

June 2012

COMMUNICATIONS
CONSUMER
PANEL



Panel newsletter

In short...

Draft copyright infringement code published

Ofcom has published a draft code that would require large internet service providers (ISPs) to send letters to customers informing them when their account is connected to reports of suspected online copyright infringement. Read more below....

<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/infringement-notice/>

Plans to update BT Basic

The Panel has been briefed on BT plans to update BT Basic, the social tariff for people who are claiming one of four income-related benefits. Plans to merge the benefits into Universal Credit have prompted BT to design new criteria for the tariff to ensure that it continues to be available to people who need it...

www.bt.com/includingyou/other-products-services-bt-basic.html

Latest complaints figures published

The latest complaints data from Ofcom for the first time includes pay TV services. The figures show that complaint levels for pay TV and mobile phone services are lower than for landline telephones and broadband...

http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/other/telecoms-research/complaints/q1-january-march-2012/?utm_source=updates&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=telecomsComplaintsQ12012

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Latest news...

Panel to chair DCMS communications review seminar

Panel Chair Bob Warner is to chair *The consumer perspective*, one of the seminars that will develop policy options for the recently announced Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Communications Review White Paper.

Bob Warner said: "Meeting the communications needs of consumers and businesses is integral to building and maintaining thriving communities. The rapid pace of change in the sector means that it is vital that regulators and policy-makers appreciate and address the issues that matter to consumers and small businesses."

DCMS aims to:

- promote growth and evolution in the communications sector
- meet consumer expectations of high-quality content and services delivered in a variety of ways

- improve connectivity and speed
- ensure sufficient protection from unfair practices and inappropriate content.

DCMS says that responses to its open letter in May last year show root and branch reform of current legislation is unnecessary. A White Paper with plans for legislative reform will be published in early 2013, followed by a Communications Bill in 2014.

The review will take place over the summer as a series of seminars with supporting policy papers to inform the discussion:

- the consumer perspective (July 4)
- in competition in the content market (July 9)
- the maximising the value of spectrum to support growth and innovation (July 12)
- driving investment and growth in the UK's TV-content industries (July 16)
- supporting growth in the radio (audio) sector (September).

http://www.culture.gov.uk/news/news_stories/9156.aspx

RNIB plans to adopt Panel's Framework for digital participation

The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) has recommended that it adopts the Consumer Panel's five stages of the *Framework for digital participation*. The decision follows the charity's BT-sponsored research into the barriers that prevent older blind and partially sighted people from getting online. The framework would form the basis of a new technology support strategy to reflect the scope of RNIB's work.

Panel Chair Bob Warner said he was delighted that the Panel's work in digital participation had helped focus the charity's work to bring blind and partially sighted people online.

Report author and RNIB Research Officer, Angela Edwards, explained that she had structured the research around the framework because it takes people from getting interested in the internet through to managing the risks of getting online: "The framework was a really helpful tool for organising the research findings and structuring the recommendations, as well as for organising RNIB's future strategies aimed at improving the situation for people with sight loss," she said.

Tackling digital exclusion - older blind and partially sighted people and the internet found that older people with sight loss are one of the groups less likely to be online than others: "Getting older people with sight loss interested in using the internet will involve a number of factors. These will depend on where people are in their online journey. The first stage involves changing the perception that sight loss precludes the use of the internet," Angela Edwards said. She continued: "The report also calls on government, training and service providers to focus more on the needs of disabled people who are digitally excluded - and families too have a role to play in encouraging and supporting family members to get online."

The research found:

- 82% of respondents said that their eyesight was a reason for not using the internet
- there was low awareness of the technologies available to enable people with sight loss to get online
- participants said that they were aware of the internet but not the benefits its use could bring
- barriers also included the high cost of assisted technologies, and a lack of one-to-one training and support.

To read *Tackling digital exclusion - older blind and partially sighted people and the internet* go to: http://www.rnib.org.uk/aboutus/Research/reports/2012/digital_exclusion.pdf

For more information about the Consumer Panel's *Framework for digital participation* go to: <http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/smartweb/digital-participation/the-consumer->

[framework-for-digital-participation](#)

New switching plans should benefit consumers and the market

The Panel has said that Ofcom's plans to make the process of switching landline and broadband providers easier and more reliable would be a significant improvement for consumers.

