

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 12 May 2005 12:36  
**To:** [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; Dominic Ridley  
**Subject:** Ofcom's section 10 duties

[REDACTED] / [REDACTED] / Dominic,

Earlier this year, members of both the Consumer Panel and the Advisory Committee on Older and Disabled People commented on the procedures Ofcom had in mind for discharging its section 10 duties earlier this year. Particular suggestions included making sure that Ofcom's priorities are informed by research, greater transparency with stakeholders, taking a more pro-active approach, and amending the criteria so that projects with the prospect of benefits in the longer-term are not automatically ruled out.

We shall take these suggestions on board by:

- taking account of the research recently published by the Consumer Panel and the forthcoming research into media literacy (to which extra questions have been added) in determining priority areas,
- consulting both ACOD and the Consumer Forum (hopefully at their meetings in July, but if not, by correspondence); and
- amending the criteria so that projects with the prospect of benefits in the longer-term are not automatically ruled out. We remain of the view that the likely leadtime for benefits is a legitimate factor to be considering in looking at costs and benefits, but accept that the likely leadtime should not be a pass/fail criterion. The amended criteria are attached. The aim will be to complete the annual process of planning next year's work by October, and to invite the Board's views on both the process and the outcome at that stage, having regard to any advice from ACOD and the Consumer Panel.

We recognise that it would be appropriate for Ofcom to be seen to do more in this area, in particular (to quote from section 10) 'to encourage others to secure that domestic electronic communications apparatus is developed that is capable of being used with ease, and without modification, by the widest possible range of individuals (including those with disabilities)' and that is 'as widely available as possible for acquisition by those wishing to use it'. With this in mind, we are planning a seminar in late November aimed primarily at suppliers and manufacturers of communications equipment and services which will showcase successful examples of easily-usable apparatus and related services that exist now. The aim will be to prompt thinking at a high level amongst manufacturers and those commissioning products and services about the need to put users at the centre of design. Stephen Carter will address the seminar, and Mike Whitlam has kindly agreed to be a speaker.

Recognising that the take-up of digital television amongst older and disabled people has been less than amongst the population as a whole, we also plan to talk to SwitchCo about how better information can be provided to older and disabled consumers about the different options for digital television, and what equipment and services might best suit their needs.

I'd be grateful if you'd pass this on to members of the Consumer Panel and the Advisory Committee on Older and Disabled People.

Thanks

