

April 2012

## Panel newsletter

### In short...

#### **The Switching Debate**

The Panel is about to hold the *Switching Debate* with Consumer Focus and the Consumer Forum for Communications, to discuss Ofcom's current consultation on proposals to change the processes for switching fixed voice and broadband providers on the Openreach copper network. A report on the event will follow in next month's newsletter ...

<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/switching-fixed-voice-broadband/>

#### **Communications Green Paper event**

The Panel is planning an event in May with Consumer Focus to discuss the Government's Communications Green Paper. More details to follow soon...

#### **Updated consumer mobile guide published**

Ofcom has published a new version of its consumer guide including details about how to maximise mobile coverage...

<http://consumers.ofcom.org.uk/2012/04/maximising-your-mobile-coverage-2/>

#### **Ofcom publishes Annual Plan**

Following a public consultation, Ofcom has now published its Annual Plan for 2012/13. The Panel's response to the draft Annual Plan can be found at:

<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/consultations/936793/responses/consumer-communications.pdf><http://www.ofcom.org.uk/about/annual-reports-and-plans/annual-plans/annual-plan-201213/>

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## Latest news...

### **The fast-changing communications environment - Panel work plan for 2012/13**

Following its public consultation, the Communications Consumer Panel has now published its work plan for 2012/13. Panel Chair, Bob Warner said: “The fast-changing communications environment means that it is vital that consumers and citizens have a strong advocate and as ever, we’ll be looking at issues specifically from the consumer perspective to protect and promote their interests.

“Stakeholders have played an important role in helping the Panel to shape the work programme and I’d like to thank everyone who has advised us.”

The work plan explains the Panel’s role and illustrates the different ways in which it engages with issues. It describes how the Panel has chosen its priorities and sets out the areas it plans to address:

#### **Pro-active work areas 2012/13**

- Future of communications regulation
- Online security/privacy
- Consumer information and decision-making
- Digital participation
- Mobile coverage/spectrum auction.

#### **Issues for periodic review**

- Future for consumer advocacy
- Switching
- Co-existence of new services and DTT
- Broadband roll-out
- Net neutrality/traffic management
- Broadband speeds
- Complaint handling
- Unexpected charges and high bills
- Mobile usability.

To read the full document, please visit:

<http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/CCP%20Final%20workplan%202012-13.pdf>

### **Panel will continue to work in partnership to ensure consumers have a strong advocate in communications sector**

The Consumer Panel has reiterated that it will continue to work closely with other consumer stakeholders in the new landscape to ensure effective consumer advocacy. Responding to the Government’s statement following the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) consultation into the future of the consumer landscape, Panel Chair Bob Warner said: “The telecommunications market develops rapidly - and the communications needs of consumers and citizens in the 21st century are integral to people’s personal and business lives. We want to ensure that the common issues that affect consumers across a range of industries are addressed in partnership to maximise our and their impact on behalf of consumers.”

<http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/consumer%20landscape%20FINAL.pdf>

### Close monitoring needed to stop silent call companies

The Panel has backed Ofcom's decision to exercise its new powers and fine a company £750,000 for making persistent silent calls, and called for continued close monitoring to stop others. Panel Chair Bob Warner said this had been the first time that Ofcom had used the new enforcement powers: "The Panel has long lobbied for tougher action to protect consumers, and we are now urging Ofcom to monitor the numbers of silent call complaints closely - and take further action where persistent silent calls remain a problem."

<http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/Homeserve%20silent%20calls%20release%20final.pdf>

### Speaking with one voice to promote mobile accessibility

OneVoice is a newly-formed coalition set up to promote and raise awareness of ICT accessibility and usability. The umbrella organisation brings together organisations from the public, private and third sectors to campaign for and promote accessible and usable new technology.

The coalition has just published its first report *Moving together: mobile apps for inclusion and assistance*, which looks into how older and disabled people use mobile apps and what more needs to be done.

Panel member Colin Browne said: "The Panel has pressed for increased mobile phone usability. The publication of this report by the OneVoice coalition is a welcome development that should facilitate the design of more accessible apps for mobile phones that will make them significantly easier for users, including older and disabled people."

For more information about the coalition or to read the report go to: [www.onevoiceict.org](http://www.onevoiceict.org)

### Spring Online 2012

Spring Online with Silver Surfers' Day has been extended to a week of activities from 23 to 27 April across the country. This year events are taking place from the European Commission in the UK, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London to the Government's vehicle licensing offices DVLA in Swansea. Libraries, schools, sheltered housing schemes, UK Online Centres, cafes and community groups are also opening their doors in one of the biggest digital inclusion campaigns of the year - giving thousands of older people their first taste of all the benefits of getting online. The campaign that started 11 years ago has now helped more than 150,000 people get more out of life online.

[www.springonline.org](http://www.springonline.org)

### Free 0800 mobile calls good news for consumers

Communications Consumer Panel Chair Bob Warner has called proposals by Ofcom to introduce free 0800 calls from mobiles "good news". He said that the proposed free charges for 0800 calls from mobiles will particularly help people on lower incomes because "they are more likely to rely on a mobile at home and use it to make calls to essential services". He added that Ofcom's proposals to simplify call charges to 03, 08, 09 and 118 numbers "respond to our concerns that calling non-geographic numbers can be confusing and costly for consumers", and the Panel would continue to monitor the other changes to ensure they go far enough.

<http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/Free%200800%20nos.pdf>

### April Panel meeting

This month's Panel meeting will include:

- A presentation by Ofcom on their research into unexpectedly high bills.

- The latest work from the Ofcom media literacy team.
- An update on UHF spectrum.
- An update on DTT co-existence.

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