Responding to Ofcom's consultation, Panel Chair Bob Warner said: "Switching should be a seamless journey, but instead the consumer experience is obstacle-ridden. The new proposals mean that consumers should benefit from better value services and innovations."

The Panel is urging providers to work with Ofcom to design a unified switching system as soon as possible, and asking Ofcom to consider how a revised switching process will be tied to a more unified process: "Action now will benefit consumers and the market for many years to come," Bob Warner explained.

http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/consultations/switching-fixed-voice-broadband/responses/Communications_Consumer_Pan1.pdf

Protect DTT viewers from problems when 4G services come online, Panel tells Ofcom

The Panel has told Ofcom that it has significant concerns about the support that is being planned to help over 2 million households whose TV signal could be affected when new 4G mobile services are introduced on the 800MHz band. The Panel has also told the regulator that no consumer should have to pay to fix the potential interference problem to their digital terrestrial television (DTT) signal.

"DTT is popular with millions of viewers and we want Ofcom to reassure the Panel that consumers will continue to receive those services. People affected by interference to their DTT signal should not have to pay the costs of rectifying the problem or suffer inconvenience and worry," Panel Chair Bob Warner said in response to the regulator's second consultation on DTT and the roll-out of 4G services. "The next generation of mobile services will bring many advantages, and we want to see consumers and citizens across the UK benefit from it."

The Panel has called for a UK-wide campaign, which Bob Warner said would "make people aware of any potential problems that 4G roll-out might bring, and what the solutions are".

http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/consultations/949731/responses/Communications_Consumer_Pan1.pdf

Panel responds to Ofcom simplifying non-geographic numbers consultation

The Consumer Panel has submitted its formal response to Ofcom's consultation into plans to simplify non-geographic calls, which it says it is confusing for consumers. The Panel will publish its response alongside the publication of all submissions by Ofcom later in the summer.

The regulator's review found that consumers often do not know how much non-geographic calls cost because each phone company sets its own prices, and people have become suspicious of using the numbers. Ofcom argues that this can make socially important services harder to access, particularly for vulnerable consumers in mobile-only households.

Ofcom plans to take a final decision on the key recommendations by the end of 2012.

<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/simplifying-non-geographic-no/>

Digital Unite's Spring Online 2012 campaign success

Digital Unite's 2012 digital inclusion campaign, Spring Online with Silver Surfers' Day, saw another excellent level of participation. Around 2,000 digital taster events were held in April across the UK at venues including libraries, schools, housing associations, DVLA, the Victoria and Albert Museum and even a fish and chip shop!

As a result thousands of people were helped to get online for the first time, and/or improve their computer and internet skills. One new learner discovered a picture from her school days in the 1930s

using Google, and another, aged 100 years, enjoyed using computers and the internet so much at her event she's asked her son to buy her a laptop.

More information is available on Digital Unite at: <http://springonline.org/>

Draft copyright infringement code published

Ofcom has published a draft copyright infringement code for consultation. It would compel large internet service providers (ISPs) to send letters to customers when their account is connected to reports of suspected online copyright infringement. It also includes measures to inform the public, and promote lawful access to digital content such as music and films.

Under the proposed code ISPs would notify customers of reported infringements, explain the steps they can take to protect their network, and tell them where to go for licensed content on the internet. Copyright owners would be expected to invest in awareness campaigns to help educate consumers about the impact of copyright infringement, and develop attractive online services for their content.

The draft code has provisions for sharing costs between copyright owners and ISPs. Ofcom has published a separate consultation on how these costs are allocated, which closes on 18 September 2012.

The revised draft code and consultation closes on 26 July 2012.
<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/infringement-notice/>

June Panel meeting

This month's Panel meeting included:

- An update from Ofcom on mobile coverage in the UK.
- A briefing on the work programme on unexpectedly high bills (bill shock).
- A presentation by Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK)
- An update on Ofcom's plans to simplify non-geographic numbers.

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