



October 2010

Panel newsletter

Latest news...

Consumer Panel responds to government abolition plans

The Government has announced that it is, "minded to abolish the Communications Consumer Panel and to move some of their functions to Citizens Advice, subject to an examination of the practicalities and details of such a move."

The Panel will be working through the implications of the Government's decision and will provide an update in due course. We want to see that the interests of consumers in the communications sector continue to be protected and promoted effectively. To this end we will seek to ensure that the benefits of the Panel model are enshrined in the new system, including the ability to advise on Ofcom proposals early in the decision-making process before they are made public and to use its communications sector expertise to counterbalance industry input.

Disability research findings 'shocking' says Consumer Panel

The Consumer Panel was shocked by the findings in Ofcom's mystery shopping research into how well communications providers publicise services for disabled customers. Chair Anna Bradley described the research as "a picture of inadequate, misleading or non-existent information across all providers".

The Panel will be publishing its own research into how manufacturers and operators can make mobile phones easier to use for consumers, including disabled people, later in the year.

Read the Panel's press release on Ofcom's research on our website:

<http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/Ofcom%20mystery%20shopping%20release.pdf>

Two-tier internet could put access to public services at risk

The Consumer Panel has continued to engage with the topics of net neutrality and traffic management, making detailed submissions to the Ofcom and EU consultations - following on from the seminar we held with LSE media think-tank Polis in September.

The Consumer Panel told Ofcom and the EU that taking a purely market-driven approach to net neutrality could put online access to public services at risk. The Panel warned that as networks become more congested internet service providers (ISPs) are considering charging content providers to prioritise certain types of internet traffic. Chair Anna Bradley said that this could improve the quality of service for consumers who want to use these services, but "the danger is public services could suffer from being in the shadows of more appealing commercial services". The Panel has called for a wide-ranging debate

In short...

Watch this space...

In mid-November we'll be publishing the changes mobile providers have made following our research into contract cancellation policies for poor or no mobile coverage.

Net debate...

Visit the website to watch the video of the Consumer Panel/Polis seminar discussion:

www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk

informed by a better understanding of consumer needs and behaviour: “We need to know what might work for consumers in both the short term, and in the long term to guarantee consumer access to online public services.”

Read the Panel’s press release on the website:

http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/011010%20Ofcom_EC%20NN%20PN.pdf

Good news for consumers appealing against online copyright infringement notifications

Blogging at the start of the month, Panel member Damian Tambini applauded the Government’s decision not to charge consumers who appeal against a notification for online copyright infringement. But he said he had concerns about how consumer-friendly the appeals process would be, saying that it has to be simple and easy for anyone to use. He said it will also be essential to have an independent third party able to advise consumers on the process and how to gather evidence to support their appeal.

To read Damian’s blog go to:

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

Switching principles

Panel member Roger Darlington recently spoke to an industry workshop on switching. Roger explains in his blog on the event that he suggested eight key principles to guide decision-making. He said that using the principles would favour gaining provider-processes (GPL) for switching rather than losing-provider processes (LPL). He reported that there was a view that the current Ofcom consultation on switching focused too narrowly on GPL versus LPL processes “instead of looking at wider migration issues”.

You can read Roger’s blog in full at:

<http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/smartweb/news-and-media/blog-post/78>

From mobile not-spots to the need for more phone numbers: the October Panel meeting

This month’s meeting took in a breadth of communications issues, with the Panel advising on:

- Ofcom’s work on addressing mobile not-spots and improving consumer information about coverage;
- Ofcom’s review of wholesale broadband access, which is designed to stimulate more competition between suppliers at the wholesale level and so deliver benefits for consumers;
- Ofcom’s plans to ensure that there will continue to be enough geographic phone numbers to meet the needs of consumers and businesses; and
- Ofcom’s review of alternative dispute resolution schemes

The minutes will be posted on the Panel’s website shortly. To read minutes from previous meetings go to:

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

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