



Emotionally  
Intelligent  
Communications

**WALES & WEST UTILITIES**

**SAFETY ONLINE STAKEHOLDER  
WORKSHOP**

**FEEDBACK REPORT**

**11 DECEMBER 2023**



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## INTRODUCTION

On 11 December 2023, Wales & West Utilities (WWU) held a stakeholder workshop aimed at seeking feedback from local authority representatives and others involved in safety. The purpose of this workshop was to elicit feedback on WWU's approach to ensuring safety in emergency works, pipe replacement operations and its energy decarbonisation approach.

Each session consisted of a short presentation given by a WWU representative, followed by a facilitated group discussion in a virtual breakout room where feedback was noted down by a scribe.

The event was divided into three sessions:

1. Carbon monoxide
2. Plant protection
3. Local resilience forums

The event was attended by 14 participants representing 12 organisations from a range of different stakeholder groups including local authorities, charities and emergency services.

WWU instructed EQ Communications, a specialist stakeholder engagement consultancy, to independently facilitate the event and to take notes of the comments made by stakeholders. This document summarises the feedback received. Every effort has been made to faithfully record the feedback given. To encourage candour and open debate, comments have not been ascribed to individuals.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A summary of the major themes of the feedback provided from each session and the results from the event feedback form are provided below.

### CARBON MONOXIDE

- Stakeholders emphasised the need for collaborative communications with WWU in order to elevate carbon monoxide (CO) awareness. In particular, there was a feeling that dovetailing their individual campaigns into WWU's national awareness-raising efforts would more effectively raise the profile of this danger.
- Attendees stressed that WWU should focus on localised community outreach in order to create human connections with residents and get these CO services out to hard-to-reach customers.
- Participants supported the idea of WWU extending its CO incident services beyond the regulatory requirements. However, they were uncertain about how exactly WWU could ensure that landlords adhere to CO monitor legislation.

### PLANT PROTECTION

- Attendees argued that WWU could be more proactive around plant protection by making improvements to its LineSearch tool and by engaging more proactively with local authorities on planning applications.

### LOCAL RESILIENCE FORUMS

- Stakeholders fully supported greater involvement by WWU in local resilience forums and felt that this should take the form of more proactive information sharing with the other responders involved, as well as more regular attendance at resilience training events.
- Concern was expressed about potential meeting clashes between different strategic coordination groups across WWU's licence area in England and Wales, potentially preventing WWU from being as involved as it would like to be in local resilience forums.

### WRITTEN FEEDBACK

After the workshop, stakeholders were asked to complete a short feedback form. Some of the key findings are shown below. A full breakdown of the feedback can be found in Appendix 2 of this report.

- 100% of attendees who filled out a feedback form told us that they found the workshop either 'very interesting' or 'interesting'.
- 66% 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that the right topics were discussed on the day, with the remainder (34%) feeling 'neutral'.
- 100% thought EQ Communications' facilitation was either 'good' or 'very good'.

### PARTICIPANTS

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A total of 14 stakeholders participated in the workshop, representing 12 organisations. The most prominently represented stakeholder group was local authorities, which accounted for 50% of attendees. A full list of organisations that attended the workshop can be found in Appendix 1.

## **SESSION ONE: CARBON MONOXIDE**

Following a welcome and an overview of WWU and the upcoming GD3 Business Plan from David Robinson (Business Services Director), Paisley Carpenter (Community and Partnerships Officer) took stakeholders through the first presentation, which focused on CO. She began by outlining the threat of CO to customers, setting out WWU's emergency response and legal obligations to customers following an emergency. Paisley then spotlighted WWU's broader approach to tackling CO, with tailored approaches for different customer groups. With this in mind, she also touched upon the company's proposed CO Reconnection Project to enhance this offering, by training up engineers to perform deeper checks to determine the source of CO and possibly isolate it. To conclude, Paisley discussed barriers faced by the company in ensuring that smoke and carbon monoxide alarm regulations are enforced.

Participants were then asked to introduce themselves and provide feedback on their approach to addressing CO.

All discussions began with introductions. Attendees represented a range of different stakeholder groups, including emergency services, local authorities, national agencies and charities.

