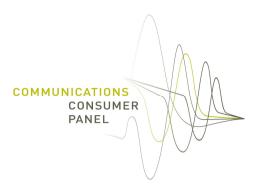


# **Consumer representation in the UK communications sector**

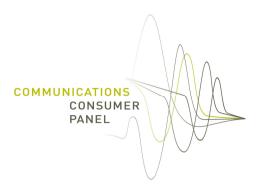
Roger Darlington Communications Consumer Panel United Kingdom ANACOM Seminar Lisbon, 27 March 2009

©Communications Consumer Panel



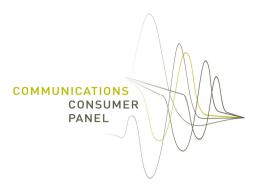
# Different models of consumer representation in the regulated sectors of the UK

- Sector-specific consumer body located inside the regulator **examples:** telecommunications and financial services
- Sector-specific consumer body located outside the regulator examples: transport and water
- General consumer body located outside the regulators
  **examples:** posts and energy



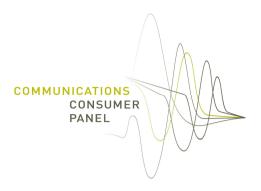
#### The consumer body located in Ofcom – title

- Originally called Ofcom Consumer Panel
- Now called Communications Consumer Panel
- Name change
  - Signals our independence from Ofcom
  - Reflects stronger consumer focus in Ofcom itself
  - Indicates that we speak to other bodies



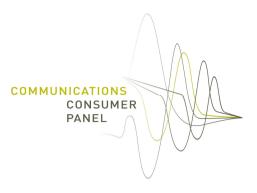
### **Relationship between Ofcom and the Consumer Panel**

- Ofcom appoints members of the Panel BUT it does this in an open and transparent manner
- Ofcom employs Panel staff BUT the Panel Chairman makes the appointments
- Ofcom provides the Panel's budget BUT the Panel decides how this money will be spent
- The Panel is physically located in Ofcom BUT it is statutorily independent of the regulator
- Relationship governed by a Memorandum of Understanding
- The Panel has been described as "a critical friend" to Ofcom



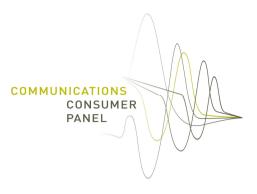
#### How the members of the Consumer Panel are chosen

- The Panel Chairman is appointed by the Ofcom Board after an open recruitment process with an interview panel of Board members and independent members
- The other Panel members are effectively appointed by the Panel Chairman, but again after an open recruitment process with an interview panel comprised of the Panel Chairman, a couple of Ofcom members, and an independent member and subject to approval by the Ofcom Board
- All Panel members formally appointed by the relevant Government Ministers



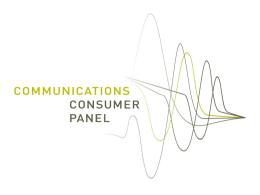
### How the Consumer Panel is composed

- The Communications Act 2003 requires the following membership structure: Chairman
   Member for England
   Member for Scotland
   Member for Wales
   Member for Northern Ireland
- Other members (currently five) who must be able to advise on the interests of:
  a) persons living in rural areas
  - b) persons living in urban areas
  - c) small businesses
  - d) disadvantaged persons, persons with low incomes, and persons with disabilities
  - e) the elderly



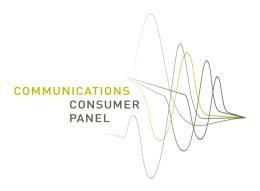
### How the Consumer Panel is resourced

- Panel members time between 2 and 4 days a month (Chairman 6)
- Panel staff full time equivalent of four
- Panel budget last financial year c £900,000



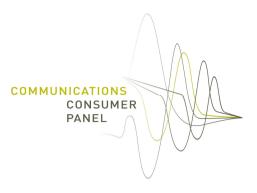
#### What the Consumer Panel does

- Our remit covers the sectors regulated by Ofcom, namely: telecommunications, broadcasting and spectrum (plus soon post) - with the exception of content issues (which are covered by a separate Content Board reporting to the Ofcom Main Board)
- Our role is to influence Ofcom, Government, the European Union, and service and equipment providers so that the communications interests of consumers and citizens are protected and promoted



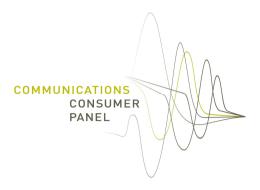
#### How the Consumer Panel reaches its views

- Qualitative research
- Quantitative research
- Analysis of complaints data
- Discussions with Ofcom
- Discussions with stakeholders



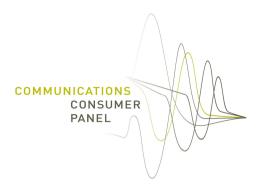
#### How the Consumer Panel influences Ofcom

- Discussions with Ofcom staff at Panel's monthly meetings
- Discussions with Ofcom staff at ad-hoc meetings
- Private advice notes before Ofcom publishes a consultation document
- Public submissions when Ofcom publishes a consultation document
- Design and promotion of a Consumer Interest Toolkit for use by Ofcom



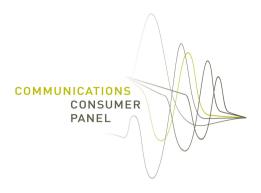
### How the Consumer Panel influences other organisations

- Meetings with Government Ministers and officials
- Submissions to Government reviews
- Publication of research
- Media releases
- Calls to action



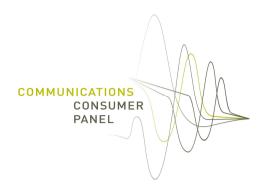
# Some issues on which the Consumer Panel has been active (1): Telecommunications

- Consumer protection issues such as mis-selling
- Consumer empowerment issues such as information provision
- Access to broadband
- Broadband speeds
- Next generation access



# Some issues on which the Consumer Panel has been active (2): Non- telecommunications

- Digital switchover especially help for the hard to reach
- Digital dividend review use of released spectrum
- Media literacy



### **Further information**

#### Ofcom web site:

http://www.ofcom.org.uk/ Communications Consumer Panel web site and blog: http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/

#### My web site and blog:

http://www.rogerdarlington.me.uk/

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rogerdarlington@dsl.pipex.com