



Communications Consumer Panel Draft Workplan 2026/27

About us

The Communications Consumer Panel, established by the Communications Act 2003, is a group of independent experts with direct sectoral experience, supported by a small team. We ensure the citizen and consumer voice is represented in communications policy development. The Panel's job is to ensure that the sector works for consumers, citizens and microbusinesses; in particular, people who may be less heard in a policymaking context.

The communications sector is a highly technical and fast-moving market - and one that impacts across society and the economy. As a result, the Panel's work is diverse and broad, covering not just telecommunications such as broadband and mobile services and spectrum (mobile and TV airwaves), but also postal services, broadcasting (accessibility; portrayal and representation) and digital inclusion - and newly, Online Safety (the protection of citizens online).

Citizen and consumer challenge and advocacy

When we anticipate consumer detriment, or identify it occurring, we work with those who can make a difference - Ofcom, communications providers, campaigning and policy groups, academic bodies, and UK and devolved government departments. Our sector specialism and expertise mean we can challenge in a constructive environment, offer comprehensive advice and influence the development of policy and regulation so it delivers for consumers and citizens.

We act as a "critical friend" to Ofcom. Our unique relationship with Ofcom, made possible by a Memorandum of Understanding, gives us early, confidential access to the regulator's thinking and means we can proactively influence decisions.

By Ofcom sharing information and ideas in confidence with us from the very start of policy making, we can make early, robust, high quality interventions, ensuring that consumer and citizen interests are at the heart of Ofcom's thinking throughout. The level of trust we have fostered in the sector enables us to effectively influence communications providers and the regulator, and to challenge and hold Ofcom to account where appropriate.

We partner with stakeholders to inform the advice that the Panel gives and to help protect and promote consumers' interests across the sector. Strong representation on the Panel from the devolved nations and a diversity of backgrounds and expertise means we can encourage stakeholders to look at issues through the eyes of people who use - or are excluded from - using communications services.

Our aims in 2026/27

In 2024/25 we set out our [strategic plan](#) for three years. Since then, we have remained vigilant to changes in the communications market, while experiencing changes to the Panel's membership and remit (introducing Online Safety, consumer use of AI, and the protection of



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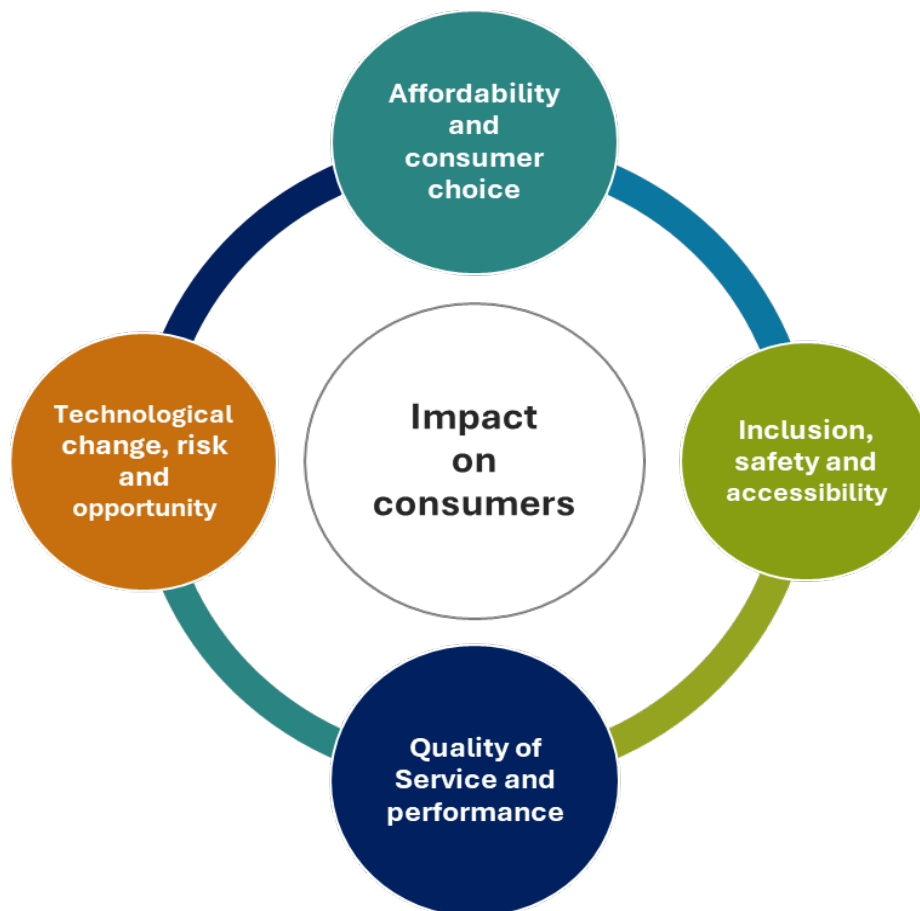
users of premium rate telephony services), a UK General Election, regulatory reform and instabilities in the geopolitical landscape.

We look ahead to our first year as a complete Panel of twelve members. All members have, through an iterative process, contributed to a workplan for 2026/27 that honours and builds upon the aims of the three-year strategic plan.

We continue to examine the multiple layers of detriment affecting the UK's consumers, citizens and microbusinesses who use, or are excluded from, all or any of the communications sectors. We believe that listening to the needs of consumers is more important than ever, in days where access to digital connectivity provides a gateway to inclusion and technological changes can be the door to opportunity or exclusion. We encourage Ofcom to work with industry to build a culture of fairness and inclusion across all sectors.

Strategic Pillars

It is our view that we must, as a priority, focus on the four areas of importance set out in the image below:





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There is some natural overlap across these themes. However, we believe that each of Ofcom's regulated sectors can be viewed through each of the four lenses.

Our aims under those four areas are as follows:

Affordability and Consumer Choice (affordable access to services delivered through telecoms and digital connectivity, and to postal services)

- Maintain an evidence-led understanding of affordability pressures and consumer decision-making. This activity draws on stakeholder insight and commissioned research to illuminate the often-invisible trade-offs households and microbusinesses must make.
- Advise on how markets can offer meaningful, navigable choice, ensuring that complexity, bundling, and behavioural design do not turn abundance into a maze. We support clear, fair, and confident decision-making across communications services.
- Identify and escalate risks to financially vulnerable consumers, including pricing practices, geographical disadvantage, disconnection, and barriers to switching. We translate these risks into practical, proportionate recommendations that support fair treatment and sustainable participation.

Inclusion, Safety and Accessibility (encouraging a culture of inclusion and safety as a baseline across all communications sectors, enabling accessibility for all)

- Continue to build a system-level picture of inclusion, working with stakeholders and evidence partners to discover where access breaks down, whether through cost, capability, design, or confidence. We ensure these insights shape regulatory priorities.
- Advise on embedding inclusive design and delivery as a baseline expectation, so that services are not retrofitted for accessibility, but conceived with the full participation of all users from the outset.
- Highlight structural and less visible barriers to participation and to positive consumer outcomes, including cognitive load, trust, and digital skills, ensuring that the Panel's advice reflects the full experience of exclusion, not just what is easily measured.
- Highlight that barriers to inclusion, safety and accessibility can be transitory and the importance of agile regulatory and industry intervention to help people connect safely and stay connected.

Technological Change: Risk and Opportunities (protecting consumers from being left behind or carrying the burden of change that benefits industry, enabling opportunities for consumers to thrive)

- Provide forward-looking insights on emerging technologies and consumer risk, translating complexity. For now this includes AI, network evolution, and platform dynamics but we are aware that this may change.
- Ensure that consumer protection keeps pace with innovation, identifying where safeguards may lag behind technological change. We speak up for those least equipped to navigate new systems or unseen decision-making processes.



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- Support a balanced narrative on innovation, which recognises both opportunity and risk, and helps build trust by making the implications of technological change accountable.

Quality and Performance (quality of service and of customer service, so that consumers' needs can be heard and acted upon and performance of communications services is measured in a way that is meaningful, transparent and trusted)

- Advise on the development of meaningful measures of service quality, ensuring that performance frameworks reflect reality.
- Continue to strengthen the evidence base on consumer experiences of failure and redress, via stakeholders and research to ensure that when systems falter, the response is timely, fair, and proportionate.
- Highlight issues of consistency and equity in service delivery for all.

Horizon-scanning

We do not intend this workplan to define every challenge that will affect UK consumers, citizens and microbusinesses using communications services in the year ahead. We will continue to take a holistic approach to seeking and amplifying the consumer voice. We remain vigilant to emerging issues and will work with partners in this and other sectors, to build and act on intelligence that helps us to protect and empower consumers by providing timely advice.

How we intend to deliver against this plan

The Panel has three main, interconnected levers to influence change, and we plan to strengthen each of them in the year ahead:

- **Stakeholder engagement - building effective and dynamic partnerships**
We have built a network of consumer bodies, charities and other organisations across the UK that have enabled us to listen to the needs of diverse groups of consumers and to share information through our sector specialism and relationship with Ofcom.

We welcome continued collaboration with partners in our Consumer Advocacy Hub and each of our Nations' Stakeholder Hubs, in the year ahead.

We meet with industry and attend industry events and have found our Industry Forum to be a useful place to share best practice with communications providers. Given our changes in remit, we believe it is timely to look again at the way we engage with industry across the communications sectors we represent.

We engage with academics on topics such as digital inclusion and affordability and in the year ahead we look to expand this engagement, to seek partnerships in academia regarding Online Safety and use of AI



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➤ **Research and insight-gathering**

Our stakeholders' research and intelligence provide us with insights that expand on our own. We will continue to ensure that we work with them to commission research that tells the human story of using communications services.

We welcome Ofcom's large-scale studies and surveys and will complement these with focused research amplifying voices less heard.

➤ **Policy input**

Alongside our regular engagement with Ofcom's policy, research and enforcement teams, we will continue to provide advice through public consultation responses, and where relevant, advice notes and letters to those in power.

Across all areas, the Panel will listen at scale, interpret with care, and advise with clarity, ensuring that the communications sectors remain accountable not only to performance metrics, but to the people and microbusinesses that rely on them.

We publish our research, minutes, consultation responses, workplans, Panel Member biographies and Annual Reports on our website: <https://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/>

We welcome feedback, insights and connection with new and existing partners throughout the year. Contact our Executive team at contact@communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk