



**Communications
Consumer Panel**

and Advisory Committee for Older
and Disabled people



**Panel Defnyddwyr
Cyfathrebiadau**

a Phwyllgor Cynghori pobl Hŷn
ac Anabl

Communications Consumer Panel and the Advisory Committee for Older and Disabled People



Annual Report 2021/22



Contents

Foreword	3
Strengthening the consumer voice in 2021/22	4
How we work	5
Our Strategic Plan	6
Engagement with our stakeholders.....	7
Our network's impact	9
Our research and insight programme	12
Consultation responses.....	13
Annexes.....	16
Annex 1: Financial Report	17
Annex 2: Panel Member biographies	18



Foreword

Communications services are - we believe - essential services, which consumers relied on more than ever during the pandemic and should have a right to access. The past year has been one of navigation for the UK's communications consumers - through the consequences of the Covid pandemic, the UK's exit from the EU and the significant outages caused by winter storms. As we enter a significant cost of living crisis, we are also starting to see the impact of the withdrawal of additional support measures and protections that had been in place during the last two years.

In our last Annual Report, I applauded communications providers, governments, Ofcom and consumer organisations for working together swiftly and collaboratively to keep people connected and informed. We need more of this now. Consumers need our support now to believe that communications providers will do the right thing for all consumers in crisis. As the pandemic eases, we need to find ways to lessen the digital divide, to keep people connected while living in financial vulnerability, to give people the access and support they need to make the most of their communications services.

Communications consumers deserve high quality, affordable, reliable and secure services - this is now as important as the right to access utilities. Our research into migration to VOIP has highlighted the continued importance of the landline for many UK consumers and their dependence on it during power cuts. We remain convinced that there needs to be a wider communications campaign around this industry-led change. We have welcomed industry's engagement on this issue and look forward to further collaborative working to influence change, along with the National Stakeholder and Consumer Advocacy Hubs, Ofcom, DCMS and devolved government stakeholders. We have witnessed with postal services in Northern Ireland the detriment that can be caused when access to an established and relied upon service is changed.

We believe that now is the time for communications providers to listen to the needs of their customers, particularly those who may not want to label themselves as 'vulnerable', but who may benefit from a little extra support. We know from our engagement with industry and research that often the support is available, but consumers are unaware of it, or of what to ask for. In the current context, communications providers must do more to raise awareness of the social tariffs they offer.

Communications providers have an opportunity to ensure that no-one is left unplugged from society, work, education or healthcare services, using the innovative thinking that this sector is known for. We look forward to seeing the sector deliver.

Rick Hill, MBE, Chair
Communications Consumer Panel
Advisory Committee for Older and Disabled People



Strengthening the consumer voice: stakeholder engagement in 2021/22

We aim to capture a well-rounded and representative consumer voice, gathering first-hand information from consumer and citizen-facing organisations. It is important to us that everyone's voice can be heard and we endeavour to ensure that all discussions, presentations and communications are inclusive.

Over the past year, our discussions with our stakeholders have allowed us to highlight a number of key issues facing people across the UK. We have combined this intelligence with evidence from our insight programme to inform our advice to Ofcom, industry and government on communications policy and practice. Regular stakeholder engagement throughout the year helps us to anticipate consumer detriment, or identify it occurring. We then work with those who can directly make a difference.

74 meetings with 95 organisations:

National Stakeholder Hubs

- 17 meetings
- 66 organisations
- All-UK Stakeholder Hub in May 2021



Consumer Advocacy Hubs

- 4 meetings with organisations spanning the UK
- We look to expand the Hub to include other representatives, particularly in Wales and Scotland in the coming year



Industry Forum

- 4 Forum meetings
- 11 major providers
- Speakers from other sectors to build understanding of best practice
- Teach-in with the ICO in March 2022 on data protection regarding vulnerable consumers



Other stakeholder engagements

- 35 meetings
- 19 stakeholders including communications providers, ADR schemes and consumer advocates





How we work

The communications market is complex, highly technical and fast-moving - and impacts across society and the economy. The Panel and ACOD's work is diverse and broad, covering not only telecommunications such as broadband, spectrum (mobile and TV airwaves) and mobile, but also post, broadcasting and cross-cutting issues such as digital inclusion.

The Panel's wide remit enables it to identify projects that are often apparently unrelated but raise similar consumer issues - we can then ensure that connections are made between them. Our sector specialism, experience and understanding allow us to robustly challenge telecoms policy development from a position of strength, supported by sound evidence and resulting in pragmatic actions based on real world solutions.

The Panel works to influence before, during and after policy development - through a variety of methods and channels. Our work results in significant policy changes - we contribute expert advice to ensure consumers' and citizens' interests are high on the agenda and we do not shrink from airing issues more widely if necessary.

UK consumers are enduring a highly turbulent period, as the effects from the long tail of the pandemic combine with the impact of the UK's exit from the EU and that of the conflict in Ukraine. We are working closely with our UK-wide consumer stakeholder base to hear their insights into the harm caused by the cost-of-living crisis, building these issues into our strategic plan, and ensuring we highlight the information to those who could directly make a difference. We urge prompt action and monitoring of impact throughout.

The sector presents different challenges to those faced in utilities such as energy and water; in many ways it is closest to financial services in its complexity, vast range of providers and related competitiveness. Overall indicators of consumer satisfaction with the market risk masking individual service variations. An appreciation of the complexities of the market is vital if progress on consumer service is to be made - different services within the sector present different challenges. Panel Members' own insights from their work in other sectors, as well as the insights gained from our consumer research and our National Hubs and Consumer Stakeholder Hubs, help us to keep aware of the differences and similarities in consumer experiences across sectors.

We believe in learning from best practice in other sectors, so that communications consumers can receive a fair, accessible, affordable and reliable service, with excellent standards of customer care to equal the highest standards in any other sector.

When we anticipate consumer detriment, or identify it occurring, we work with those who can make a difference - Ofcom, communications providers and UK and national governments. Our sector specialism and expertise mean we can challenge in a constructive environment, offer robust advice and influence the development of policy so that it delivers good outcomes for consumers and citizens.



Our Strategic Plan

We develop our strategic plans by examining issues and considering:

- What is the scale of the issue for consumers, citizens and micro businesses?
- What difference can the Panel and ACOD make?

Our strategic aims and objectives for 2021/22¹ and 2022/23² have been published in full on our website. The Panel's remit is broad and we scan the horizon with a preventative lens, for emerging issues that could potentially cause harm to consumers, citizens and microbusinesses. Following public consultation and input from our stakeholders, we announced that we would focus our attention for 2021/22 year on:

- **Promoting equality of access and usability of communications services that are resilient, reliable, secure and affordable;**
- **Encouraging excellent standards of service and of customer service; and**
- **Prevention of consumer harms.**

Taking this as our guiding, although not exclusive, approach, we have advised policy-makers and industry on a range of issues including:

- Universal connectivity, including rural connectivity gaps, the Shared Rural Network, 5G misinformation and 2G and 3G connectivity;
- Customer service, complaints and consumer dissatisfaction;
- Contracts, switching and consumer choice;
- Media literacy;
- Public policy;
- Accessibility and inclusivity of television and on-demand services;
- Scams and fraudulent practices using communications networks;
- Affordability and debt, including promoting social tariffs;
- Migration to voice-over IP networks (VOIP), particularly implications for consumers with additional access requirements and those more vulnerable in an emergency;
- 'Vulnerability': to encourage sectoral use of the social model of disability and promote awareness of access requirements rather than outdated medical 'labels';
- Premium rate telephony, including directory enquiries and call connection services;
- Digital privacy and ethics;
- Postal services and parcels including access/surcharging in hard-to-reach locations such as the Highlands and Islands, and in Northern Ireland, after EU-Exit.

¹ <https://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/2021-22/2021-22>

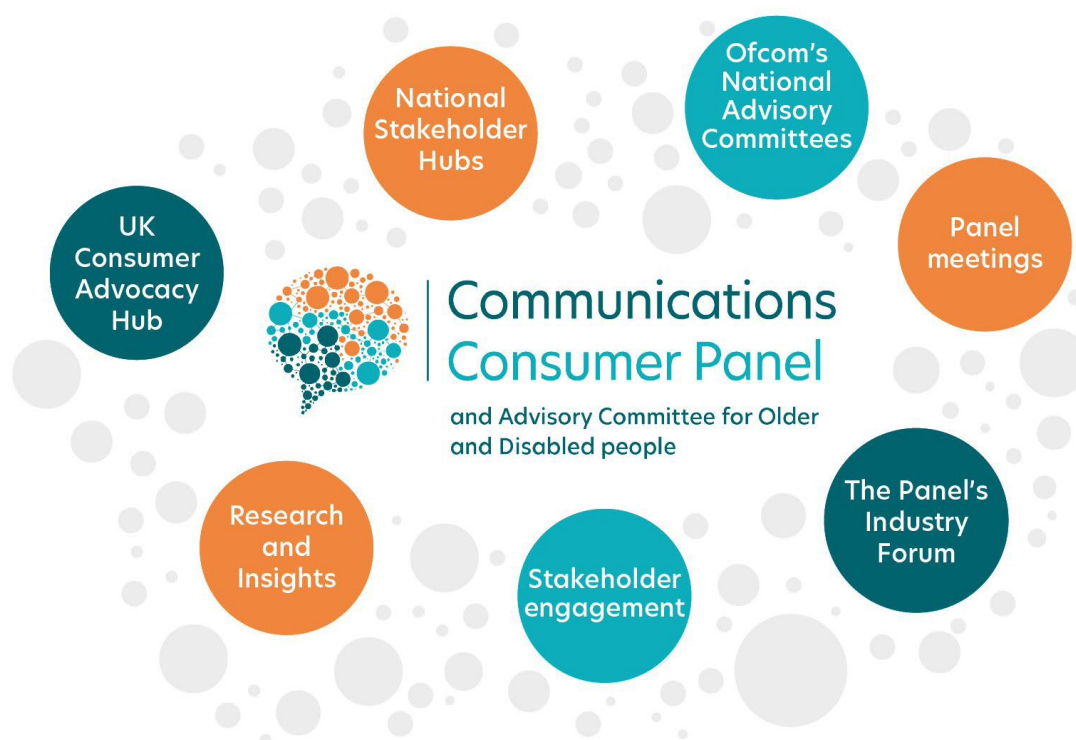
² <https://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/current-year/current-year>



Engagement with our stakeholders

In 2021/22 we continued to focus our initiatives on strengthening the consumer voice in this sector, seeking particularly to hear from people less likely historically to be heard in the development of communications policy. We have endeavoured to fill knowledge gaps and dispel myths that prevent the sector from being able to act to protect vulnerable consumers. We aim to capture a well-rounded and representative consumer voice, gathering first-hand information from consumer-facing organisations. Over the past year, our discussions with our stakeholders have allowed us to highlight a number of key issues facing consumers across the UK. We have combined this intelligence with evidence from our insight programme to inform our advice to Ofcom, industry and government on communications policy and practice.

Diagram 1: The Panel's stakeholders



We have established four Hubs across the UK - one in each Nation. Through our **National Hubs**, we have continued to deliver on our promises to gain fresh insights about issues affecting consumers, citizens and micro businesses from across the UK - those that are experienced universally and those that are particular to each Nation.

We have worked collaboratively with other consumer organisations - Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland, the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland and Which? - in our **Consumer Stakeholder Hubs**. These have enabled us to learn from those who have direct engagement with consumers on a daily basis, and for all participants to share insights and research plans. This ensures that we are working together in a way that makes the most of our differing remits, ultimately further aligning our activities to better benefit consumers,



citizens and microbusinesses in the communications sector. Outside of these meetings, we meet regularly with participants on a one-to-one basis to follow up on areas of mutual interest.

We have continued to work collaboratively with industry, in our **Industry Forum**. We have brought in a range of speakers from other sectors to raise awareness of best practice that could benefit their customers, including holding a session with the Information Commissioner's Office to ask questions and dispel any myths around data protection and vulnerable consumers. We also continue to hold meetings between the Chair and individual communication providers to hold them to account and understand and influence their consumer strategies.

Additionally, we have continued to meet with a range of organisations including Ofcom Board Members and the Chief Executive and team, the two Alternative Dispute Resolution Providers in the communications sector, the Office of the Telecoms Adjudicator, the Phone-paid Services Authority and StepChange. We have worked closely with the Broadband Stakeholder Group (now the Digital Connectivity Forum) with our Chair, Rick Hill leading a working group to ensure that the voice of the consumer fed into reframing the BSG's purpose and mission. We look forward to continuing to work with the Digital Connectivity Forum and have encouraged a broader input from consumer organisations.



