



May 2010 newsletter

Latest news...

Communications Consumer Panel joins forces with consumer groups to call for fair treatment of customers accused of online copyright infringement

The Communications Consumer Panel, Consumer Focus, Which?, Citizens Advice and the Open Rights Group have published a set of principles to ensure that new rules on online copyright infringement properly protect consumers. The consumer groups are calling on Ofcom to use these principles to build the initial obligations code. The obligations code will set the rules for how copyright holders and internet service providers notify customers that they are suspected of infringing copyright laws. The groups are also calling on industry to think sensitively about customers as they apply the code. Anna Bradley, Panel chair said: "It is imperative that a system that accuses people of illegal online activity is fair and clear. By publishing these principles we want to make sure that customers get fair treatment, are fully informed of what's happening to them and that they have real rights of appeal."

For a copy of *Online copyright infringement - customer protection principles* go to:
<http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/smartweb/policy/internet>

Lack of support in choosing and setting-up equipment gets in the way of going online

New research from the Communications Consumer Panel has found that many consumers are put off going online by the amount of choice of equipment in shops, and because they don't know what to buy or how to set it up. Panel Chair Anna Bradley has called on retailers to improve the support they give customers: "We want retailers to do more to provide support to help consumers choose and set up the equipment that is right for them." Many people told the Panel how unsure they are about what to buy, and said that they have no idea how to set up it up and go online. Others told us of their fears of being ripped off. Anna Bradley said that: "Without the right support new users can get stuck, eventually giving up on the internet altogether."

The Panel's new consumer research into people's experiences of getting online and getting the most from the internet can be downloaded from the internet. You can also watch a short video featuring people who took part in the research talking about their experiences. This is on the Panel's homepage:

www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk

Download a PDF of the report *The journey to digital participation: a consumer research report* and read the Panel's review of all the other relevant research literature at:

<http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/smartweb/digital-participation/the-consumer-framework-for-digital-participation>



Digital Scotland

Scotland Panel member Fiona Ballantyne recently attended a meeting on Digital Britain along with a number of key business groups. Jim Mather, the Scottish Parliament's Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism, wants to use this group to help influence the Westminster Government and articulate the Scottish position to Broadband Delivery UK, the body tasked with implementing the universal broadband commitment. It will also help build a consensus of interest around the issues to be tackled. The group is keen to see a Digital Strategy for Scotland as a starting point. Fiona says that the Panel will continue to work with this initiative and encourage the Scottish Government to examine issues raised in Digital Britain through the eyes of Scottish consumers and small businesses.

<http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/smartweb/news-and-media/blog>

Consumers in Wales use the internet less but Scotland and Northern Ireland compare well to the rest of the UK

Kim Brook, Panel member for Wales, said he was concerned by the findings in Ofcom's *Adults' media literacy in the Nations* report: "It is worrying that there are fewer consumers in Wales using the internet compared to the rest of the UK." He also said that more work needs to be done to tackle mobile and broadband not-spots. In Scotland and Northern Ireland mobile phone and internet use compares well to the rest of the UK, but as the Panel's research shows, consumers and small businesses continue to have real and persistent problems making even basic mobile voice calls in all three Nations.

You can download a copy of Ofcom's report *UK Adults' Media Literacy*:

http://www.ofcom.org.uk/advice/media_literacy/medlitpub/medlitpubrss/adultmedialitereport/adults-media-literacy.pdf

Putting the consumer first

This year's annual report illustrates the impact of the Communications Consumer Panel's advice, and looks ahead to what the Panel will be working on in the year ahead. The Panel has worked hard over the last year to achieve positive results for consumers in the communications sector, focusing in particular on.

Our future priorities will continue to target the issues that are important for consumers and small businesses. We will be using research based on consumers' experiences, and getting the views of a wide variety of organisations. Our aim will be to ensure that Ofcom, Government and communications providers put consumers first as they shape the future of the UK's communications sector.

You can download a copy of the Panel's annual report *Putting the consumer first: the work of the Communications Consumer Panel*

<http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/CCP%20AR%202010%20English.pdf>

There is also a separate report detailing our budget and spend over the past year, which you can access from the link below:

<http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/AR%20Financials%2009-10.pdf>



May Panel meeting

Discussion at the Panel's May meeting was firmly focused on the key issues of the moment - ranging from spectrum to mobile coverage and switching. Ofcom presented their future spectrum policy and gave an insight into new research into mobile coverage and mobile broadband. Panel members advised Ofcom to look at how to explain their approach to spectrum policy in a consumer-friendly way, and supported the development of a framework for analysing consumer and citizen interests. Members plan to use the Consumer Interest Toolkit to review Ofcom's spectrum project. Discussion on mobile coverage looked at the lack of reliable coverage information, and how this puts consumers at a disadvantage. The Panel asked Ofcom to explore coverage solutions as soon as possible, and encouraged it to explain how accurate operator coverage information could be published.

You can download the full minutes of Panel meetings from our website at:

<http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/smartweb/angenda-and-minutes/2010>

Coming up in future issues...

- Further work on mobile coverage, including consumers' ability to cancel their contracts if coverage is inadequate.
- Publication of research on the usability of mobile phones.

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www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk