalent.

4.3 How engagement evolved during the trial

Mid-trial communications often faded into the background

Across both supplier groups, most participants could clearly recall the initial email informing them about their inclusion in the trial. Recollection of further communications, however, varied extensively amongst participants. Clear themes regarding reactions to the mid-trial communications emerged across suppliers and treatment groups and are set out below:

1. Across both suppliers

A substantial portion of participants did not remember receiving any communications beyond the initial invite. Many reported they may have missed the communications as they often ignored or deleted emails they received from their energy supplier.

"I think initially the set-up of the trial was really clear... what was happening during it, not so much... I was just clicking random bits, that wasn't so clear."

- ScottishPower, Low usage

2. ScottishPower

The majority of ScottishPower participants recalled receiving some form of mid-trial reminder across various channels, including by email, text message, and in-app notifications.

Some ScottishPower participants did not recall receiving SMS messages at the time. During the interview, several participants checked their phones and were surprised to see these messages had been received.

"I got an email from ScottishPower advertising it [the trial]... There was a burst of activity and then I heard nothing of it and I'd forgotten about it until I got a reminder and a statement saying how much electricity I'd used."

- ScottishPower, High usage

3. British Gas

A) Monthly treatment group

British Gas participants in the monthly summary treatment groups were often positive about the frequency of communications, finding it the 'right amount of information'. However, as above, a notable proportion did not recall any communications beyond the initial invite.

"I was quite impressed but put it to one side and carried on with my life."

- British Gas, Low usage

B) Fortnightly treatment group

British Gas participants in the fortnightly summary treatment groups often found the frequency of reminders overwhelming. This perceived oversaturation of emails meant some participants mistook the frequency as weekly.

"Felt like all the time once a week or twice a week. I would ignore it if it felt too frequent. The information about the trial was overlapping with British Gas news. It felt like a lot of emails."

- British Gas, Low usage

Those who remembered the mid-trial communications found it helpful, but generic

Of the participants across both suppliers that recalled receiving communications, the majority said they were helpful reminders to continue with the behaviours suggested by the trial. However, the extent to which participants actively engaged with the information provided by

the reminders was minimal, with many describing them as reminders of the trial's general proposition rather than updates on their savings' progress or specific guidance on how to maximise the opportunity for reward.

"Individual companies like ScottishPower are being forced to ask customers to cut down on the use of electricity between certain times... because the grid can't handle the amount of electricity that's required... It [email] didn't spell it out per se but you read between the lines and it was pretty obvious that's what the problem was."

- ScottishPower, High usage

Visibility of savings strengthened engagement and motivation

The visibility of participants' savings was a significant influencing factor in continued motivation and engagement with the trial. Participants typically saw their savings through a supplier app (**ScottishPower**), or as prepayment credit (Prepayment Meter users). They often described the moment of seeing their savings as a motivational event which kept them engaged to keep going. Notably, participants reported feeling motivated by seeing their savings even if it was relatively small and did not report feeling de-motivated by the amount.

"I'm competitive so if it says, 'you've saved two pounds fifty', in the back of my head I'd be sitting thinking – am I going to put the kettle on? I might save three pounds this week so no I don't want a cup of tea... so it was that competitive element."

- British Gas, Low usage

For some participants, receiving the notification of their savings was the deciding factor in beginning to shift their electricity usage. This was most frequently observed in participants with low usage generally, who received a discount based on their usual routine rather than any particular behaviour changes, and who were then reminded of their participation in the trial.

"I'd forgotten about it [the trial] so when it [the email] came in, I thought it was nicely clearly written, and it obviously focused my mind on the cost saving elements."

- ScottishPower, High usage

As mentioned in the table above, although participants across both groups received a monthly summary of their savings from their suppliers, the vast majority did not spontaneously recall seeing these summaries. When prompted by researchers, participants continued to report either not having seen the emails or having forgotten them, due to the high volume of emails they reported receiving from their suppliers about other topics.

Communications spotlight: Mid-trial engagement and reinforcement

What worked well

- **App notifications and visible feedback reinforced engagement.** Where participants could see what they had saved (e.g. via **ScottishPower's app**) the moment of recognition would reinforce motivation, often more than the saving itself.
- **Seeing savings created positive reinforcement.** A small number of participants were inspired to change their behaviour once they had seen a notification of their savings.

What didn't work

- **The majority did not engage with mid-trial communications.** While several participants described the regular touchpoint as helping to keep the trial top of mind, most did not recall these. The frequency (monthly or fortnightly) does not appear to have made a difference to engagement or behaviour change – with the content being much more impactful (e.g. visibility of savings).
- **Oversaturation of fortnightly communications reduces impact.** British Gas participants in the fortnightly treatment group were more likely to report feeling overwhelmed by communications and ignored ongoing communications.
- **Communications often focused on participation rather than impact**, with reminders to keep going but limited connection between specific behaviours and specific savings.

Implications for future design

- ⇒ **Link communications more directly to personal outcomes and impact**, rather than generic reminders to take part.
- ⇒ **Consider a tapered frequency of communications as engagement changes**, to balance the risks between oversaturation (fortnightly) and disengagement (monthly) by considering more frequent communications early on, reducing as habits form.

5. Incentives, Fairness and Value Perceptions

In this section, we cover participants' perceptions and satisfaction with the discount and overall fairness and acceptability of the trial proposition.

5.1 Perceptions of savings and rewards

The perception of receiving a reward was often more motivating than the size of it in reality

The premise of receiving a discount was often more motivating than the actual act of receiving the discount. Across participants, the majority described the idea of receiving a discount positively, even when the actual amount received was minimal. This is highlighted by the many participants who stated they had no knowledge of how much they had saved but continued to change their behaviour and view the trial positively.

“No [don't know how much saved] ... what I did save, I don't know. If the opportunity presents to save a bit of money, I think everyone would jump on it because ultimately, it's not going to cost you any more... but it could save you.”

- ScottishPower, Medium usage

Nonetheless, the act of receiving a reward did still play an important role in participants' motivations. Several participants explicitly described the experience of seeing a saving appear (i.e. on the app, in a summary email, or on the prepayment meter) as the most rewarding part of the trial, regardless of the amount. This points to immediacy and visibility being more behaviourally important than the value of the reward itself.

Satisfaction with the final discounted bill often depended on initial expectations and awareness of the discount structure

Participant satisfaction with their discount amount was influenced mostly by their initial expectations of potential savings and overall understanding of the discount structure.

- For the majority of participants who held **lower expectations** of how much they could save, most felt satisfied with the amount they had received, despite acknowledging it was fairly small. These participants stated that the reward they received felt proportionate to the effort they had put in during the trial (i.e., moving the washing machine run time did not feel difficult) and described feeling surprised at the amount they had saved.
 - These participants were also more likely to report a strong understanding of their standing charge and therefore understood that the discount was coming off an amount that was already relatively low.

“Felt quite nice to get something back for so little effort.”

- British Gas, Low usage

- A minority of participants who had **higher expectations** of the amount they would save reported feeling unsatisfied with their discount.
 - These participants felt they had made significant changes to their routines or perceived minor changes to routines as disruptive. They described the

savings they had received as not being proportionate to the amount of effort they believed they had put in.

- These participants also tended to have less of an understanding of the discount structure and standing charges more generally. They were also more likely to report feeling misled by the offer of a '50% discount' and when standing charges were explained in interviews, these participants stated that they had not understood how small the amount they could save actually was.

"I didn't do my towels when it was convenient to me - all for £4."

- ScottishPower, Medium usage

Small savings made it difficult to identify the discount, even where it was visible

Across both suppliers, the majority of participants could not remember the exact amount they had saved throughout the trial. Some recalled an approximate amount, others remembered receiving an amount but could not recall how much, and a few did not know whether they had received a discount at all.