Our network's impact

National Stakeholder Hubs

The Panel's National Hubs were introduced to help strengthen the UK consumer voice in the communications sector. The Hubs are chaired by the Panel's National Members: Rick Hill (in his capacity as Member for Northern Ireland), Amanda Britain (Scotland), Richard Spencer (England) and Sian Phipps (Wales). Hub Members include a wide range of consumer, citizen and micro business representatives - NGOs, policymakers, consumer protection organisations; and charities working in a range of fields such as mental health and racial equality or representing the interests of people who are: older; younger; with disabilities; carers; in debt; living in farming and rural communities; digitally excluded and many intersections of the above. A full list of those organisations attending can be found at Annex A.

We continuously review whether we are hearing from a wide enough range of consumer, citizen and micro business voices and regularly invite new organisations to attend a session that may be of interest to them. It is important to us that all participants who want to participate, can. We provide speech-to-text support to Deaf participants both online and face-to-face, and endeavour to ensure that all discussions, presentations and communications are inclusive.

We relay the insights provided by Hub Members to Ofcom policy teams and industry, resulting in positive action. We act as a facilitator of debate and encourage information sharing, for example encouraging Ofcom's engagement with the views of Hub Members through the presentation and discussion of policy proposals at meetings. We have been pleased that Hub participants have gone on to share news about consultations, research and ideas with their stakeholders and other participants following meetings. It is important to us that we utilise the knowledge and skills of participants who attend the Hubs and we encourage participants to share updates on recent work that they have been involved in.

In 2021/22 we:

- Put specific issue discussions on the agenda of industry and policy makers in response to Members' intelligence of the problems facing consumers across the UK;
- Facilitated evidence-based discussions to feed into emerging areas of policy focus in the communications sector;
- Further increased participation across the Hubs and ensured a diverse range of voices are contributing to these discussions; and
- Generated awareness of consultations at the Hubs and fed intelligence gained at them into our responses to live issues and consultations, encouraging participants to respond directly where relevant.

Details on specific Hub meetings are published on our website.



UK Consumer Advocacy Hub

The UK Consumer Advocacy Hub provides an opportunity for consumer advocacy bodies to come together and share knowledge and awareness of the types of issues facing consumers nationally.

Chaired by Rick Hill, as Chair of the Communications Consumer Panel, regular attendees include: Citizens Advice, Citizens Advice Scotland, Consumer Council for Northern Ireland and Which?

The meetings provide an opportunity to share knowledge across the consumer landscape and drive awareness of any ongoing work/or research and to avoid duplication of work.

These discussions were particularly invaluable during the initial stages of the pandemic to share intelligence in a fast-paced and unpredictable world where consumers required additional protections. A key example of this collaborative approach concerned specific issues raised at the Northern Ireland Hub and by the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland (CCNI) relating to the potential effects of the implementation of the NI Protocol on parcel deliveries for consumers in NI. In common with the CCNI, the Panel is concerned about the barriers now faced by NI consumers when shopping with GB businesses.

We urged Ofcom to consider the impact of the revised customs arrangements for second class parcels on the delivery of the Universal Service Obligation both in terms of delivery delays and additional charges. We have also had constructive engagement with HMRC to try and find solutions to this issue. We have commissioned a further study this year to help inform the debate.

In 2021/22 we:

- Continued to share intelligence across the UK, strengthen networks and identify areas that require further research.
- Identified mutual and separate areas of concern and made best use of the resources of all participants, by learning from each other's research and commissioning research where knowledge gaps existed or further depth of understanding was needed.

Industry Forum

We established the Industry Forum to gather the main communications providers together under Chatham House Rules, presenting examples of cross-sectoral best practice to facilitate inform discussion. Chaired by: Rick Hill, with Panel Member Kay Allen as a special adviser and facilitator to the Forum, the group is open to any communications provider who would like to attend. The Forum enables discussion of how to overcome obstacles and barriers to service improvement - including making communications services accessible and easy to use by all consumers - notwithstanding the fact that they are competitors of each other. Our aim is for CPs to provide a baseline level of fairness for consumers, above which they can freely compete for customers.

In 2021/22 we:

- valued being able to work collaboratively with industry and received significant positive feedback from many participants.



