

OCTOBER BULLETIN

Lost & stolen mobile phones

The Communications Consumer Panel has been concerned for some time about the lack of consumer protection from high bills run up on lost or stolen mobiles. Recent months have also seen a spate of stories in the media highlighting extreme examples of large bills experienced by consumers and the potentially life changing effect on their lives. We are aware that this may be the tip of the iceberg of consumer detriment in this area.

In 2013, the then Culture Secretary, Maria Miller MP, announced an agreement between Government and four of the mobile companies to implement a cap on bills on lost/stolen mobile phones, with the ambition of introducing it in the spring of 2014. Eleven months on, the promised consumer protection has not been delivered.

Fraud prevention and management systems have been in place within the mobile industry for many years and so the ability to swiftly block unusual or excessive usage already exists. Over the next few months, we will be looking to discuss potential solutions with government, Ofcom and the mobile operators. In particular, we are encouraging the implementation of the liability cap without further delay and the exploration of potential technical solutions.

Panel continues to push for free CLI

In advance of the House of Lords' consideration of amendments on the Consumer Rights Bill, the Panel continued to argue for CLI to be offered free of charge and by default as well as calling for mandatory caller line identification (CLI) on the majority of business calls.

The Panel believes that, since it is the service provided by telephone companies, and paid for by the consumer, that is being abused; then it is logical for CLI - one of the main available defence mechanisms against nuisance calls - to be freely available to all consumers. Additionally, the CLI service can be used to report nuisance calls to regulators as well as being critical for the effective use of handsets and services that rely on caller display to block and filter certain calls.

Government launches consultation on nuisance calls

The Government has published a six week consultation on lowering the legal threshold before firms responsible for nuisance calls and texts can be hit with fines of up to £500,000.

The law currently requires the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) to prove a company caused 'substantial damage or substantial distress' by their conduct.

The Government wants to reduce this to causing 'annoyance, inconvenience or anxiety'.

[The Consultation](#) closes on 7 December 2014

Communications Consumer Panel seeks new Panel Member for Wales

The Communications Consumer Panel is looking to appoint a member representing Wales who will also act as a member of the Advisory Committee on Older and Disabled People (ACOD).

To join the Consumer Panel and ACOD you will need:

- A keen interest in consumers' experiences, with particular reference to older and disable people in Wales.
- Good understanding of issues affecting the communications sector in Wales or an ability to acquire it rapidly
- Ability to understand complex consumer, citizen, micro-business, regulatory, economic and wider business issues.
- Strong communication skills to make an effective contribution to the discussions of a high level public body

Potential conflicts of interest from a financial or business perspective must be declared and discussed at interview. The time commitment is four days per month.

For further information please contact contact@communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk. The closing date is 21 November 2014.

Full details can be found on the [Panel's website](#).

Ofcom publishes Citizens and Communications Services Report

Ofcom has published a new report that looks at the availability, accessibility and affordability of communications services in the UK and highlights the progress made over the last 10 years in ensuring communications services have kept pace with the changing needs of UK citizens, as well as developments in technology.

The report also considers current and future challenges facing Ofcom, policymakers and industry in order to keep pace with the growing needs and expectations of UK citizens and rapidly changing technologies.

A full copy of the report can be downloaded from [Ofcom's website](#).

One in three UK children now has their own tablet computer

New research published by Ofcom reveals that one in three children in the UK now has their own tablet computer.

34% of children aged between 5 and 15, now have their own tablet, rather than using devices belonging to their parents or school, up from a fifth (19%) in 2013.

Six in ten (62%) children use a tablet at home, which has risen by half in a year (42% in 2013).

A sharp increase in tablet ownership among very young children means that some are using one to surf the web, play games and watch video clips before they join school. More than one in 10 children aged 3-4 now have their own tablet (11%, up from 3% in 2013).

Twice as many children aged 5-15 are using a tablet to go online (42% versus 23% in 2013), which could have implications in future for the use of laptops and PCs. For the first time, the proportion of children accessing the internet on a PC, laptop or netbook fell, by three percentage points, year on year, to 88%.

These trends are highlighted in Ofcom's annual [Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report](#), which examines children's use of different media and communications, and the role parents play in overseeing them. A summary of the research can be found in [Ofcom's press release](#).

Alongside the research, Ofcom has also [published a range of guides](#) for parents to help them understand more about parental controls and how to protect their children in a digital world.

Switching landline and broadband providers on the KCOM copper network

Ofcom is consulting on its proposal to introduce a single switching process led by the gaining provider to improve the experience for consumers switching landline and broadband services on the copper network provided by KCOM (formally Kingston Communications). KCOM provides voice and broadband services in the Kingston upon Hull area, where the Openreach copper network is not available.

This follows Ofcom's decision, in December 2013, to introduce a harmonised gaining provider-led process for consumers switching landline and broadband providers on Openreach's network.

Ofcom also proposes to implement on the KCOM network the same additional measures to help prevent consumers losing service when changing provider, or being switched without their consent, as those in force on the Openreach network.

Ofcom is seeking views from stakeholders on its proposals which must be submitted by 10 December. Ofcom will aim to publish a statement by early 2015.

Further details on the consultation can be found [here](#).

Scottish Government launches 'Let's Get On' campaign about the benefits of the internet

The Scottish Government has launched a major drive to get people from all walks of life to take advantage of the internet.

The 'Let's Get On' campaign is being run in partnership with organisations from the public and private sector under the overall Digital Scotland brand. Libraries, clubs and community organisations across the country are supporting the campaign and offering people the opportunity to join classes and support groups, showing them how to go online and get the most from the internet.

More details on the initiative can be found via the website www.letsgeton.org or by calling 0800 77 1234

Digital Hero Awards

This month saw the announcement of the TalkTalk Digital Heroes 2014, celebrating inspirational people who use digital technology to bring about positive social change.

For over six years the Digital Heroes Awards have recognised and rewarded little and local projects from all across the country. This year the Awards replaced regional categories with eight new themed categories to find the most inspirational and creative individuals using technology for good. All category winners were awarded £5,000 of funding each and the overall winner received an additional £5,000 of funding for their project. All Digital Heroes were announced and celebrated at an Awards ceremony at the House of Commons. You can read more about the winners on the [Digital Heroes Website](#).

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