In order to raise CO awareness, stakeholders felt that the most effective avenue of collaboration between themselves and WWU was through more effective and structured joint communications. There was a general feeling that WWU should act as a convener for other stakeholders to help to create partnerships and to disseminate information. One attendee took the view that it would be worthwhile to link their own organisation's CO awareness campaign into WWU's national one in order to raise its profile, while another stressed that it would be useful for the company to regularly update them on its own strategy so that they could inform their own partners. Beyond communications, one participant suggested that WWU should look into partnerships with local fire and rescue agencies around disseminating CO alarms in order to spend the limited funding pots available more efficiently.

During discussions on closer partnerships to identify at-risk customers in communities, the key theme was leveraging locally-known faces and organisations as part of an on-the-ground strategy. A number of attendees bemoaned the fact that communications and outreach campaigns are primarily now undertaken online. This could prevent WWU from reaching a significant number of people who need these CO emergency services, but do not use the internet. Therefore, there were calls for WWU to work with local organisations – such as the fire and rescue service – and establish a presence locally, such as outside shops or at community coffee mornings. One stakeholder took the view that while this approach would be beneficial, it should also be underpinned by a clear and concise information document about CO safety and emergencies that could be distributed locally during any such community outreach campaign. This

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stakeholder expressed an interest in working with WWU to develop such a document, displaying an appetite for collaboration that WWU was seeking from this event.

WWU's proposal of investing more into providing services beyond its licence obligations to support customers, such as customer callbacks after CO incidents, was well received. The general consensus from the group was that any additional investment that would result in increased customer safety should be welcomed. Reinforcing this broad level of support, one participant showed a willingness to share relevant information that their organisation holds in order to help WWU shape this investment strategy in this area.

Attendees could not come to a clear conclusion on how WWU could ensure that landlords adhere to carbon monoxide legislation, with one noting that it is a 'complex topic' due to the different types of landlords operating in the company's licence area. Therefore, it was felt that it would be impossible to come up with a silver bullet to overcome all of the barriers identified in the presentation. However, one stakeholder took the view that the fire service should simply be given the powers to enter the properties of landlords that had refused to comply over long periods in order to install the legally required monitors.

## FEEDBACK

### 1. What is your role and your reason for attending today? What would you like to get out of today?

- "I'm here to deal with disconnections and reconnections." Local authority officer
- "I'm here for information on carbon monoxide safety" Charity
- "I'm part of the secretariat services to the all-party Parliamentary group on carbon monoxide policy and safety." Charity

### 2. Is there anything more we can do in collaboration with you to raise awareness of CO, including recent changes to legislation?

- "We only get representation at strategic level, so it would be beneficial if there was some sort of strategy in place to give us an update on a regular basis. Some utility companies send a quarterly newsletter, or possibly on social media, that we can share with our LREF partners. On a positive note, one of my colleagues recently had a gas emergency and within 20 minutes there was someone on site." Emergency service
- "From a fire service perspective, linking into our national campaigns and ensuring there's a joint double-pronged attack in our area. Joined-up working and having access to these contacts is perfect and working in line with Paisley when we have campaigns working is perfect." Emergency service
- "In public health, sometimes we find that lots of campaigns are run on social media, but how are we getting to those who aren't on social media? These are the most vulnerable because they're not connected in the most technologically advanced ways. How are we identifying the more vulnerable in society and reaching them? Second is to do with cost of gas supply and getting those people who might not be using gas. Is there anything more that we can do to save them money? Is there some

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link-up to ensure people are safer if they're using different methods due to the cost-of-living crisis? Maintaining those conversations and looking at the policy and legislation around that." Charity

- "With the supply of CO alarms, is there a possibility to work with Fire and Rescue Services to push that with the limited budget some of these services have? To help push that onto the customer?" Emergency service
- "Is WWU involved in consultation responses? I'm wondering if that was something that you get involved in to influence policy." Charity

