The Communications Consumer Panel and ACOD

Protecting and promoting the citizen, consumer and micro-business interest in communications

Jo Connell - Chair

- What is the Panel? What is ACOD?

- What do we do?

- 2014/15 workplan

The Panel's objective

The Panel's objective is to:

"protect and promote the interests of consumers, citizens and micro-businesses in the communications sector by giving advice to Ofcom, the EU, Government, industry and others."

Areas of focus include:

➢ Customer service, dissatisfaction and complaints

➢ Nuisance calls

➢ Mobile and broadband coverage and quality of service

➢ Digital engagement

➢ Micro-businesses' experience of communication services

Going Round in Circles?

➢ Qualitative research project

➢ Investigated why some customers who had cause to contact their suppliers about a communications service issue did not do so

➢ Explores the experiences of those customers who did

Going Round in Circles? Key Findings

- Some people who don't contact their provider are suffering in silence, 'getting by' on a sub-standard service

- For some that did contact their provider, their initial frustration was exacerbated by a negative contact experience

- The loss of time and money by consumers trying to get a problem addressed and the emotional perseverance required are rarely acknowledged by communications providers

COMMUNICATIONS CONSUMER PANEL

Going Round in Circles? Key Findings

> Some older consumers and those with a disability seemed to be at a particular disadvantage in their dealings with providers

> Escalation of problems frequently appears to be ineffective and communications providers seem to be poor at telling customers about Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

> The phone remains the preferred method of contact for most participants

Going Round in Circles?

"So you were going round in circles and you were definitely in this massive maze where it seemed to be every exit that you thought was an exit... was just a blank wall."

"They use terms I don't understand [...] you know, they'll say 'have you sorted the router' or something and I'll say 'what router?'. You know, that sort of thing."

"So I got through to [supplier] and then my credit went when I was on the phone with them, and they took my number and all that, but they just never rang back and that really done my head in..."

"Every single phone call that you placed you were speaking to maybe three or four different people and you were having to explain the problem each and every time"
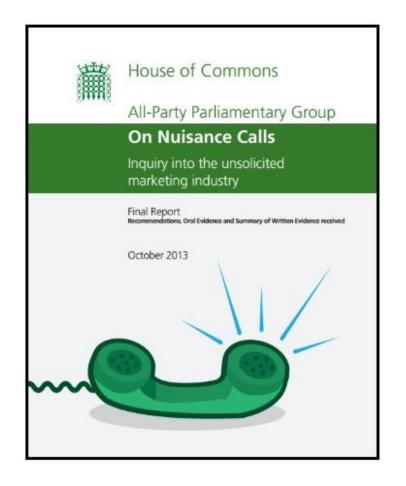
Going Round in Circles? Recommendations

➢ The provision of information

➢ Review and strengthen contact centre staff training

➢ Improving the consumer contact experience

➢ Provide greater support for older and disabled consumers

➢ Review and strengthen escalation and ADR referral processes

Nuisance calls

Mobile and broadband coverage and quality of service

➢ Coverage – mobile and broadband

➢ Quality of Service

➢ Mast rationalisation

Digital engagement

- Bridging the Gap: Sustaining Online Engagement

- 21% of people lack basic digital literacy skills (BBC/Go ON UK)

- 23% of older (65+) less affluent disabled people access the internet (Ofcom)

- Digital by Default and Assisted Digital

Micro-business research

➢ Which communications technologies and services micro-businesses use and to what extent; and their importance to the business.

➢ What are the experiences of micro-business in relation to the communications sectors and services?

➢ What are the barriers/challenges and what are the opportunities?

➢ What – if anything – should/could be done to improve communications experiences to contribute to greater growth?

Draft Workplan 14/15

COMMUNICATIONS CONSUMER PANEL

Key areas of engagement

- Nuisance calls
- Mobile and broadband coverage and quality of experience
- Customer Service and complaints
- Personal data and security
- Effective digital engagement

Research

- Micro-businesses' experiences of communications
- Digital Footprints - the use of personal data
- How organisations communicate with more vulnerable consumers

Draft Workplan 14/15

COMMUNICATIONS CONSUMER PANEL

Review

- Affordability and debt
- Consumer Information
- Mobile payments
- Next generation text relay services and support for video relay initiatives
- Switching
- Content access services
- Traffic management
- DAB switchover
- Postal services

Additional ACOD specific work areas

- Portrayal and participation
- Accessibility

Thank you