For some participants, this lack of awareness was driven by the small size of their savings. Many reported where the trial discount amounted to a few pounds across the three-month period, it was easily lost against the bill. Several participants described checking their bill and being unable to distinguish the trial saving from other changes to their bill (e.g. actual or assumed broader energy price increases).

"Thought [the saving] was a feature of the variable rate."

- British Gas, Low usage

How participants paid their bill also influenced awareness of their savings

Additionally, awareness of savings amount was driven by the method participants paid their bills:

- **Direct Debit:** The majority of participants paid by a regular direct debit and were sometimes unaware of the precise cost of their overall electricity bill.
 - However, there were a few participants who paid by direct debit and were aware of their savings. These participants reported higher engagement with the mid-trial communications or regularly used their supplier's app, where they could more clearly see the discount amount.
- **Pre-Payment Meter:** By comparison, those on pre-payment meters were more engaged in general with their energy spending overall. These participants were more likely to say that they noticed their discount from the trial and had a better approximation of much they had saved.

"I think the highest [discount received] was five quid one month and then one month was two pounds, one month was three pounds. It was quite varied."

- British Gas, Low usage (Pre-payment meter)

Communications spotlight: Communicating rewards and value

What worked well

- **Visible and tangible savings reinforced positive engagement even where the absolute amount was small.** Many participants explicitly accepted that the amount was modest while still describing the experience positively, because the reward had been visible and proportionate to the effort they had put in.

What didn't work

- **Savings often lacked visibility and salience**, particularly for direct debit customers. Where the bill amount remained smooth and unchanged, participants frequently said they hadn't noticed the saving or weren't sure they had received one.
- **"50% off" framing led some participants to expect larger savings than the proposition could realistically deliver.** The gap between expectation and reality became a source of dissatisfaction.

Implications for future design

- ⇒ **Make savings immediate, visible and easy to interpret**, the moment of seeing the reward matters more than the amount itself.
- ⇒ **Use simple monetary framing in pounds and pence rather than percentages**, and be cautious about headline figures that overstate likely savings
- ⇒ **Integrate behavioural feedback into billing**, so the impact from the behaviour change and saving is clearly visible in the bill.

5.2 Fairness and acceptability of the trial proposition

Most participants accepted the overarching trial proposition

Across both suppliers, participants reported high acceptability of the trial's core proposition: specifically, reducing electricity usage during peak hours in exchange for a discount. Participants described the reason for the trial (i.e. reducing pressure on the energy grid) as a clear benefit to the wider public. However, participants' focus on the financial benefit they received as part of the trial suggests that wider societal benefits alone would most likely not be enough to drive behaviour change.

"For the individual [there is a] benefit of ensuring the grid can cope with the demands that are being made and that you get a few pounds back, you also don't get this feeling that your suppliers are only interested in ripping you off, feeling of partnership"

- British Gas, Medium usage

Where participants expressed reservations about the trial proposition, these mostly centred around how the discount worked (e.g., why it was applied to the standing charge) or concern about people – including themselves – who may not be able to participate as easily (e.g., families with children).

Variation in perceptions of fairness was largely driven by understanding and attitudes towards standing charges

Overall, participants thought it was fair and acceptable for some portion of their bill to be discounted in exchange for reducing peak hour electricity use. However, when asked about the fairness of discounting the standing charge specifically, acceptability varied. This variation was often due to participants' prior understanding of what standing charges are and their attitudes towards them.

Reactions to the discount mechanism fell into four broad groups, set out below:

1. **No prior awareness of standing charges.** A minority of participants only learned that standing charges existed because of the trial. This group were more likely to see the discounted standing charge as fair, and in general held an attitude that any form of discount would be acceptable.

“If you talk about discounts, who would think that’s not fair? Nobody.”

- ScottishPower, Low usage

2. **Aware and accepting of standing charges.** Most participants understood standing charges and saw them as a necessary part of supporting the energy system. They did not feel strongly about them and tended to see the discount as a reasonable mechanism.

“If there are problems outside pipework or wires or whatever, that’s what all that standing charge is. Everybody’s standing charge goes towards the upkeep of electricity running into your property.”

- ScottishPower, Low usage

3. **Aware and opposed to standing charges.** A small minority of participants resented standing charges as an unfair or excessive 'extra' charge. For this group, the discount applying to the standing charge was welcomed because it reduced a part of the bill they actively opposed. These participants were often low-usage (e.g. single, retired couple) and described the discounted standing charge as a fair way to compensate them for the fact they had to pay the same charge as others, despite using less electricity overall.

“I don’t agree with the standing charge, especially someone like me who doesn’t use much electricity... I’ll do anything to reduce the standing charge because to me... anything they put forward as an incentive, I would follow it within reason.”

- ScottishPower, Low usage

- **Aware of standing charges but felt the discount was misplaced.** A substantial group of participants were aware and accepted standing charges in general, but perceived the discount as unfair because it applied to the smallest portion of the bill, as well as being a part of the bill they had no control over.

“The bigger chunk is the unit rate, if there was a discount on the unit rate that would help me more than just the standing charge.”

- ScottishPower, High usage

A perceived ability to ‘control’ charges linked to unit rates meant many participants felt this should be the discounted element within the trial

Of the participants who did not perceive the discounted standing charge to be fair, many stated they would prefer the unit rate to have been discounted instead. This preference mainly stemmed from a belief that a unit rate discount would provide a larger discount, as well as provide the user with a stronger sense of control over their electricity use.

“I think people would benefit more if it [discount] was on the unit rate rather than the standing charge... The unit rate is variable in terms of how we use it so I think it would favour the customer more if it was based on the unit rate.”

- British Gas, Low usage

There was widespread acknowledgment that trial was less fair for larger households

Many participants raised concerns about how fair the premise of the trial was for larger households. Many recognised that families with children faced the greatest barriers to engaging with the trial, particularly that children’s routines frequently centre around the peak hours of 4 – 7pm including dinner, baths, bedtime, and the use of devices. In response to this realisation, several participants suggested alternative frameworks, such as tiering the discount by household size, comparing to historical individual usage, or applying a ‘flat rate’ discount uniformly across all consumers.

“I naturally don’t have the TV streaming constantly or the washer on constantly... but other people may do so therefore it would impact them because they receive less of a discount... I have one child, one husband, one dog; other people may have four children, four dogs so naturally they have more things to do... It’s not fair on them.”

- ScottishPower, Medium usage

Several vulnerable participants felt disadvantaged by the trial design, and less able to benefit

In addition to larger households, some PSR-registered participants described health-, disability-, or care-related constraints that limited their ability to flex usage in the way the trial required. This included needing consistent warmth and heating and relying on space heaters, which could not be flexed during the peak hours.

Several of these participants reported receiving only a very small discount, or none at all, despite engaging actively with the trial. They highlighted that the discount structure assumes a level of behavioural flexibility that they do not have. This raises a key equity concern for vulnerable consumers who are willing to participate but are most constrained in how much they can shift.

Notably however, during the trial period, none of the participants reported self-rationing their energy use.

"I have a health condition that means I need to keep the house warmer... I use space heaters rather than gas central heating to heat individual rooms. Sometimes it's a struggle to remain warm... I'll try to put a blanket on me first."

- ScottishPower, High usage (PSR)

6. Lasting impacts and future interest

This section explores how the trial influenced participants' sustained behaviour changes following the trial and their future interest in schemes relating to saving energy.

6.1 Lasting impacts post-trial

Most participants who shifted behaviour reported continuing these routines afterwards

Across both suppliers, most participants who had made behavioural changes during the trial said they were continuing them. This was most common amongst those who found it easiest to change their routines and experienced minimal disruption during the trial. The behaviours that stuck most reliably were appliance timing (running the washing machine, dishwasher, tumble dryer at off-peak times) and air fryer use.

“Yes [will continue with the new routine], there's no reason not to. It's a no brainer as far as I'm concerned, just adjust your lifestyle to suit.”

- British Gas, Medium usage

Behaviours that were less sustainable tended to be those tied to dinner timing, as shifting mealtimes felt like a more significant change, or children's routines which were viewed as non-negotiables by parents of young children prioritising their children's stability.

“If there was going to be a noticeable financial incentive, then I think I potentially would [continue with behavioural change]. But if it's going to make no difference whatsoever, then I'll just wash them when I'm able to wash them, cook when I'm able to cook.”

- ScottishPower, Medium usage

Habit formation supported the continuation of some behaviours

When asked if they had continued to shift their electricity usage away from peak hours despite no longer receiving a discount, several participants explicitly described their off-peak appliance use as 'now habit' or 'just what we do now'. Following the trial, the new routine has been instilled into participants' daily lives and become something they do without having to consciously think about it. Some even stated that it would be more difficult to revert to their original pre-trial routine as the off-peak 4 - 7pm period had been ingrained into their way of thinking. This suggests that for some within the participant sample even modest financial incentives, applied over a few months, can generate durable behaviour change in flexible appliance use.

“[The trial] made me conscious of what I was doing around the house and I made habits of, okay the washing machine's going to be on first thing in the morning instead while I go out to work. It made me more conscious... stuff like that helped save money.”

- British Gas, Low usage

Extrinsic motivations strengthened for some participants over time

A small number of participants described their reasons for continuing as having shifted away from money and toward broader principles: supporting the grid, being more conscious of

usage and contributing to environmental goals. For these participants, the trial brought their attention to wider benefits of the trial and highlighted the role they can play in taking individual actions to build cumulative impact – this could be interpreted as behaviour change leading to attitude change. However, it should also be acknowledged that there may be some overclaim on this point as participants were told about the broader benefits during the interview which may have introduced some priming effect.

“I don’t use that much [electricity] but if there’s a million people like me who change, then it makes a hell of a lot of a difference.”

- British Gas, Low usage

“[Since the trial] I don’t bother to use it [electricity] between 4 and 7pm... I think it’s a good thing, I don’t need to put the power on. I’m saving it for somebody else who’s got more need for it, say a family... every little bit helps.”

- ScottishPower, Low usage

A minority stated they would not continue with their new routines

Although many were enthusiastic about continuing their new routines, a few for whom the financial incentive was key in prompting behavioural change, stated they would not continue the new routine due to the lack of meaningful financial reward.

Those who experienced greater disruption to their routine during the trial were also more likely to report reverting to their original behaviours as this requires less effort than maintaining new habits.

“No [wouldn’t continue routine], I don’t see any incentive for me. That mental juggle of ‘oh, I’m putting the washing machine on now’ – there’s nothing to prevent me from doing that. So, no I’ve reverted back.”

- British Gas, Low usage

6.2 Future interest

Participants remained interested in future money-saving opportunities

Most participants had taken part in the trial to save money and this motivation remains a priority. Therefore, across both suppliers, participants expressed appetite for similar future schemes to save money wherever they can. Particularly with widespread recognition of the rising cost-of-living, participants were very enthusiastic about any alternative cost-saving schemes that could help ease financial strain.

“I would be happy if they have more initiatives and I would join for sure... [for the] discount, [to] be more green and discover new technologies – everything.”

- ScottishPower, Low usage

Many had already explored their supplier's existing off-peak products and saver options, but several wanted visibility of all the schemes available to them as they were unsure where to look for further information on similar initiatives. Participants want to engage with schemes

that are clearer, more visible and allow for easy progress tracking. Future propositions that build on this appetite are likely to find a receptive audience.

“No [haven’t looked into other cost-saving schemes] ... I don’t know what options are available. I don’t know if this is an ongoing thing, now that the trial’s ended is there a way for me to opt into that? Does it continue longer term? I don’t know what’s available.”

- British Gas, Low usage

Participants viewed the proposition as a practical and socially beneficial 'win-win'

The dominant retrospective view of the trial was positive as participants felt it was relatively easy to engage with. For many participants, there was no real downside, particularly for those whose routines were minimally changed, and resulted in some financial saving alongside contributing to a useful societal goal. Overall, it felt like a ‘win-win’ situation for many who felt happy to be both giving back to the energy grid and receiving a financial reward in return.

“Overall [the trial was] really good, very beneficial, easy. I can’t see why people wouldn’t do it. Even if you make a couple changes, you see a reflection [in the savings].”

- ScottishPower, Low usage

“[The experience went] really well, it was good. What was good for me was I took the information on board from what I got from the emails and made habitual changes in my household which saved me a lot of money at the end of the month... It had a direct impact on my pocket, it was to my incentive and benefit to take part.”

- British Gas, Low usage

In the future, participants want to see clearer communications and information on incentives

Participants are eager to participate in similar schemes but fed back some suggestions they’d like to see implemented for a better experience. They wanted:

- **Clearer, more meaningful information on the incentive and how much they have saved** throughout the trial, which could encourage further behaviour change as participants see the tangible impact of their actions. To make information clearer, participants say bullet-pointed information, simple language and diagrams would be ideal.
- **Personalised communications which highlight savings**, rather than reminders of the trial proposition. Participants felt including specific information about their savings in communications would make this cut through more, particularly at mid-points.

“A weekly email or something coming through as you’re doing the trial saying ‘great, you’ve saved this much this week’... it may have been the information was there and I didn’t access it but it didn’t seem clear to me... just keeping people more updated on how the trial’s going during rather than just concentrating on the beginning and end of it.”

- ScottishPower, Low usage

7. Recommendations

The following recommendations are drawn from participants' insights and experiences of the trial. They are written to inform future flexibility related propositions, with a view to improving consumer engagement and impact.

The recommendations largely relate to trial design decisions and how to run a trial of this kind well, separate to the proposition – which will be evaluated taking into account a range of policy considerations and the wider set of data from the trial.

They fall into three categories:

1. Optimising communications

Framing: how the proposition is presented

- Consider using simple financial framing (£ and pence) rather than percentages or kilowatt-hours.
- Be cautious with headline figures that risk overstating realistic savings (i.e. "50% off" framing creating an expectation gap).
- Distinguish the proposition clearly from existing supplier off-peak products.

Processing fluency: how easily information can be understood

- Simplify explanations of incentives and calculations, particularly the standing-charge mechanism. Consider the minimum level of detail required for consumers to make informed choices (either via direct comms or linked FAQ pages).
- Ensure communications clearly state what participants need to do and what they will receive.

Salience: keeping the trial visible and present

- Prioritise highlighting engaging content, with frequency less impactful in driving cut-through and engagement.
- Consider making comms more visible and engaging by placing key information in the subject line (e.g., savings amount) about savings.
- Use feedback mechanisms to provide timely updates on savings (app, smart meter integration) where supplier infrastructure allows.
- Adapt communications as the trial progresses. More frequent early on, easing as habits form – highlighting actual financial savings throughout to support engagement and motivation.

Rewards: how feedback and recognition are delivered

- Treat the moment of seeing the saving itself as a behavioural intervention (e.g. on bills, in live app / smart meter updates). For many participants, that moment mattered more than the size of the figure.

2. Supporting behaviour change

- Focus on simple, routine-compatible actions. The trial showed that named appliances (washing machines, dishwashers, tumble dryers) became the behaviours participants shifted.
- Design around household realities and differing levels of flexibility. Provide alternative ways to save within peak hours for those less able to adapt (e.g. families with children, shift workers and those with medical needs).

