



Communications Consumer Panel Stakeholder Event

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Chair

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What is the Communications Consumer Panel?

- Independent advisory body – critical friend
- Statutory function to advise Ofcom and “such other persons as the Panel think fit” – counterweight to views of industry
- Specifically expected to advise on the interests of:
 - People in rural and urban areas
 - Disadvantaged people, people with low incomes, people with disabilities
 - Older people
 - Small businesses
- Formerly called the Ofcom Consumer Panel – new name emphasises role in advising across the communications sector

What is the Panel's role?



To influence Ofcom, Government, the EU, and service and equipment providers, so that the communications interests of consumers and citizens are protected and promoted.

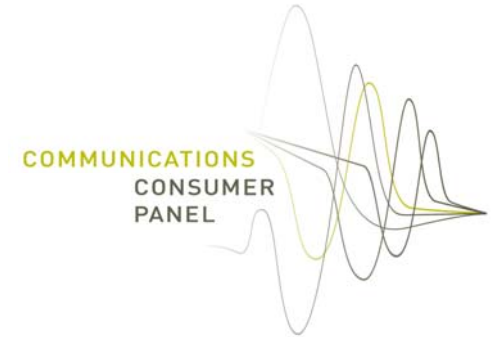
What types of activity does the Panel carry out?

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- **Influencing policy processes:**
 - Main vehicle: Consumer Interest Toolkit
- **Influencing policy decisions:**
 - Major area of activity
 - Commitment to evidence-based advice
- **Calls to action:**
 - Could be addressed to policy makers or industry
 - Previous examples: digital switchover and broadband speeds

What is in the interests of consumers?



- The Panel draws on:
 - Research it commissions itself
 - Research carried out by Ofcom and others
 - General principles about how products and services should be supplied
- In doing so, uses the knowledge and expertise of its members
- Recently commissioned deliberative research to understand:
 - Consumers' needs and how they might change in the future
 - Role of communications services and devices in meeting those needs
- Presented findings to the Digital Britain Steering Group

Four key findings

1. It is critical for all consumers and citizens that no one should miss out on the digital age – access to the internet has become an essential service.
2. Consumers and citizens accept they have responsibilities, but also believe Government, regulators and industry have responsibilities that need to be met.
3. Consumers need help to manage increasing complexity and constant change.
4. Security and privacy are vital to trust and confidence and so to the use of digital services and technologies.

1. No one should miss out

- Access to a range of communications services is essential.
- Broadband to access services seen as a 'right'.
- Broadband speed required will change over time.
- Potential for deepening digital divide.

2. Everyone should meet their responsibilities

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- Individuals, especially parents, willing to take responsibility for harnessing communications services to meet their needs.
- But want help from Government, regulators, service providers and equipment suppliers.



3. Want help to manage complexity and change

- Need help from industry and regulators to cope with more complex purchasing decisions.
- Consumers want straightforward routes to help and problem-solving.
- Anxiety about perpetual change.
- Would like life to be simpler.

4. Security and privacy are vital

- Recognise the potential benefits of information-sharing.
- But will embrace communications services fully only if they trust companies and Government to treat their personal information with care.
- Would like it to be easier to protect themselves.

Developing the Panel's work programme



- Panel identified the issues it could potentially address
- Also examined the issues on the agendas of Ofcom, Government and EU
- Narrowed down long list by asking two main questions:
 - What is the scale of the issue?
 - Can the Panel make a difference?
- Then for each issue on the short list decided on the type of engagement necessary
- Reviewed short list to check fit with strategic priorities

Provisional work programme 2009/10



	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Influencing policy processes		Ofcom's engagement with consumer groups		
Influencing policy decisions	Universal service			
	Consumer and citizen empowerment			
			Trust and security	
	Mobile			
	Digital Inclusion Action Plan			
	Consumer protection			
	Next-generation broadband			
	Watching briefs: digital switchover, broadband speeds			
	Calls to action	As and when necessary		

Keeping in touch

- For the first time Panel consulting stakeholders on its work programme
- Will refine to reflect comments and publish by end March
- Will define outcomes aiming to achieve and then report on progress
- Will update work programme quarterly to reflect more detailed scoping and any changes to priorities
- Improving awareness of activities through:
 - New website
 - Blog
 - Now monthly newsletter
- Will continue to report formally on activities through Annual Report

Questions



- What are your views on the Panel's proposed work programme?
- Are there any issue that you are surprised to see as priorities?
- Are there any issues that you are surprised not to see as priorities?
- Do you think the Panel engages with its stakeholders in appropriate ways? Is there anything else that we should be doing?

**Please send any written comments to Alistair Bridge by Tuesday 17 March:
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