### 3. How can we work more closely with you to identify those who are most at risk in your communities?

- "Our current prevention work and the visits we complete are targeted at the most vulnerable. If we are in the community and making an assessment on the most vulnerable business users, we put these at the heart of the services we provide anyway as part of the Fire and Rescue Service." Emergency service
- "A lot of the campaigns we do are online, but the vulnerable people in Cornwall in particular don't have internet access. Going out to coffee mornings or engaging with people outside the shops is basic, but really key." Emergency service
- "Due to the age profile we work with, we don't expect them to have an internet connection. Is there an easy-to-read, single page, large-print document to help with the word-of-mouth informal network sharing? We'd be up for developing a resource like this." Charity
- "Is there a priority service register? People can sign up to this and have communication in a certain way. You mentioned about CO being detected by an audible alarm, what about the deaf or hard of hearing? Are there any visual alarms, is that a consideration when providing alarms?" Charity

### 4. Do you think we should be funded to allow us to invest more into providing services beyond our license obligations to support customers, like the ones listed below?

- **Carrying out the CO source checks (CMDDA1)**
  - **Carrying out repairs to appliances**
  - **Customer callbacks following a CO / gas safety incident**
  - **Providing additional support for identified customers following the callbacks**
  - **Continue to provide CO alarms to vulnerable customers or extend to the wider community**
- "I would be a big advocate for that and have nothing but positive things to say about WWU. They are a lot more speedy and proactive than other organisations. We'd be big supporters of whatever we can do to make people safe." Emergency service
  - "Any more information that we can have, including roadshows or whatever presentations to various groups or going to a strategy LREF meeting, the offer is on the table." Emergency service

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**5. How do you think WWU should ensure that landlords adhere to carbon monoxide regulations / legislation?**

- “The fire service could unlock awkward landlords if they’re uncompliant as they do have the tools in the box.” Emergency service
- “This is a complex issue as there are so many different types of landlords. It is a complicated topic.”  
Emergency service



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## SESSION TWO: PLANT PROTECTION

The second presentation of the day was given by Stephen Davies (Network Officer) and focused on approaches to ensure safe working practices to prevent damage to underground pipes. He began by outlining the potential safety impacts and wider implications of damage to pipes caused by unsafe working methods, such as disruption to the gas network and environmental damage caused by leaks. Stephen then introduced WWU's 'Can you DIG it?' guide for workers looking to perform excavation work to identify where any pipes are before any work is carried out. He also noted that LineSearch, an online mapping service, is available to enable interested parties searching WWU's network and producing scaled plans. Stakeholders were then asked to provide feedback on the company's efforts to ensure safety in any operations involving digging underground.

It was felt that increased engagement with local bodies and technology advances were the best ways for WWU to be more proactive in plant protection. One attendee noted that some water companies are consultees on planning applications and therefore took the view that increased engagement from the company with local authorities would be worthwhile. On the other hand, another argued that significant improvements need to be made to LineSearch in order for them to rely on it as a working tool, citing inaccurate maps and tricky user interfaces as notable weaknesses to the platform.

### FEEDBACK

#### 1. How can we work together to be more proactive in this space?

- "Some water companies are consultees on planning applications, so I was wondering whether WWU have input on planning applications. Do local authorities currently engage with you? Or do you have to go out of your way to engage with local authorities?" Local authority officer
- "We've tried using LineSearch before but the plans we get aren't accurate. They don't make any sense. Is there any way to make these plans direct yourself? I don't think LineSearch is very user friendly." Local authority officer

#### 2. What systems and data are available from a local authority perspective to support the plant protection team?

- No feedback provided

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## SESSION THREE: LOCAL RESILIENCE FORUMS

The final presentation was delivered by Martin Cook (Head of Health and Safety) and took a deeper look at local resilience forums (LRFs) to deliver a rapid response for localised incidents or emergencies. He began by outlining the broader aims of LRFs and the types of organisations involved in them. Martin then provided two examples of the LRFs in action, through the proactive work undertaken in response to Storm Ciaran and the emergency efforts undertaken following an incident in Swansea. To finish, he spotlighted the benefits of these LRFs for WWU customers. Stakeholders were then invited to give their opinions about WWU's partnerships and work with LRFs.

There was a universal consensus that WWU should be increasing its resources in order to be able to regularly play a more active role in LRFs in its licence area. In particular, there were multiple calls for the company to provide more resources for training and scenario exercises in order to develop knowledge bases and share best practices. As part of this more proactive approach, some attendees took the view that WWU should be engaging with umbrella organisations – such as local authorities and large charities like the British Red Cross – who could disseminate any relevant information among their wide networks.

