

DECEMBER BULLETIN

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

The Communications Consumer Panel would like to wish all our subscribers the very best for the festive season.

Government deal for UK mobile phone users

Culture Secretary Sajid Javid has announced a deal with the four mobile networks to improve mobile coverage across the UK. The Government has secured a binding agreement with the mobile networks EE, O2, Three and Vodafone to tackle poor signal issues in so-called 'partial not-spots'.

The announcement follows DCMS' consultation on Tackling Partial Not-Spots in Mobile Phone Coverage which the Panel responded to. In its response, the Panel highlighted that a lack of voice and/or data coverage is no longer one of simple irritation for consumers and micro businesses but is now an issue of real detriment. We also argued that if the UK is to have a world-class digital economy, then ubiquitous mobile data coverage was also essential.

Under the agreement all four of the mobile networks have collectively agreed to:

- a guaranteed £5bn investment programme to improve mobile infrastructure by 2017;
- guaranteed voice and text coverage from each operator across 90 per cent of the UK geographic area by 2017, halving the areas currently affected by patchy coverage as a result of partial 'not-spots';
- full coverage from all four mobile operators will increase from 69 per cent to 85 per cent of geographic areas by 2017; provide reliable signal strength for voice for each type of mobile service (whether 2G/3G/4G) - currently many consumers frequently lose signal or cannot get signal long enough to make a call; and
- make the deal legally binding by accepting amended licence conditions to reflect the agreement - it will be enforceable by Ofcom.

Further details can be found via [the government's website](#).

Nuisance calls - Task Force report and recommendations

The Government's Nuisance Calls task force has formally set out [recommendations](#) (pdf) to help tackle the everyday menace of unwanted calls and texts including holding senior executives to account for the behaviour of their company.

The Task Force, of which the Panel is a member, was established as part of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) Action Plan on nuisance calls announced in March 2014.

The Government asked Which? to chair a task force looking at the issues of consumer consent and the lead generation industry. Membership of the Task Force on Consent and Lead Generation included Ofcom, the Information Commissioner's Office, the Direct Marketing Association, CallCredit, Barclaycard, the CCA, the Ministry of Justice as well as the Panel.

Jo Connell, Chair of the Communications Consumer Panel, commented; "The problem of nuisance calls requires concerted action by all relevant parties. In conjunction with the other work underway, we believe that these recommendations about the treatment of consent provide further steps to help reduce the number of unwanted calls and texts people receive. However we continue to call for all communications providers to supply free caller line identification for their customers."

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

Independent Library Report for England published

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport has published William Sieghart's [Independent Library Report for England](#) (pdf), which calls for a re-invigoration of the library network.

The report highlighted that despite the growth in digital technologies, there is still a clear need and demand within communities for modern, safe, non-judgemental, flexible spaces, where citizens of all ages can mine the knowledge of the world for free, supported by the help and knowledge of the library workforce.

The Panel responded to the initial call for evidence earlier this year and was pleased to be able to expand further on this at an oral evidence session.

The Panel is pleased that the report endorses our view of the need to improve the use of digital technology, including rolling WiFi out to every library in the country. As part of this, we support the report's recommendation that libraries should be a comfortable, retail-standard environment, as well as offering additional services that would make the library a vibrant and attractive community hub.

The full report and recommendations can be found via the link above.

Ofcom publishes draft Annual Plan for consultation

Ofcom has published its draft 2015/16 Annual Plan for consultation, outlining its work programme for the next financial year.

Ofcom's [proposed plan of work](#) for the 12 months will focus on six broad themes.

The six themes are:

- Ensuring fair and effective competition, with particular focus on the needs of SMEs
- Promoting wide availability of communications services for consumers and businesses
- Renewing the focus on quality of service for consumers and businesses
- Protecting and promoting the interests of audiences and citizens in content services
- Meeting the growing demands for spectrum
- Identifying and addressing areas of potential consumer harm

The consultation closes on 26 February 2015. Ofcom will be holding [public consultation events](#) in early 2015 in Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh and London.

Sharon White appointed new Ofcom Chief Executive

The Ofcom Board has announced the appointment of Sharon White as Chief Executive.

Sharon will join Ofcom in late March 2015 from HM Treasury, where she is Second Permanent Secretary. In this role Sharon is the lead official responsible for managing the UK's public finances, a position she has held since November 2013. Before that she served as Director General, Public Spending at HM Treasury.

An economics graduate, Sharon has 25 years' experience in the public sector and Government, starting with spells in Washington, the No 10 Policy Unit, and the World Bank. Sharon later worked in the Department for International Development, the Department of Work and Pensions, the Ministry of Justice and the Treasury.

Further details can be found on the Ofcom [website](#).

Latest customer service satisfaction levels revealed

Levels of satisfaction with the customer service of landline, broadband, mobile and pay TV providers are reported in new Ofcom research.

Over 6,000 consumers were interviewed as part of the research. Of those, 3,402 who had contacted their provider between July and September 2014 were asked to rate their customer service experience.

Various aspects of the providers' customer service were scored including: the speed with which issues were dealt with; the standard of advice given; and the attitude and ability of the advisor.

Pay TV

Overall customer service satisfaction is highest in the pay TV market at 80%. Satisfaction among customers with a pay TV complaint is 68%.

Landline and broadband

Levels of overall satisfaction are lower for both landline and broadband than for pay TV, with two thirds of customers (67% and 69% respectively) rating the customer service as satisfactory.

Customer satisfaction among those with a complaint is 52% for broadband and 53% for landline.

Mobile

Mobile customer service satisfaction is 73%. Satisfaction among those customers with a complaint is 59%.

The full research can be found [here](#).

Importance of the UK's internet economy revealed

Ofcom's [International Communications Market Report](#) (ICMR) 2014 reveals that the UK's internet economy is one of the strongest in the world, driven by record online advertising, spending and entertainment consumption.

The report examines take-up, availability, price and use of communications services across the world's major countries and shows that that the UK has the highest e-commerce spending among the major nations surveyed in the research, with consumers paying almost £2,000 on average online for goods each year. This was significantly higher than the next-highest valued market of Australia (£1,356 per head).

It is published alongside the [European Broadband Scorecard](#), which compares internet coverage, take-up, usage and choice between EU states. The reports underline the importance of the internet and broadband to UK consumers, businesses and the economy as a whole.

A summary of the report can be found via the [Panel's website](#).

Ofcom's Infrastructure Report 2014

Ofcom has outlined the future challenges in ensuring the UK's communications infrastructure serves the growing needs of consumers and businesses.

The UK is making good progress in the roll-out and take-up of key communications services, according to Ofcom's [Infrastructure Report 2014](#), an in-depth look at the UK's telecoms, broadcasting and wireless networks.

However, the report recognises that there is still more to do, particularly in improving broadband and mobile availability and quality of service for consumers and businesses across the UK. An overview of the report along with relevant links can be found [here](#).

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