- Support habit formation and cut-through through reinforcement and visible feedback, rather than solely reminding consumers of the trial being 'live'. Consider introducing more novel or challenging 'asks' as time progresses to push behaviour change further.

3. Communicating the trial proposition specifically

- Lead with the household financial benefit, not the wider system benefits. Even where participants accepted the 'societal impact' or system-level saving framing, financial saving remained the primary motivator.
- Clearly define the standing charge discount structure (or whichever charge the discount is applied to). To avoid confusion or unmatched expectations, any future communications should clearly define which parts of the bill are discounted.

8. Appendix

Recruitment approach

Participants were recruited for the research using the following approach:

- Ofgem used the final Request for Information to select a sample of 1000 customers per supplier and provided the supplier with unique IDs.
 - Thinks then reviewed the sample for oversight of quota spread before British Gas and ScottishPower issued invites to customers with a sign-up link to the interviews.
 - Thinks set up a screener via a survey platform to create unique survey links that align to the original unique IDs within the customer list.
 - This captured specific information such as recall of communications and incentive rebates received, and enabled participants to sign up to the interviews.
- Thinks screened participants based on the required sample characteristics, actively monitoring the live sample to ensure a spread across quotas with participants prioritised based on quota needs.

Detailed sample frame

Category	Demographic	British Gas	ScottishPower	Total
Gender	Woman	10	12	22
Gender	Man	5	8	13
Gender	Other	1	0	1
Age	18-24	1	0	1
Age	25-34	3	1	4
Age	35-49	4	10	14
Age	50-64	6	4	10
Age	65+	2	5	7
Ethnicity	White	14	14	28
Ethnicity	Ethnic minority	2	6	8
Location	East England	2	2	4
Location	London	4	5	8
Location	South East of England	0	4	4

Category	Demographic	British Gas	ScottishPower	Total
Location	East Midlands	1	0	1
Location	West Midlands	1	3	5
Location	South West England	0	1	1
Location	South Wales	0	1	1
Location	North East England	0	1	1
Location	Yorkshire	4	1	5
Location	North West England	3	1	4
Location	North Scotland	0	0	0
Location	Southern England	0	1	1
Location	Central & Southern Scotland	1	0	1
Location	Merseyside, Cheshire & North Wales	0	0	0
Living situation	Live alone	5	3	8
Living situation	Friends / house share	0	0	0
Living situation	Partner / spouse	6	10	16
Living situation	Children under 18	2	5	7
Living situation	Children 18 or over	1	0	1
Living situation	Parents or other family	1	0	1
Living situation	Other	1	2	3

Category	Demographic	British Gas	ScottishPower	Total
Usage band	Low	10	4	14
Usage band	Medium	4	6	10
Usage band	High	2	10	12
Rebate	50% received	-	10	10
Rebate	100% received	-	10	10
Communications	Monthly summary	6	-	6
Communications	Fortnightly reminder and monthly summary	10	-	10
PSR	Yes	4	7	11
PSR	No	12	13	25
Energy tariff	Fixed-term tariff	6	13	19
Energy tariff	Standard variable	5	3	8
Energy tariff	Default tariff	1	0	1
Energy tariff	Non-standard variable tariff	0	0	0
Energy tariff	Economy 7	0	0	0
Energy tariff	Other	1	0	1
Energy tariff	Don't know	3	4	7
Electricity bill payment method	A regular direct debit or standing order	8	18	26
Electricity bill payment method	Standard credit	0	1	1
Electricity bill payment method	Prepayment meter	7	0	7
Electricity bill payment method	Pay only on receipt of a bill	1	1	2

Research materials – British Gas:

British Gas Discussion Guide

Introduction

Ofgem has been running behavioural trials as part of a broader review of cost allocation and recovery. These trials aimed to explore the effectiveness of interventions designed to encourage reductions in peak-time electricity usage by linking daily standing charges reduction during weekdays. The trials have taken place between November 2025 – March 2026 in collaboration with two energy suppliers.

The trials have involved a range of interventions and incentives. British Gas customers were asked to reduce their electricity usage during peak times (weekdays from 4pm – 7pm). Trial participants' electricity usage was compared to a daily regional baseline and participants who were in the lowest usage percentiles were offered a maximum rebate of 50% off their standing charge. This rebate decreased linearly as the usage increased. Participants also received different communications – with one group only receiving monthly reminders, and the other receiving both monthly and fortnightly reminders.

The objectives of this research will be to:

- Explore consumers' lived experiences of participating in the trial, including their end-to-end consumer journey and the reasons behind their decisions and behaviours.
- Explore consumers' attitudes, awareness, acceptability and perceptions of the trial proposition, including perceived benefits, drawbacks and perception of fairness, to inform future policy design.
- Examine motivations for participating or not participating, any impact different communications variants and frequency and identify any sustained behaviours.
- Assess consumers' comprehension of how the proposition was communicated, in order to support future improvements and maximise participation.

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About this discussion guide

The purpose of this document is to serve as a guide to inform the flow of the discussions, rather than a definitive list of questions to cover. As these are qualitative sessions, the facilitator will use the guide flexibly and be guided by what comes out of the discussions.

In this discussion guide:

- Instructions to the facilitator are *italicised*
- Key questions are **bolded**

Pre-task - Participants will be asked to complete a short pre-task ahead of the interview

Before your interview with Thinks, please could you tell us in a few sentences about your overall experience of the energy trial:

- What do you remember from the trial?
- What, if anything, did you do as a result of the trial?
- Did you receive any discounts on your bill or communications during the trial period?

Before the interview, please revisit any communications or information you received during the trial period to remind yourself of what you saw or heard. This could include emails, text messages or bills from Centrica (British Gas).

Section	Key questions and probes	Time	Total
Introduction	My name is [XXX] and I'm a researcher from an independent research agency called Thinks Insight & Strategy. We are conducting research on behalf of Ofgem, Ofgem is the regulator for energy supply in Great Britain. We are looking to speak to people who have taken part in the Centrica (British Gas) Weekday Flexi Saver trial, which was ran in partnership with Ofgem from November 2025 to March 2026. <i>Explain terms of the session:</i> • We'll be talking for 60 minutes – finishing up at [XXX]. If I move you along at any point, this is just to ensure that we cover everything we need to within this timeframe. • There are no right or wrong answers – we are just interested in hearing your thoughts and experiences. • You can opt out of the research at any time, and you don't have to answer all of the questions asked. • Incentives will be paid by bank transfer through the Ayda platform after the interview is complete. <i>Confirm confidentiality:</i> • We abide by the Market Research Society Code of Conduct. We will also never pass your contact details on to any third party and will not include your name or any details which could identify you within our research reports. • The only exception to this is if you say something that gives me reason to think you or someone else is at risk of harm. In the unlikely event that this happens, we may be legally obliged to pass this information on to the relevant authorities.	10	10

Section	Key questions and probes	Time	Total
	- With your permission we would like to record this session. In the first instance, this is just so that the immediate team at Thinks can refer back to the interview for analysis purposes. <i>Offer the opportunity to ask questions about the research process.</i> To kick things off, it would be great if we could do some introductions. Please could you tell me: Where in the country you are based? Who you live with? What you like to do when you're not working? Now, I'd like to hear a bit more about your energy use at home. How do you use electricity at home on a typical day? <i>Moderator to probe on working/lifestyle patterns/lifestyle to understand how much time they spend at home and during 4 – 7pm</i> - Do you also use gas? How do you use gas at home on a typical day? <i>Moderator to probe on whether participant relies more on gas or electricity or uses alternative energy sources like heat networks</i> Does your electricity usage change across time (e.g. across different seasons, during peak hours from 4-7pm, weekdays vs. weekends) and if so, how? What, if anything, do you do to try and manage your electricity use? <i>Moderator to probe on participants' reasoning and motivations as well as barriers and enablers to electricity management.</i>		

Section	Key questions and probes	Time	Total
	If you had to guess, do you think you use more or less electricity than your neighbours? Why? <i>Moderator to probe on potential vulnerabilities which may impact electricity use (e.g. energy dependent health conditions, children / elderly people living in the household, financial vulnerability/electricity rationing)</i> How familiar are you with the way your electricity bills are calculated? - What do you know about the different charges that are included in your bill? (this is not a test!) - Have you heard of standing charges? If so, how would you describe what this means? <i>Moderator to probe on attitudes towards standing charges</i>		
Your trial journey and lived experience	I'd now like to focus on the Weekday Flexi Saver trial you took part in with your energy supplier, British Gas. What do you remember about the British Gas Weekday Flexi Saver trial? - What, if anything, stood out to you from the trial period? How did you hear about the trial? - What were your initial thoughts when you first learnt about the trial? Why? - Did you understand what you were being asked to do? - What made you decide to participate in the trial (i.e. not opt out)? <i>Probe to understand awareness of ability to opt out and thoughts on this approach to including customers in the trial</i> In your own words, tell me about what happened during the trial	5	15

Section	Key questions and probes	Time	Total
	<i>Moderator to understand at a high level what their experience was, which will be explored in more detail later on in the discussion</i> - What communications did you receive? How often did you receive them? - Did you receive any discount on your standing charge? If so, roughly how much was that discount? - Did you change how you used electricity in your home? If so, what were those changes?		
Deep dive on actions taken as a result of the trial	For the next part of the conversation, I'd like to explore any actions you may have taken to reduce your electricity use during peak hours. As a reminder, we are referring to peak hours as weekdays between 4pm – 7pm. During the trial, did you change how you used electricity in your home? <i>Probe on whether participants only changed their peak hour usage or their overall usage. Explore whether they relied more on gas if they reduced electricity.</i> - What made you change your behaviour? Why? <i>Probe on motivations relating to trial if mentioned (i.e. idea of reducing standing charge, saving money)</i> - If so, can you tell me more about what you changed? <i>Moderator to probe on specific appliance usage (e.g. washing machine, tumble dryer, electrical oven) and the reason participants chose these behaviours to change.</i> - How consistently were you able to make those changes? <i>Moderator to probe on whether participants changed their behaviours on every week day or only sometimes – explore barriers to this</i> - If not, why not? <i>Moderator to probe on the barriers to change: motivations, capability, structural barriers</i>	10	25

Section	Key questions and probes	Time	Total
	[If changes were implemented] How did making these changes impact you and your household? - How did they affect the lives of the people who live in your house? What did they think of the trial? - How easy or difficult did you find it to make these changes? - Were there any actions you considered but didn't take? If so, why? - Out of the changes that you made, which do you think saved the most electricity? Why? <i>Moderator to check for signs of harm (e.g., rationing)</i> [If changes were not implemented] What, if anything, would have made you more likely to make changes? Why? - What impact, if any, do you think these changes could have? - What are the main things you think you could do as a household to save electricity? Why? Now that the trial is over, do you plan to keep this new routine? - Why / why not? - What will help you to do this longer term? - What would get in the way / make this difficult? - Have you considered any other energy and cost saving schemes? If so, which schemes and why?		
Deep dive on impact of communications	Thank you for your answers so far! I'd now like us to discuss what you might have experienced or saw during the trial in more detail.	10	35

Section	Key questions and probes	Time	Total
	<i>Moderator to build on and refer back to any previous discussion about incentives being a prompt for behaviour change</i> What information do you remember receiving from British Gas during the trial? If messaging was received: • How did you receive this information (e.g. through email, text)? • What was your initial reaction when you opened the [letter, email, text]? • How clear was the information you received? Did you feel like you had all the information you needed? <i>Moderator to probe on whether participants understood that their standing charge was being reduced and if they understood why they were being asked to reduce their energy use at peak times</i> As best as you can remember, how often did you receive information about the trial? • What did you think about the amount of information you received? Was it too often or too infrequent? • Did information about the trial change over time? If so, how? • In your opinion, did the information you received cause you to change your electricity usage? Why? • What would you improve or change about any of information you received? [If comms not remembered or received] Here is some of the information you may have received during the trial <i>Moderator to show slide with communications examples. Stimulus shown to reflect the treatment group that participant was in (e.g. environmental messaging, fortnightly/monthly communications)</i> • Do you remember receiving any of this information during the trial?		

Section	Key questions and probes	Time	Total
	○ What do you remember? ○ What did you think of it at the time? ○ How frequently did you receive communications about the trial? ○ Did the information within the communications differ at any point? ● [For those who do not remember receiving the communications] What are your initial thoughts on this information? Is it clear? ● If you had received this information during the trial, how do you think it would have impacted you? ○ What difference, if any, would it have made if you had received this information more frequently? <i>Probe based on participant's treatment group (fortnightly vs. monthly communications)</i> ● Do you think that receiving this information would have prompted you to change your behaviour? Why / why not? ● How, if at all, would this have impacted the way you use electricity during peak hours / overall?		
Deep dive on impact of incentives	I'd now like to move on to talk about potential discounts on your standing charge that you may have received. To the best of your knowledge did you receive a discount on your standing charge during the trial? ● Did you receive the same discount every month? <i>Moderator to probe on how participants felt about each discount they received.</i> ● Did your discount percentage change throughout the trial? ● In your own words, tell me why you received the discount.	10	45

Section	Key questions and probes	Time	Total
	<i>If incentive was received:</i> • Were you satisfied with the amount that was discounted? Why / why not? <i>Moderator to probe on whether the amount matched participants' expectations of what they would receive and where those expectations came from</i> • Do you feel like the discount you received appropriately reflected the changes you made? <i>Moderator to probe on what amount would feel appropriate to receive given the changes they made.</i> <i>If incentive was not received:</i> • Did you expect to receive a discount? How did you feel about not receiving a discount? Here are some discount amounts you could have received depending on the amount of electricity you used during the trial <i>Moderator to show slide with stimulus outlining the discount amounts offered</i> What are your immediate thoughts on this information? • If you had received a discount during the trial, how do you think it would have impacted you? <i>(Moderator to probe on impact of different incentive amounts.)</i> • Do you think that receiving an incentive would have prompted you to change your actions / the way you use electricity / the amount of electricity you use? Why / why not? <i>(Moderator to probe on impact of different incentive amounts.)</i> • How would this have impacted the way you use electricity during peak hours / overall?		

Section	Key questions and probes	Time	Total
Perceptions of the trial proposition	I'd like to move on now to thinking about the idea behind the trial overall. <i>Moderator to show stimulus with information outlining the reasons behind the trial and the proposition.</i> What are your immediate thoughts on this information? • Do you remember seeing or hearing this information during the trial period? • What, if anything, stands out to you? Why? • Are there any benefits you think it may have? • Are there any drawbacks you think it may have? • Is there anything that feels unclear / you would want more information on? <i>Moderator to share stimulus about standing charges and how these sit alongside other components of the electricity bill</i> What do you think about the idea of getting a discount or money back on the standing charge you pay for your electricity? Moderator to probe on participant's attitude towards standing charges • Are there any benefits you think this may have? • Are there any drawbacks you think this may have? What are your thoughts about this discount applying to the standing charge? • How far do you think this is an appropriate part of the bill to discount? • How fair does this feel?	10	55

