

Communications Consumer Panel National Stakeholder Hubs

The communications consumer voice, UK 2025: Summary of stakeholder insights

Cross-UK themes:

- **Connectivity and Infrastructure:** Rural and remote areas across all nations face persistent issues with broadband and mobile coverage. Storm damage (e.g., Storm Éowyn in NI) exposed vulnerabilities in above-ground infrastructure.
- **Digital Exclusion and Literacy:** Lack of digital skills, affordable devices, and reliable internet continues to exclude many, especially older people, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and low-income households.
- 1. **Affordability:** Rising costs of broadband, mobile, and postal services are disproportionately affecting groups of consumers whose needs are already being under-served. Social tariffs are under-utilised due to poor awareness and accessibility.
- **Online Safety and Scams:** A rise in scams, including AI-driven fraud and sextortion, was reported across all nations. There is a lack of redress mechanisms for online harms—calls were made for an ADR-style system for digital platforms.
- **Accessibility:** Concerns about the accessibility of complaints processes, especially for those with age-related or sensory impairments. Scotland was praised for services like Contact Scotland BSL, but access still depends on digital tools.
- **Loneliness and Isolation:** Particularly acute in rural areas and among older people. Loss of local radio and community services exacerbates this issue.

Highlights from each Nation's Hub:

- England: rural funding disparities, loneliness and digital exclusion
- NI: storm damage, roaming charges, and digital exclusion
- Scotland: VoIP awareness, funding of accessible tech solutions, and postal delays
- Wales: cashless society exclusion concerns and healthcare access

Key Priorities for the Communications Consumer Panel and Ofcom:

- Champion digital inclusion across all demographics and geographies.
- Promote awareness of social tariffs and of digital transitions (such as migration to VoIP)
- Advocate for Online Safety reforms, understanding where gaps lie, from a consumer view
- Support community-led solutions, and fair access to postal and telecom services, especially in rural, remote and island communities.