- conducted further work on defining and understanding ‘vulnerability’. We have encouraged providers and regulators to look beyond this label to ensure that consumers with additional requirements can be identified and have an equal opportunity to benefit from communications services;
- invited smaller providers to join the Industry Forum and benefit from discussions with larger CPs, other sectors and the Panel;
- Used our think piece on making communications services inclusive as a springboard for debate and action.
- Invited guest presenters from other sectors to highlight what’s possible in terms of adapting and designing processes to suit consumers’ changing needs and requirements. This has included other private sector organisations, not for profits and the ICO.

We also continue to hold meetings between the Chair and individual communication providers to hold them to account and understand and influence their consumer strategies.

Panel meetings

Our monthly meetings are chaired by Rick Hill and offer an opportunity for Members to advise on the development of both policy and procedure, provide consumer insights into emerging policies and provoke thought and debate. Members also meet outside of these regular meetings on topics of interest and expertise.

We will continue to engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including Ofcom, the National Advisory Committees, other regulators, individual communications providers and other subject matter experts to look deeper into ongoing issues that would benefit from a more proactive and systematic approach.

In the last year we’ve provided expert advice and guidance on a wide range of topics including:

- migration to voice-over IP (VOIP)/all-IP networks;
- switching, contracts and consumer choice;
- Ofcom’s latest work on simplifying contract information, which has come into effect in June 2022.
- access to the emergency services for BSL users via video relay;
- customer service, complaints and unreported dissatisfaction;
- premium rate telephony services, including directory enquiries and call connection services;
- rural connectivity;
- micro-business service needs;
- affordability and debt (with a particular focus on encouraging industry to publicise the support available for financially vulnerable customers);
- data privacy and ethics; and
- scams and fraudulent practices using communications networks.

We’ve identified synergies between ongoing pieces of work by our stakeholders and called out issues of consumer harm early on, to prevent, reduce or halt impact on consumers.



Our research and insight programme

We have published research on the following topics this year and shared insights and recommendations with policy, consumer advocacy and industry stakeholders:

- [Contacting your provider during the pandemic - what can we do when we can't get through?](#) Consumers' preferred channels of contact with CPs and the impact on consumers of not being able to use their preferred channel;
- [Are parcel services delivering what we need in 2021?](#) The attitudes of consumers who use parcel services, including people living in rural and remote areas, micro-businesses and people with additional access needs, across the UK;
- [Getting 'up to speed' while staying at home - UK consumers' digital connectivity challenges.](#) How people's digital needs have evolved during the pandemic and what needs people have that are unmet in terms of promoting digital inclusion;
- [Switchover from analogue to digital telephony: UK consumer and micro-business reactions.](#) Issues for consumers during the forthcoming migration to VOIP: awareness among consumers and micro-businesses, including participants who would be more at risk of harm if their landline service failed;
- [Connecting with Care: are the communications needs of residents in care homes being met?](#) The needs of consumers living in residential care - building our understanding of the unmet connectivity needs of people living in residential care and how connectivity can improve care home residents' daily lives.
- [Think-piece on making communications services inclusive and accessible to all consumers.](#) We commissioned Graham Whippy MBE to develop this report involving input from industry and interviews with a range of stakeholders including Ofcom, consumer organisations and charities, including participants of our National Hubs.

All our research documents, cover reports and recommendations are published here: [Research and reports - Communications Consumer Panel](#)

To help us establish “what good looks like” in this sector and aim higher, we commissioned Robert Hammond, a customer service and consumer advocacy expert to write a cross-sectoral think-piece looking at what works well in other regulated sectors. This builds from our 2021 think-piece by Graeme Whippy which focused on positive outcomes for consumers in vulnerable circumstances. We look forward to sharing Robert's findings and our recommendations. Along with this horizon-scanning research and our quantitative and qualitative studies highlighted above, we have in the past year participated in a series of ‘immersion studies’, enabling us to deep-dive into issues affecting consumers, listening to small groups of consumers across the UK airing their views, concerns and insights.



Consultation responses

The Panel provides a voice for consumers, citizens and micro-businesses not just in public consultations, but also with policy-makers early on in policy development and throughout implementation and revision of policy. We also regularly share news of public consultations with our stakeholders to encourage policy insights from a range of consumer, citizen and micro-business representatives.