Section	Key questions and probes	Time	Total
	- Are there other ways of offering an incentive to people to reduce their peak electricity use, that you think would be more appropriate? What? Why? <i>Moderator to share stimulus about the way in which discounts were calculated for customers during the trial</i> How fair do you think this way of calculating the discount for customers is? - Are there other ways you think might be fairer? Having heard this information, how well do you think the idea behind the trial was communicated to you during the trial? - Was the information presented and communicated clearly? Why / why not? - What information would you have liked to receive during the trial? - How do you think this could have been communicated better? What is one piece of advice you would give to Ofgem if they were to go ahead with the idea behind this trial, and roll it out more widely?		
Reflections on taking part in the trial	Now I'd like to reflect on your overall experience of the trial – and what could be different or improved should you be part of something like this again in the future. How did you find the experience of taking part in the trial overall? - To what extent, if at all, have your thoughts on how energy bills are calculated changed? - What, if anything, did you enjoy or find particularly useful? - What, if anything, do you think could have been improved for a better experience?	5	60

Section	Key questions and probes	Time	Total
	What is your one message to Ofgem about running trials like this in the future?		
Thank and close	Thank you so much for your time. Was there anything else you wanted to add before we close? Moderator to outline next steps, thank and close.	-	60

Research materials – ScottishPower

ScottishPower Discussion Guide

Introduction

Ofgem has been running behavioural trials as part of a broader review of cost allocation and recovery. These trials aimed to explore the effectiveness of interventions designed to encourage reductions in peak-time electricity usage by linking daily standing charges reduction during weekdays. The trials have taken place between November 2025 – March 2026 in collaboration with two energy suppliers.

The trials have involved a range of interventions and incentives. ScottishPower customers were asked to shift their electricity use away from peak times (weekdays 4pm – 7pm). Participants in the trial received a discount on their standing charge that depended on their electricity usage at peak times. One group of participants could receive a 50% discount on their standing charge if they fell into the lowest band of usage, whereas the highest band of usage could receive a 10% discount. The second group of participants could receive an 100% discount at the lowest band and a 20% discount at the highest band.

The objectives of this research will be to:

- Explore consumers' lived experiences of participating in the trial, including their end-to-end consumer journey and the reasons behind their decisions and behaviours.
- Explore consumers' attitudes, awareness, acceptability and perceptions of the trial proposition, including perceived benefits, drawbacks and perception of fairness, to inform future policy design.
- Examine motivations for participating or not participating, any impact different communications variants and frequency and identify any sustained behaviours.
- Assess consumers' comprehension of how the proposition was communicated, in order to support future improvements and maximise participation.

About this discussion guide

The purpose of this document is to serve as a guide to inform the flow of the discussions, rather than a definitive list of questions to cover. As these are qualitative sessions, the facilitator will use the guide flexibly and be guided by what comes out of the discussions.

In this discussion guide:

- Instructions to the facilitator are *italicised*

- Key questions are **bolded**

Note to moderator: Review profile sheet prior to interview to determine treatment group and stim slides shown

Pre-task - Participants will be asked to complete a short pre-task ahead of the interview

Before your interview with Thinks, please could you tell us in a few sentences about your overall experience of the energy trial:

- What do you remember from the trial?
- What, if anything, did you do as a result of the trial?
- Did you receive any discounts on your bill or communications during the trial period?

Before the interview, please revisit any communications or information you received during the trial period to remind yourself of what you saw or heard. This could include emails, text messages or bills from ScottishPower.

Section	Key questions and probes	Time	Total
Introduction	My name is [XXX] and I'm a researcher from an independent research agency called Thinks Insight & Strategy. We are conducting research on behalf of Ofgem, Ofgem is the regulator for energy supply in Great Britain. We are looking to speak to people who have taken part in the ScottishPower Ofgem trial from January 2026 to March 2026. <i>Explain terms of the session:</i> • We'll be talking for 60 minutes – finishing up at [XXX]. If I move you along at any point, this is just to ensure that we cover everything we need to within this timeframe. • There are no right or wrong answers – we are just interested in hearing your thoughts and experiences. • You can opt out of the research at any time, and you don't have to answer all of the questions asked. • Incentives will be paid by bank transfer through the Ayda platform after the interview is complete. <i>Confirm confidentiality:</i> • We abide by the Market Research Society Code of Conduct. We will also never pass your contact details on to any third party and will not include your name or any details which could identify you within our research reports. • The only exception to this is if you say something that gives me reason to think you or someone else is at risk of harm. In the unlikely event that this happens, we may be legally obliged to pass this information on to the relevant authorities.	10	10

Section	Key questions and probes	Time	Total
	- With your permission we would like to record this session. In the first instance, this is just so that the immediate team at Thinks can refer back to the interview for analysis purposes. <i>Offer the opportunity to ask questions about the research process.</i> To kick things off, it would be great if we could do some introductions. Please could you tell me: Where in the country you are based? Who you live with? What you like to do when you're not working? Now, I'd like to hear a bit more about your energy use at home. How do you use electricity at home on a typical day? <i>Moderator to probe on working/lifestyle patterns/lifestyle to understand how much time they spend at home and during 4 – 7pm</i> - Do you also use gas? How do you use gas at home on a typical day? <i>Moderator to probe on whether participant relies more on gas or electricity or uses alternative energy sources like heat networks</i> Does your electricity usage change across time (e.g. across different seasons, during peak hours from 4-7pm, weekdays vs. weekends) and if so, how? What, if anything, do you do to try and manage your electricity use? <i>Moderator to probe on participants' reasoning and motivations as well as barriers and enablers to electricity management.</i>		

Section	Key questions and probes	Time	Total
	If you had to guess, do you think you use more or less electricity than your neighbours? Why? <i>Moderator to probe on potential vulnerabilities which may impact electricity use (e.g. energy dependent health conditions, children / elderly people living in the household, financial vulnerability/electricity rationing)</i> How familiar are you with the way your electricity bills are calculated? - What do you know about the different charges that are included in your bill? (this is not a test!) - Have you heard of standing charges? If so, how would you describe what this means? <i>Moderator to probe on attitudes towards standing charges</i>		
Your trial journey and lived experience	I'd now like to focus on the ScottishPower Ofgem trial you took part in with your energy supplier ScottishPower. What do you remember about the ScottishPower Ofgem trial? - What, if anything, stood out to you from the trial period? How did you hear about the trial? - What were your initial thoughts when you first learnt about the trial? Why? - Did you understand what you were being asked to do? - What made you decide to participate in the trial (i.e. not opt out)? <i>Probe to understand awareness of ability to opt out and thoughts on this approach to including customers in the trial</i> In your own words, tell me about what happened during the trial	5	15

Section	Key questions and probes	Time	Total
	<i>Moderator to understand at a high level what their experience was, which will be explored in more detail later on in the discussion</i> - What communications did you receive? How often did you receive them? - Did you receive any discount on your standing charge? If so, roughly how much was that discount? - Did you change how you used electricity in your home? If so, what were those changes?		
Deep dive on actions taken as a result of the trial	For the next part of the conversation, I'd like to explore any actions you may have taken to reduce your electricity use during peak hours. As a reminder, we are referring to peak hours as weekdays between 4pm – 7pm. During the trial, did you change how you used electricity in your home? <i>Probe on whether participants only changed their peak hour usage or their overall usage. Explore whether they relied more on gas if they reduced electricity.</i> - What made you change your behaviour? Why? <i>Probe on motivations relating to trial if mentioned (i.e. idea of reducing standing charge, saving money)</i> - If so, can you tell me more about what you changed? <i>Moderator to probe on specific appliance usage (e.g. washing machine, tumble dryer, electrical oven) and the reason participants chose these behaviours to change.</i> - Why did you change these particular actions? <i>Moderator to probe on structural barriers and enablers</i> - How consistently were you able to make those changes? <i>Moderator to probe on whether participants changed their behaviours on every week day or only sometimes – explore barriers to this</i>	10	25

Section	Key questions and probes	Time	Total
	- If not, why not? <i>Moderator to probe on the barriers to change: motivations, capability, structural barriers</i> [If changes were implemented] How did making these changes impact you and your household? - How did they affect the lives of the people who live in your house? What did they think of the trial? - How easy or difficult did you find it to make these changes? - Were there any actions you considered but didn't take? If so, why? - Out of the changes that you made, which do you think saved the most electricity? Why? <i>Moderator to check for signs of harm (e.g., rationing)</i> [If changes were not implemented] What, if anything, would have made you more likely to make changes? Why? - What impact, if any, do you think these changes could have? - What are the main things you think you could do as a household to save electricity? Why? Now that the trial is over, do you plan to keep this new routine? - Why / why not? - What will help you to do this longer term? - What would get in the way / make this difficult? - Have you considered any other energy and cost saving schemes? If so, which schemes and why?		

