

## Advice to Ofcom from the Ofcom Consumer Panel



<b>Title of Ofcom Project:</b>	Complaints Handling and ADR
<b>Date:</b>	22/02/08
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<b>Paper no.</b>	AO74

1. At the 12 February 2008 Consumer Panel meeting the Panel discussed a paper provided by Ofcom that set out the proposed details of Ofcom's Review of Complaints Handling and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) schemes (paper CP/2008/07).
2. The Consumer Panel is pleased to see that the substance of its earlier recommendations (Advice Note AO68 on Complaints Handling Process) has been incorporated into Ofcom's work in this area.
3. The Panel fully supports the proposals outlined in Ofcom's paper and sees them as a very important and consumer-friendly set of proposals which are pragmatic and fit for purpose. The Panel encourages Ofcom to pursue these proposals.
4. Alongside its strong welcome for this Review, the Panel has two further suggestions that it would like Ofcom to consider.

### **Compensation**

5. The Panel would like Ofcom to look at the issue of compensation. We understand that it may not be directly addressed as part of this Review. However, we believe it would be useful for Ofcom to acknowledge compensation as an important aspect of redress, and to explain when and how Ofcom is likely to consider the issue in the future.

### **Period before the consumer has the right to go to ADR**

6. We are pleased that this Review proposes to reduce the period that consumers must wait before being able to go to ADR from 12 weeks to 8 weeks. The Panel notes that it supported this option in its own June 2007 Advice Note.

7. Nonetheless, even an 8-week timeframe might be too long for some consumers and we therefore think it would be helpful for Ofcom to explore a special escalation process for financially vulnerable consumers.
8. We are conscious that it would not be simple to design something appropriate. However, any measures which helped to make the ADR process as quick as possible for such consumers - who stand to be hardest hit by factors like suspension of service while waiting for a complaint to be resolved - would represent a significant advance.