

May 2012

COMMUNICATIONS  
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PANEL



## Panel newsletter

### In short...

#### The Switching Debate

Last month the Panel co-hosted the very successful *Switching Debate* with Consumer Focus and the Consumer Forum for Communications. Following presentations from Ofcom, BT and TalkTalk, the audience discussed Ofcom's consultation on proposals to change the processes for switching fixed voice and broadband providers on the Openreach copper network, and the implications this may have for consumers.

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

#### Fighting fraud

The latest edition of the National Fraud Authority's (NFA) newsletter *Fraud Focus* features articles on recent NFA activity, including the 2012 Annual Fraud Indicator and awareness-raising campaign *The Devil's in Your Details...*

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/agencies-public-bodies/nfa/fraud-focus-newsletter/fraud-focus-may2012?view=Binary>

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### Latest news...

#### Panel calls for better balance between broadband roll out and online support

New Panel research into sustaining people's online engagement highlights a serious risk that public policy underestimates the challenge of supporting people to get and stay online. Panel Chair Bob Warner has called on government "to strike a better balance between funding for broadband infrastructure and supporting people online and highlighted the need for clear targets to assess the progress being made".

Speaking at the opening plenary on the second day of the Go ON: ND2012 conference, Bob Warner said: "There is an increasing drive for public and commercial services to be online, but about 11 million people (22% of adults) in the UK still do not use the internet at home - and in some areas around the UK this percentage is far higher. This means that a significant minority of people risk being excluded from online benefits and services. Sustainable growth for the future can only be achieved if broadband is used by most consumers and businesses."

The Panel's report *Bridging the Gap: Sustaining online engagement* explores people's digital needs and highlights solutions to support more people online, including a study of the key barriers that work to

keep people offline in areas of socio-economic deprivation in Glasgow.

“The research has implications for funding, growth and policy. The distance is increasing between consumers who are online, with access to new services and faster broadband, and people who remain anchored in the offline world. Unless fundamental action is taken now to give people the skills to exploit the advantages of the internet, the digital divide risks becoming a digital gulf,” he told the conference.

The Panel also held a special roundtable event with Consumer Focus Scotland and key stakeholders to discuss the findings from the Glasgow study. Panel member for Scotland Fiona Ballantyne said: “The barriers to getting online are more pronounced in the most deprived areas of Glasgow. We found that the familiarity of the offline world, along with an active social network of friends and family who are not online either, reinforce the belief that internet access is irrelevant to their lives. A perceived lack of affordability, technical complexity and support also work to keep people offline.”

To read or download a copy of *Bridging the Gap: Sustaining online engagement* go to:

<http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/smartweb/research/bridging-the-gap:-sustaining-online-engagement>

### Online copyright licensing should reflect the digital age

A Digital Copyright Exchange built on high quality data, in combination with common systems capable of handling high volumes of low value transactions, could provide the key to more efficient and effective digital copyright and licensing, Panel member Chris Holland said, reporting back from an International Institute of Communications event on Digital Copyright issues

“There is a desire for industry-led, cross-sectorial and international solutions that are clear, open and voluntary. This is the case for a Digital Copyright Exchange. For copyright infringement to become less justifiable and easier to police, licensing needs to reflect the digital age,” Chris said, adding: “Creativity and innovation need adequate protection, but clarity about what’s legal and what constitutes piracy will help the creative industries and consumers alike.”

More information about digital copyright and licensing details go to: <http://www.ipso.gov.uk/hargreaves-copyright-dce>

### Consumers need to know likely broadband speeds early in sales process

Panel Chair Bob Warner has called on internet service providers (ISPs) to “give consumers information on their likely broadband speeds early in the sales process, before any decision is made”. He was responding to the publication of mystery shopping research from Ofcom into the information ISPs give consumers on broadband speeds. The research found that 7% of mystery shoppers did not receive speed estimates via telephone sales and of those that did, in just over a third of cases (34%) the caller had to request this information.

“Consumers can only make an informed choice if they can easily compare different packages and providers. It’s encouraging that some ISPs acknowledge that better training is needed for sales staff and the Panel will monitor closely the outcome of Ofcom’s further action to improve the provision of broadband speeds information for consumers.”

<http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/BB%20speeds%20mystery%20shop.pdf>

Ofcom’s *Voluntary Code of Practice on Broadband Speeds* Mystery shopping research can be found at: <http://consumers.ofcom.org.uk/2012/05/call-for-broadband-providers-to-improve-speeds-information/>

### OneVoice expands its 7 steps programme

Following its inaugural AGM in March, the OneVoice Coalition for Accessible ICT has announced plans to set up working groups to campaign around and promote four initial areas that build on its 7 steps

programme and report *Moving together: mobile apps for inclusion and assistance*: accessible websites; mobile apps; digital TV; and barriers to accessibility and statistics. Further workstreams will be launched in due course.

OneVoice is an umbrella organisation bringing together organisations from the private, public and third sectors to campaign for and promote accessible and usable technology. Their goal is to develop a shared agenda for change, sharing experience and expertise in the belief that working together gives a greater impact and stronger voice.

For more information about OneVoice, or to read the report go to [www.onevoiceict.org](http://www.onevoiceict.org) If you would like to be involved in the workstreams, please contact [sophie.oconnor@abilitynet.org.uk](mailto:sophie.oconnor@abilitynet.org.uk)

### May Panel meeting

This month's Panel meeting included:

- The latest from Ofcom on its review of the ADR (alternative dispute resolution) schemes.
- A report from PhonePayPlus on its latest work.
- An update on the online copyright infringement Code of Practice.
- An update on next generation relay services.

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