We publish all of our consultation responses on our website³. In 2021/22 we responded to consultations on a range of topics, to provide the UK communications consumer voice, including:

- **Ofcom's Disability Action Plan for Northern Ireland**, protecting and promoting the rights of disabled consumers using communications services in Northern Ireland, we encouraged Ofcom to adopt the social model of disability, both externally and within its internal policies:
<https://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/downloads/ccp-acod-response-to-ofcoms-consultation-on-its-disability-action-plan-for-northern-ireland.pdf>
- **Ofcom's consultation on its proposals under its review of UK postal regulation, further to our response to Ofcom's call for inputs, continuing to support the rights of older, disabled, rural consumers and those running a micro-business:**
<https://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/downloads/ccp-acod-response-to-ofcoms-review-of-postal-regulation.pdf>
- **Ofcom's Annual Plan of Work 2022 - 23**, supporting and challenging constructively Ofcom's plans to make communications work for everyone:
<https://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/downloads/ccp-acod-response-to-ofcoms-plan-of-work-22-23.pdf>
- **Ofcom's consultation on its review of the Telephony Universal Service**, protecting the rights of citizens reliant on public call boxes:
<https://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/downloads/ccp-acod-response-to-ofcoms-consultation-on-its-review-of-the-telephony-uso.pdf>
- **Ofcom's review of its Net Neutrality Framework**, to protect consumers online from unfair practices, while maintaining freedom of speech:
<https://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/downloads/ccp-acod-response-to-the-ofcoms-2021-review-of-the-net-neutrality-framework.pdf>
- **Ofcom's consultation on changes to its General Conditions for fixed, landline and mobile switching**, to further empower and protect consumers using these services: <https://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/downloads/ccp->

³ <https://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/consultation-responses-and-advice-notes/consultation-responses-and-advice-notes>



[acod-response-to-ofcoms-consultation-on-changes-to-the-gcs-for-fixed-landline-and-mobile-switching---november-2021.pdf](https://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/downloads/ccp-acod-response-to-ofcoms-consultation-on-changes-to-the-gcs-for-fixed-landline-and-mobile-switching---november-2021.pdf)

- **UK Government’s ‘Reforming Competition and Consumer Policy: Driving growth and delivering competitive markets that work for consumers to support competition and highlight the case of consumers that are not the subject of competition, so need further protection:**
<https://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/downloads/ccp-acod-response-to-beis-competition-and-consumer-markets.pdf>
- **Ofcom’s call for inputs towards its review of measures to protect people in debt or at risk of disconnection, highlighting the need for communications providers to raise awareness of the support they are able to provide consumers, so that consumers can stay connected:**
<https://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/downloads/ccp-acod-response-to-ofcoms-review-of-measures-to-protect-people-in-debt-or-at-risk-of-disconnection.pdf>
- **UK Government’s consultation on the ownership of Channel 4, representing audiences of public service broadcasting whose voices may traditionally be less heard in broadcasting policy.**
<https://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/downloads/ccp-acod-response-to-dcms-on-the-ownership-of-channel-4.pdf>
- **Ofcom’s consultation on the extension of the range of mobile repeaters that can be used without a licence, to enhance legitimate competition in this market, enabling consumers to extend coverage:**
<https://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/downloads/ccp-and-acod-response-to-ofcoms-consultation-on-mobile-phone-repeaters.pdf>
- **The Phone-paid Services Authority’s consultation on its strategic plans under Code 15, protecting consumers who use premium rate services via a mobile device:**
<https://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/downloads/ccp-acod-response-to-psas-code-15-consultation-july-2021.pdf>
- **UK Government’s call for evidence on improving connectivity for very hard to reach areas, representing the views of rural consumers, as highlighted by stakeholders at our National Hubs:**
<https://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/downloads/ccp-acod-response-to-dcms-call-for-evidence-on-improving-connectivity-for-very-hard-to-reach-premises.pdf>
- **Ofcom’s call for inputs into its review of postal service in the UK, featuring the voices of disabled and rural consumers, and micro-businesses, having conducted research among these communities:**
<https://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/downloads/communications-consumer-panel-and-acods-response-to-ofcoms-call-for-inputs-in-its-review-of-postal-services-in-the-uk.pdf>