Section	Key questions and probes	Time	Total
Deep dive on impact of communications	Thank you for your answers so far! I'd now like us to discuss what you might have experienced or saw during the trial in more detail. <i>Moderator to build on and refer back to any previous discussion about incentives being a prompt for behaviour change</i> What information do you remember receiving from ScottishPower during the trial? If messaging was received: • How did you receive this information (e.g. through email, text)? • What was your initial reaction when you opened the [letter, email, text]? • How clear was the information you received? Did you feel like you had all the information you needed? <i>Moderator to probe on whether participants understood that their standing charge was being reduced and if they understood why they were being asked to reduce their energy use at peak times</i> As best as you can remember, how often did you receive information about the trial? • What did you think about the amount of information you received? Was it too often or too infrequent? • Did information about the trial ch. If any over time? If so, how? • In your opinion, did the information you received cause you to change your electricity usage? Why? • What would you improve or change about any of information you received? [If comms not remembered or received] Here is some of the information you may have received during the trial	10	35

Section	Key questions and probes	Time	Total
	<i>Moderator to show slide with communications examples. Stimulus shown to reflect the treatment group that participant was in (e.g. environmental messaging, fortnightly/monthly communications)</i> - Do you remember receiving any of this information during the trial? - What do you remember? - What did you think of it at the time? - How frequently did you receive communications about the trial? - Did the information within the communications differ at any point? [For those who do not remember receiving the communications] What are your initial thoughts on this information? Is it clear? - If you had received this information during the trial, how do you think it would have impacted you? - What difference, if any, would it have made if you had received this information more frequently? <i>Probe based on participant's treatment group (fortnightly vs. monthly communications)</i> - Do you think that receiving this information would have prompted you to change your behaviour? Why / why not? - How, if at all, would this have impacted the way you use electricity during peak hours / overall?		
Deep dive on impact of incentives	I'd now like to move on to talk about potential discounts on your standing charge that you may have received. To the best of your knowledge did you receive a discount on your standing charge during the trial?	10	45

Section	Key questions and probes	Time	Total
	- Did you receive the same discount every month? <i>Moderator to probe on how participants felt about each discount they received.</i> - In your own words, tell me why you received the discount. <i>If incentive was received:</i> - Were you satisfied with the amount that was discounted? Why / why not? <i>Moderator to probe on whether the amount matched participants' expectations of what they would receive and where those expectations came from</i> - Do you feel like the discount you received appropriately reflected the changes you made? <i>Moderator to probe on what amount would feel appropriate to receive given the changes they made.</i> <i>If incentive was not received:</i> - Did you expect to receive a discount? How did you feel about not receiving a discount? Here are some discount amounts you could have received depending on the amount of electricity you used during the trial <i>Moderator to show slide with stimulus outlining the discount amounts offered</i> What are your immediate thoughts on this information? - If you had received a discount during the trial, how do you think it would have impacted you? <i>(Moderator to probe on impact of different incentive amounts.)</i> - Do you think that receiving an incentive would have prompted you to change your actions / the way you use electricity / the amount of electricity you use? Why / why not? <i>(Moderator to probe on impact of different incentive amounts.)</i>		

Section	Key questions and probes	Time	Total
	How would this have impacted the way you use electricity during peak hours / overall?		
Perceptions of the trial proposition	I'd like to move on now to thinking about the idea behind the trial overall. <i>Moderator to show stimulus [slide 16] with information outlining the reasons behind the trial and the proposition .</i> What are your immediate thoughts on this information? - Do you remember seeing or hearing this information during the trial period? - What, if anything, stands out to you? Why? - Are there any benefits you think it may have? - Are there any drawbacks you think it may have? - Is there anything that feels unclear / you would want more information on? <i>Moderator to share stimulus [slide 17] about standing charges and how these sit alongside other components of the electricity bill</i> What do you think about the idea of getting a discount or money back on the standing charge you pay for your electricity? <i>Moderator to probe on participant's attitude towards standing charges</i> - Are there any benefits you think this may have? - Are there any drawbacks you think this may have? What are your thoughts about this discount applying to the standing charge?	10	55

Section	Key questions and probes	Time	Total
	- To what extent, if at all, do you think this is an appropriate part of the bill to discount? - How fair does this feel? - What other ways of offering an incentive to people to reduce their peak electricity use, that you think would be more appropriate? Why? <i>Moderator to share stimulus [slide 18] about the way in which discounts were calculated for customers during the trial</i> How fair do you think this way of calculating the discount for customers is? - Are there other ways you think might be fairer? Having heard this information, how well do you think the idea behind the trial was communicated to you during the trial? - Was the information presented and communicated clearly? Why / why not? - What information would you have liked to receive during the trial? - How do you think this could have been communicated better? What is one piece of advice you would give to Ofgem if they were to go ahead with the idea behind this trial, and roll it out more widely?		
Reflections on taking part in the trial	Now I'd like to reflect on your overall experience of the trial – and what could be different or improved should you be part of something like this again in the future. How did you find the experience of taking part in the trial overall? To what extent, if at all, have your thoughts on how energy bills are calculated changed?	5	60

Section	Key questions and probes	Time	Total
	- What, if anything, did you enjoy or find particularly useful? - What, if anything, do you think could have been improved for a better experience? What is your one message to Ofgem about running trials like this in the future?		
Thank and close	Thank you so much for your time. Was there anything else you wanted to add before we close? Moderator to outline next steps, thank and close.	-	60

Research stimulus

Supplier 1 - British Gas Comms

Group 1:
Fortnightly and
monthly reminders

Group 2:
Just monthly
reminders



Hello Paul
Together with Ofgem, we're delighted to share that you've been included in an exciting new **Weekday First Saver** trial this winter.

By taking part, you could earn a discount on your daily standing charge every day by moving your electricity use away from peak times during the week.

And together, we'll help ease the pressure on the UK's energy grid as everyone can get the electricity they need.

Just think, if every home used 50% less electricity at peak times, we could generate enough power for 87 households for a whole year!

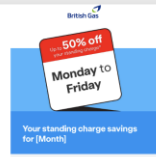
Just think, if every home used 50% less electricity at peak times, we could save over £3 billion on energy infrastructure building costs and help keep everyone's bills lower!



Hello Paul
A big thanks for taking part in our **Weekday First Saver** trial. By using a little less electricity between 9pm and 7pm on weekdays, you could get up to 50% off your standing charge each day – great for your savings and the planet!

In a couple of weeks, we'll send you a snapshot of how much you've saved so far. Until then, keep going and use how much more you could save this month.

It's all about doing what you can, when you can, by moving your electricity use away from peak times – **weekdays between 9pm and 7pm**.



Standing charge savings for [Month]
£00.00
Your remaining standing charge
£00.00

Hello Paul
Thanks for taking part in our **Weekday First Saver** trial and helping to ease your electricity bills over winter.

By taking part in the trial, you could earn a discount on your daily standing charge every day by moving your electricity use away from peak times during the week.