During discussions about which actions WWU should be involved in as part of increased involvement in LRFs, the major ask from attendees was 'more in-training'. It was generally thought that it would be valuable to have more category two emergency responders, like WWU, at these training sessions. This was seen as beneficial as these sessions were viewed as a useful platform for different kinds of emergency response groups to share best practices with each other, in terms of approaches and the equipment involved. Building on this idea, one attendee voiced the idea of WWU helping to organise a nationwide capabilities event for Wales in order to further reinforce this collaborative training approach.

Meeting scheduling was identified as the main potential barrier to WWU playing a more active role in LRFs. It was remarked that, although local authorities within the South West Strategic Coordination Group have adopted a "battle rhythm" to ensure seamless communications and prevent meeting clashes, thereby enabling relevant parties to attend all of them, WWU's licence area also covers Wales. As a result, it could transpire that two LRF events in the two countries are held on the same date, thereby preventing WWU from being quite as involved as it wishes. In light of this, there were calls for feedback from WWU in order to assist stakeholders with coordinating these meetings across its entire operating area smoothly as possible.

Top of FormTop of Form

### FEEDBACK

- 1. Should we increase our resources to be able to play a more active role in the LRFs in our region on a regular basis, outside of emergencies?**

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- “Yes, you have direction that you should train and exercise. On previous exercises, you’ve had minimal engagement with some organisations. If someone says to me, what do I do for a day job, I say I train and exercise for events I hope will never happen. You should be looking to develop more resources for training and exercising.” Emergency service
  - “I can sympathise with the issue having been involved with LRFs. I’m interested in terms of your exercising. Is that done internally or by other organisations? As I understand, it involves including a lot of LRFs in a lot of exercises. Keep the third sector in mind. In some cases it could be useful, for example for the British Red Cross, to have some opportunity to engage with the third sector who could cover that whole area rather than engage with all the different organisations. Interested to hear about this from your point of view.” Charity

## **2. If we were to increase our resources, what activities would you expect us to be involved in?**

- “I recently attended a JESIP [Joint Emergency Service Interoperability Programme] training exercise where category twos were invited. This was a whole day’s training for all LRFs, energy blue lights and category twos as well. You spend the morning going through theory and JESIP understanding. Then in the afternoon, it’s run on scenario-based training where category twos can train with category ones in a so-called ‘real setting’ to offer support and help in incident management and emergencies. At my LRF in Gloucestershire, they’re run two times a year at operational-level and twice a year at tactical level silver.” Emergency service
- “It would be good to have the visibility of category twos at the LRF meetings.” Local authority officer
- “We do JESIP training once a month. If we had that contact, we’d be more than happy to extend this training to WWU. If there are any opportunities for partners to join these courses, get in touch with me.” Emergency service
- “Develop a pan-Wales capabilities event. We held one in North Wales about a month or so ago. We had an exercise with an EV go on fire and then the fallout of that exercise – what would category ones be doing and what category twos be doing? The second part of the day was looking at what they could deliver in this emergency and what equipment these agencies could roll out. WWU should look to join these capabilities workshop when they’re fully underway.” Emergency service

## **3. Do you foresee any barriers or challenges to this?**

- “We’re part of the South West Strategic Coordination Group, as one of five local authorities involved. We follow a ‘battle rhythm’ to ensure we don’t schedule communications simultaneously and coordinate among each other to ensure that there are no meeting clashes, ensuring that all LRFs can attend. However, your area also covers local authorities in Wales, which could be a potential barrier to full meeting attendance. Any feedback or assistance you can offer would be appreciated.” Local authority officer

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## APPENDIX 1: ATTENDEE LIST