- **Ofcom's consultation on quick, easy and reliable switching, supporting consumer rights to switching without penalties:**
<https://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/downloads/communications-consumer-panel-and-acods-response-to-ofcoms-consultation-on-quick-easy-and-reliable-switching.pdf>

- **Ofcom's consultation on the future of public service media, promoting the rights of older consumers, disabled consumers and consumers in the Nations and Regions of the UK to fair representation and portrayal on-screen and affordable services:**
<https://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/downloads/communications-consumer-panel-and-acods-response-to-ofcoms-consultation-on-the-future-of-public-service-media.pdf>

- **Ofcom's consultation on mandating emergency video relay, helping to make emergency service access possible for people who rely on British Sign Language to communicate, thereby potentially saving lives:**
<https://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/downloads/communications-consumer-panel-and-acods-response-to-ofcom-on-mandating-emergency-video-relay.pdf>



Annexes

Annex 1. Financial Report

Annex 2. Panel Member biographies



Annex 1: Financial Report

Panel Member Fees	£140,307
--------------------------	-----------------

Panel Member Expenses	£610
------------------------------	-------------

Support (including Advisory Team, research, consultancy, stakeholder engagements, communications access support, design and website publications)	£503,542
--	-----------------

Total:	£644, 459
---------------	------------------



Annex 2: Panel Member biographies

Rick Hill MBE (Chair and Member for Northern Ireland)

Following degrees in Applied Maths and Church History, Rick worked as a parish minister for 17 years. He left church work in 2007 to develop a portfolio career. He is a member of the Strategic Panel for Non-Domestic Water, and a member of the Civil Aviation Authority's Consumer Panel.

Rick has previously been Deputy Chair of the Independent Press Standards Organisation, Chair of Northern Ireland Screen Commission, Chair of The General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland, Chair of Consumer Focus Post and member of the Consumer Focus UK Board, a member of the BBC Audience Council for Northern Ireland and BBC Broadcasting Council for Northern Ireland. In 2014, he was made MBE for services to Broadcast Media.

Kay Allen OBE

Kay has worked for B&Q, BSkyB and Royal Mail. She has been a Commissioner on the Disability Rights Commission and the Equality and Human Rights Commission. She also served as a NED on the Department for Work and Pensions PDCS Board.

In 2010 she was asked by Downing St to look at Responsible Business Practice of small business as part of the Big Society Team. As a result she created the on line digital platform 'Trading for Good' which is now owned by Business in the Community.

She has run her own successful bespoke consultancy for 10 years specialising in Responsible Business and Diversity and Inclusion. A qualified performance coach Kay helps others to succeed. Kay is a Fellow of St Georges House Windsor, A Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. In 2010, she was awarded an OBE for services to Equality.

Amanda Britain (Member for Scotland)

Amanda has experience spanning research, public services, and organisational change in Scotland. In all roles, she has championed the interests of people who are socially or economically excluded.

Until recently, Amanda worked with Scottish Government's Digital Health & Care directorate leading Covid-19 response programmes - providing iPads to care home residents and setting up Digital Lifelines Scotland to provide devices and support for people at risk of drug related harm.

Amanda is Chair of Iriss, a charitable company that builds the capacity and capability of the social services workforce in Scotland, and a member of Alzheimer Scotland's Human Rights and Public Policy Committee. She is a member of the Chartered Institute of Housing, was a member of the Scotland Board from 2012-2018 and was elected Chair from 2017-2018.



In parallel, Amanda has chaired the Peter Gibson Memorial Fund, which in September 2016 published '*Championing Consumers, a history of consumer advocacy in Scotland 1974-2014.*'

Helen Froud

Helen is a former Deputy Chief Executive of the Western Isles Council and was previously Director of Corporate Services at Worcestershire County Council. She also worked in consulting for KPMG. She was MD of her own consultancy firm until 2013, when she retrained to be a Salvation Army Officer. Since then she has run Salvation Army centres in Aberdeen and Inverness; and is now Assistant Director (Research) for The Salvation Army UK and Ireland.

Helen was previously a Non-Executive Director on the former Health Protection Agency Board, and on the Board of the National Records of Scotland. She is also a former Trustee of One Parent Families Scotland. She sits on the SSE Networks Stakeholder Advisory Panel.

