



# Bridging the Gap: Sustaining online engagement

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Chair - Communications Consumer Panel

# The Panel's objective

The Panel's objective is to:

“protect and promote the interests of consumers, citizens and small businesses in the communications sector by giving advice to Ofcom, the EU, Government, industry and others.”

# Panel Members

- Jo Connell (Chair)
- Kim Brook - Wales
- Chris Holland - England
- Libby Kinney - Northern Ireland
- Mairi Macleod - Scotland
- Bob Twitchin
- Awaiting DCMS approval
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# The Framework

What people need to get online and get the most from the internet

To get interested

I understand how the internet can benefit me

The benefits of the internet are worth the effort

I have the confidence to try

To get online

The services & equipment I need are available to me

I know how much it will cost and can afford it

I can choose the right equipment & services for me

I can get help making these choices if I need it

To make it work

I can get set up and connected

I can use the equipment

I can find the content and information I am looking for

I can get help when and as often as I need it

To enjoy the benefits

I can communicate effectively

I can interact with the content & services I choose

I can create content if I choose

I can pursue my passions

To manage the risks

I can protect myself (and my children) online

I can judge whether content & services are truthful & reliable

I know my rights and responsibilities online

# What did we want to understand?

- What works to get and keep people online?
- How can people get the most out of being online?
- What works best in encouraging people's breadth of participation?
- What factors lie behind low levels of digital participation?
- What barriers to digital participation exist among people who are offline in an area of extreme deprivation?

# Who did they speak to?

- Consumers who are less digitally engaged - lapsed, proxy, narrow and new users
- Stakeholders and frontline staff in training delivery roles
- People who are currently not online living in an area of extreme deprivation

# The challenge

20% of the UK adult population  
- over 10 million people -  
still do not have the internet at home.

In the Panel's view:

- the challenge to increase participation is underestimated;
- meeting the challenge is underfunded; and
- people who remain unable to access online services will suffer increasing detriment.

# The two biggest barriers

- The status quo: the ‘gravitational’ hold of the offline world
- Fear of technology and its complexity



# Other important barriers

- Lack of confidence
- Lack of ongoing support
- Low affordability and priority
- Social isolation
- Poor family dynamics
- Presence of a dominant proxy
- Lack of time
- Low awareness of community-based sources of help
- Misconception with regard to community-based sources of help

# Drivers

- Tenacity / determination
- Ready access to informal, ongoing, one-to-one support
- Benefits of being online
- Relevance to interests
- Fear of being left behind
- Peer pressure

# Areas for stakeholders' strategic focus

- Strengthen coordination
- Raise people's awareness of resources and address misconceptions about community-based centres and libraries
- Widen the scope to developing and sustaining engagement
- Encourage user-friendly forms of technology
- Introduce stronger evaluation and accountability
- The need for a focus on informal, incidental learning
- Making better use of existing offline resources

# The recommendations



## The Panel's recommendations

Unless fundamental action is taken, the digital divide risks becoming a digital gulf as the distance increases between those who are online, with access to new services, technology and faster and faster broadband speeds, and those who remain firmly anchored in the offline world.

### 10.1 Summary recommendations

1. For government to be able to maximise growth and fulfil the Digital by Default initiative, there needs to be a clearer and more comprehensive policy on take-up and use of, as well as access to, broadband.
2. To enable this, there is a pressing need to strike a better balance between funding for broadband roll-out and funding for ongoing support to enable people to take full advantage of the benefits of the online world.
3. To ensure that progress is made, it is vital that initiatives are open and accountable and that clear targets are put in place for take-up and use, based on an agreed definition of what constitutes an 'active internet user' for these purposes. Closer co-ordination between initiatives across the UK, and an evaluation framework, would facilitate the accurate assessment and monitoring of progress.
4. The Panel considers that the frequently-quoted and widely-adopted measure of 'those who have ever/never used the internet' is not helpful for policy development. Progress should be measured by ongoing use, not by initial access alone. A more appropriate measure of people's ability to function online would be whether they have gone online themselves in the past month, together with an assessment of the breadth of their internet use.
5. Messages designed to encourage people to go online must acknowledge that people make an emotional and financial investment in going online. The messages need to explain online benefits in a language that connects with people's everyday life.
6. The Panel encourages suppliers to undertake the development of introductory low priced/low-risk products, teamed with low-cost broadband access, initially without



# Priorities for 2013/14

# How do we identify the priorities?



The Panel develops its workplan by applying two questions to each issue that it might address:

- What is the scale of the issue for consumers, citizens and small businesses?
- Can the Panel make a difference?

# 2013/14 potential draft priorities



- \* Small businesses experiences of communications services
- \* The Consumer Journey
- Experiences of mobile
- Consumer Information
- Effective digital Engagement
- Nuisance calls
- Unexpected charges and high bills
- Coexistence of 4G and DTT
- Switching
- Broadband rollout
- Mobile payments
- Future of communications regulation
- Rollout of auction conditions
- Impact of legislative reforms
- Mobile usability
- Traffic management



**Thank you**