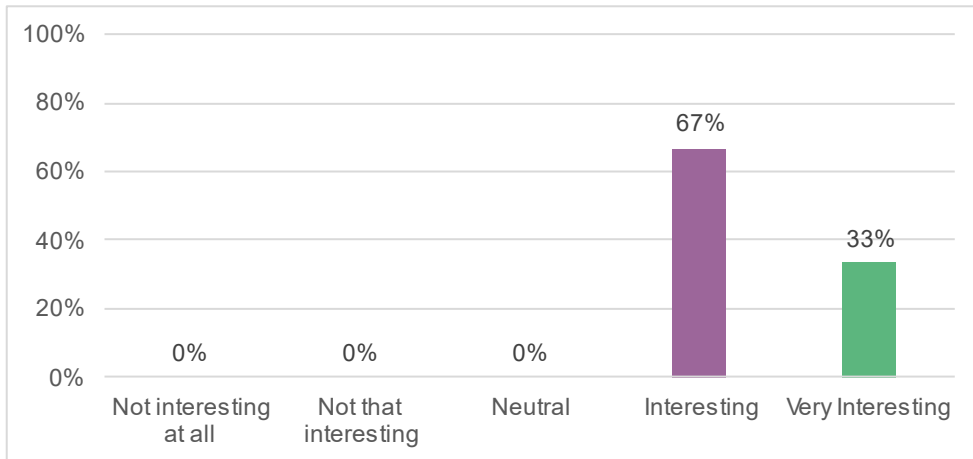
A total of 14 stakeholders attended the workshop, representing 12 organisations:

|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| Care & Repair Cymru                            | Plymouth City Council   |
| Cornwall Fire & Rescue Service                 | Policy Connect          |
| Denbighshire County Council                    | Powys County Council    |
| Economic & Community Infrastructure Operations | Public Health Wales     |
| Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue Service          | Red Cross               |
| Oxfordshire County Council                     | Somerset County Council |

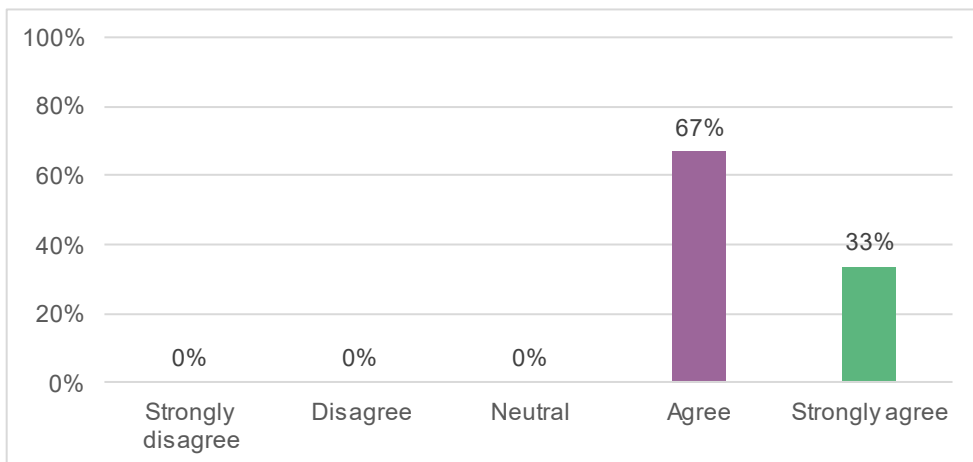
## APPENDIX 2: WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

After the workshop, stakeholders were asked to complete a short feedback form. Some of the key findings are shown below.

### 1. Overall, did you find this workshop to be:



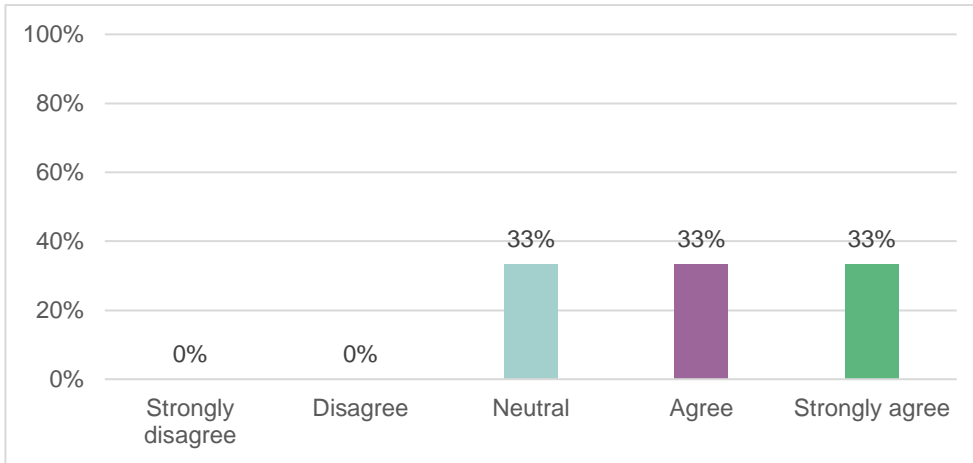
### 2. Did you feel that you had the opportunity to make your points and ask questions?