Clifford Harkness

Clifford began his career as a telecommunication and electronics technician with Queen's University Belfast working on television production and audio resources - including linguistic research. This role led him, to the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum's Department of Non-Material Culture where he supported curatorial staff in the development of oral, aural and linguistic sound recording and audio archiving. Clifford became Head of Archival Collections before the establishment of National Museums Northern Ireland, where he was Head of Collections Management, until early retirement in 2016.

He has an enduring interest in the impact of science and technology on everyday lives and the collection, preservation, and access to multi-media archives. He was a founding member of the then N. Ireland Film Council, the Ulster Oral History Society, and the N. Ireland Reminiscence Network.

He is a former member of the BBC Audience Council and BBC Broadcasting Council for Northern Ireland. He currently acts as a museum 'Accreditation Mentor' for the Somme Museum and is a member of 'The Stories Network', hosted by the Healing Through Remembering Organisation, for those gathering and sharing personal narratives related to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland.

Dr David Holden (until March 2022)

David sits on the Electricity North West (ENW) Customer Engagement Group. The group is charged with challenging ENW to ensure that its future business plans address the needs and preferences of its current and future customers and that it is putting stakeholder needs at the heart of its decision making, with special reference to the forthcoming price control period 2023-2028 (RIIO-ED2)

David previously sat on the Civil Aviation Authority's (CAA)/HAL Consumer Challenge Board (CCB), tasked with providing scrutiny to ensure that the current £15bn Heathrow expansion plans, regulatory price review and five-year business plan is driven by the



understanding and prioritisation of the needs of its current and future consumers. The CCB challenges and scrutinises HAL's business plan to determine whether it meets the requirement of 'high quality consumer engagement'.

David has direct and extensive experience of working on large-scale consumer insight projects for Vodafone, BT, O2, EE, France Telecom, 3, Sky, Inmarsat, Talk Talk, Carphone Warehouse, Ericsson, Nokia, Virgin Media, Cable and Wireless and Alcatel.

Dr Siân Phipps (Member for Wales)

Siân spent four years championing the interests of water consumers through her non-executive role with the Consumer Council for Water, regularly challenging the performance of water companies in Wales. As a Patient and Community Leader at Velindre Cancer Centre, Siân is also a voice for people who use health and care services and is currently a lay member with NICE, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence.

Previously in her career, Siân worked for cross-party committees in the Senedd/Welsh Parliament and in the House of Commons, where her role was to advise Members in scrutinising government policies, legislation and finance.

Siân has worked in communications and public affairs for a range of public organisations including BBC Wales, the Arts Council of Wales and the Environment Agency, and has a PhD in public attitudes to environmental risk from the University of Leeds.

Siân is a Welsh learner, originally from Cardiff, where she currently lives.

Richard Spencer (Member for England)

Richard has 30 years' experience in consumer and SME mobile and fixed telecoms markets in the UK and abroad, most of which was spent at BT. His career has encompassed pricing, strategy, policy, business ethics and regulation. His final role was as Director of Corporate Social Responsibility, playing a key role in architecting and monitoring the company's programmes designed to have a positive impact on society and the environment.

Richard is the Senior Independent Director of the East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust and is trustee for a charity in Colchester which provides support to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. He also serves on the Leadership Board of Reference of a local church in Colchester.

Richard holds an MBA, and degrees in History and Theology, and has trained as an executive coach.

Dr Michael Wardlow

Michael was most recently the Chief Commissioner for the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, a public appointment he held from March 2012 to February 2020. Before joining the Commission he was the Chief Executive Officer of the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education a post he held from 1995.



Michael is currently Chair of the NI Police Fund and Chair of Translink NI. Prior to this, following 7 years in commerce, the majority of his work experience, both paid and in a voluntary capacity, was in the area of peace building and reconciliation, interests which have presented opportunities for him to work in over 40 countries.

In addition to being a graduate of Queen's University Belfast, Michael is a Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and a Fellow of the Chartered Insurance Institute. Michael is also a Visiting Scholar in George Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice.

Rick Williams

Rick is the Managing Director of Freeney Williams Ltd, a disability and diversity consultancy. He is a Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and an Associate of both Business Disability International and the Business Disability Forum.

Rick is an experienced consultant and trainer with expertise in all areas of disability and their impact on individuals and organisations.