And together, we'll help ease the pressure on the UK's energy grid as everyone can get the electricity they need.

Just think, if every home used 50% less electricity at peak times, we could generate enough power for 87 households for a whole year!

Just think, if every home used 50% less electricity at peak times, we could save over £3 billion on energy infrastructure building costs and help keep everyone's bills lower!

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And together, we'll help ease the pressure on the UK's energy grid as everyone can get the electricity they need.

Just think, if every home used 50% less electricity at peak times, we could generate enough power for 87 households for a whole year!

Just think, if every home used 50% less electricity at peak times, we could save over £3 billion on energy infrastructure building costs and help keep everyone's bills lower!

By taking part in the trial, you could earn a discount on your daily standing charge every day by moving your electricity use away from peak times during the week.

And together, we'll help ease the pressure on the UK's energy grid as everyone can get the electricity they need.

Supplier 2 - ScottishPower Comms



Hello Paul
Thanks for taking part in our **Weekday First Saver** trial. By using a little less electricity between 9pm and 7pm on weekdays, you could get up to 50% off your standing charge each day – great for your savings and the planet!

In a couple of weeks, we'll send you a snapshot of how much you've saved so far. Until then, keep going and use how much more you could save this month.

It's all about doing what you can, when you can, by moving your electricity use away from peak times – **weekdays between 9pm and 7pm**.

By taking part in the trial, you could earn a discount on your daily standing charge every day by moving your electricity use away from peak times during the week.

And together, we'll help ease the pressure on the UK's energy grid as everyone can get the electricity they need.

Just think, if every home used 50% less electricity at peak times, we could generate enough power for 87 households for a whole year!

Just think, if every home used 50% less electricity at peak times, we could save over £3 billion on energy infrastructure building costs and help keep everyone's bills lower!

By taking part in the trial, you could earn a discount on your daily standing charge every day by moving your electricity use away from peak times during the week.

And together, we'll help ease the pressure on the UK's energy grid as everyone can get the electricity they need.

Just think, if every home used 50% less electricity at peak times, we could generate enough power for 87 households for a whole year!

Just think, if every home used 50% less electricity at peak times, we could save over £3 billion on energy infrastructure building costs and help keep everyone's bills lower!

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68 Thinks Insight & Strategy

Subject line: Make the most of up to 100% off your standing charge

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**ScottishPower
T2 - Monthly reminder**

Hello,

Because you're part of our exclusive trial* with Ofgem, when you shift your electricity use away from peak times (Monday to Friday, 4pm to 7pm) you can save up to 100% off your standing charge.

The trial runs until 31st March 2026

You've been given your bit to move your electricity to off-peak times, and you've saved £X in the first two weeks of the trial. We've got some tips to help you to continue shifting your electricity use to make more savings.

Tips to make the most of your savings

Making small shifts in your habits could really add up while you're taking part in our Ofgem trial. Here are three tips to help make the most of it.

Use delay timers to your advantage

Most washing machines, tumble dryer and dishwashers have delay timers. So you can pop your washing in when you get home from work, and set the time so that it comes on after 7pm. Fresh clothes and a standing charge saving? Win-win.

Get your batch cook on

Weekends are the ideal time to make the most of 50% off your standing charge. And what better way than by cooking up a storm to get your weeknight meals sorted.

Make the most of the mornings

If weekends and evenings don't work for you, the best way to get more out your savings is to do your high energy use tasks in the morning. A quick Hoover before you head to work, using your slow cooker for your tea or popping the dishwasher on at lunchtime could all add up.

Thanks for being a ScottishPower customer.

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Discount calculations

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Discount structure

- Each day, British Gas looked at peak time (4-7pm) electricity usage of people based on their region in the UK
- They used these readings to make a baseline of electricity usage during peak time
- The peak electricity use of customers on the trial is compared to this group of customers not on the trial.
- The baseline was calculated every day, which means that it reflected how electricity use can change depending on the season or the weather
- Customers on the trial who are in the top 30% of peak electricity users compared to the baseline get zero reward
- Customer on the trial who are in the bottom 25% of peak electricity users compared to the baseline earn the maximum discount of 50%
 - The maximum discount was changed to 100% for the last month of the trial
- All other customer earned reward based on a sliding scale - the less electricity customers use, the greater the discount

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British Gas

Compared to people in your region not taking part of the trial

Uses the least amount of energy

Energy usage decreases

Uses the most amount of energy

People involved in the trial

Receives a 50% discount

Discount increases

Discount decreases

Receives no discount

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ScottishPower Group 1

Discount structure

How much you save depends on how much energy you use during peak times (Monday to Friday, 4pm to 7pm).

The discount applies to your **weekdays daily standing charge** only.

If you use 0.9kWh or less...

You receive a **50% discount**

This is the equivalent of...

Boiling the kettle and keeping the lights on

If you use between 0.9 - 1.8kWh...

You receive a **20% discount**

This is the equivalent of...

Using the oven for 30 minutes

If you use between 1.8 - 3kWh...

You receive a **10% discount**

This is the equivalent of...

Running the dishwasher for 2 hours

*The amount of energy used varies depending on the energy efficiency of the appliance <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/guides/energy-guides/what-is-a-bath-bat-and-bath-explained>

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ScottishPower Group 2

Discount structure

How much you save depends on how much energy you use during peak times (Monday to Friday, 4pm to 7pm).

The discount applies to your **weekday daily standing charge** only.

If you use 0.9kWh or less...

You receive a **100% discount**

This is the equivalent of...

Boiling the kettle and keeping the lights on

If you use between 0.9 - 1.8kWh...

You receive a **40% discount**

This is the equivalent of...

Using the oven for 30 minutes

If you use between 1.8 - 3kWh...

You receive a **20% discount**

This is the equivalent of...

Running the dishwasher for 2 hours

*The amount of energy used varies depending on the energy efficiency of the appliance <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/guides/energy-guides/what-is-a-bath-bat-and-bath-explained>

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Trial proposition

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Trial Proposition

- At certain times - like when everyone gets home from work, starts cooking, or puts a wash on - the UK's energy grid gets **really busy**.
- These are known as **peak times**, and they usually happen on weekdays between 4pm and 7pm.
- This trial, run in partnership with Ofgem, is all about seeing if customers can help ease that pressure by moving some of their electricity use to quieter times. So, things like running the dishwasher, washing machine, charging your car or devices - just a little later or earlier.
- If you do, you'll save money on your electricity bill. You could earn a discount on your daily standing charge for every weekday you successfully move your electricity use away from peak hours.

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How electricity bills are calculated

Total electricity cost of the day

49p

24p/kWh

Standing charge

Unit rate

- Fixed amount you pay every day regardless of how much electricity you use.
- Standing charges cover the cost of:
 - Maintaining the energy supply network
 - Supporting government social schemes like the Warm Home Discount
 - Operating costs
- Your unit rate is the price for each unit of electricity you use.
- Your energy cost is how much energy you used in kilowatts multiplied by the unit rate.

Example: You use 10kWh in a day (you ran the dishwasher, baked a chicken for an hour, and did a load of laundry)

Your bill for the day: $49p + (10kWh \times 24p) = \pounds2.89$

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The discounted part of the bill during the trial

Total electricity cost of the day

49p

24p/kWh

Standing charge

Unit rate

The standing charge was discounted

- Fixed amount you pay every day regardless of how much electricity you use.
- Your unit rate is the price for each unit of electricity you use.

Example: You use 10kWh in a day (you ran the dishwasher, baked a chicken for an hour, and did a load of laundry)

Your bill for the day: $49p + (10kWh \times 24p) = \pounds2.89$

Example with a 50% discount: Your bill for the day: $24.5p + (10kWh \times 24p) = \pounds2.69$

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