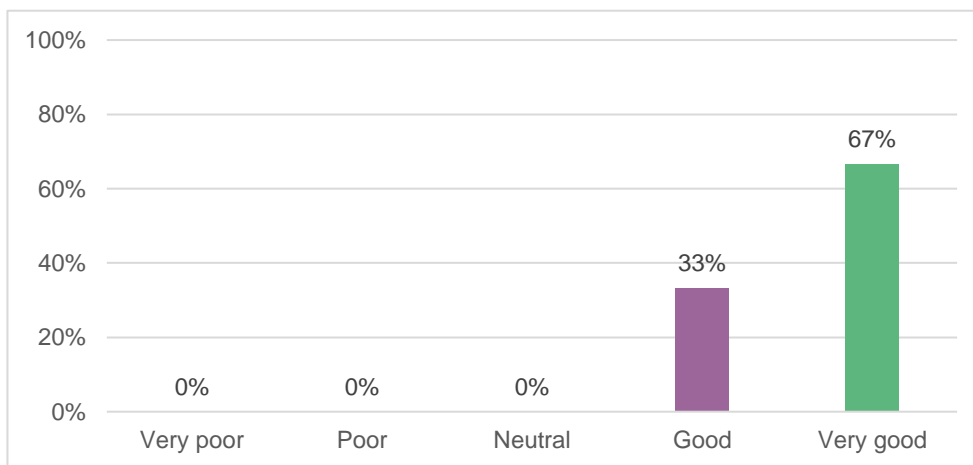
### Comments:

- “I felt that the agenda was very tight and more discussion on each topic might have been even more useful to get the discussion going even more.”
- “A great selection of people and roles, meaning lots of opportunities to engage.”

### 3. Did we cover the right topics for you on the day?



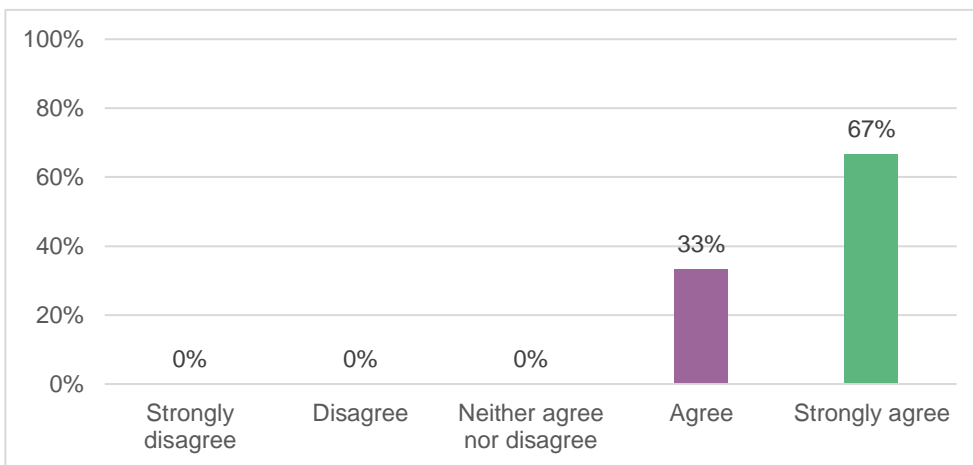
**4. What did you think of the way the workshop was chaired by your facilitator?**



**Comments:**

- “Very good facilitator.”

**5. Did you find the online format accessible and easy to use?**



**6. Do you have any other comments?**

- “Thanks for arranging. It’s a shame that there weren’t more people on the call.”

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- “Good pre-meeting details provided a few days before, along with the agenda, which were great to read. An easy-to-join meeting.”



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