

Consumer Forum for Communications

Background

The Consumer Forum for Communications (CFC) was set up in 1998 to promote dialogue between relevant public and private bodies. It aimed to identify issues of mutual concern in relation to the future shape of regulation and consumer representation in the communications sector, and to raise awareness of those concerns amongst the UK government, European Commission and communications industry. It was co-ordinated jointly by the Consumer Congress and Consumer Communications for England, and later by the National Consumer Council.

The National Consumer Council facilitated the CFC from 2000 to 2004, providing a secretariat, practical support, expertise and a chairperson. From 2004 to 2008 similar support was provided by the Communications Consumer Panel (originally the Ofcom Consumer Panel), and since 2008 it has been provided by Ofcom's Consumer Policy group.

The purpose of the CFC is to:

Promote dialogue and information sharing between consumer bodies (and other relevant organisations as appropriate) about issues of common concern relating to communications policy and developments at UK, European and international level.

The objectives of CFC are:

- To facilitate collaboration and information sharing between consumer bodies on communications issues
- To feed into Ofcom's policy priorities and thinking, both at workplan level and on relevant individual projects
- In pursuing the above objectives, to provide opportunities for members to make their own representations to government, regulators and industry
- To ensure that the views and needs of consumers in vulnerable circumstances are represented in debate about communications issues
- To keep under review the effectiveness of Ofcom's consumer engagement models and activities. (This would include Ofcom's consultation processes and its system of advisory structures.)

The CFC does not have any role in relation to the processing of individual customer complaints.

Membership of the Forum is open to consumer/citizen organisations with a specific interest in communications issues, and which do not have party political objectives. Unaffiliated individuals with expertise in the area may also join.

Membership (organisational and individual) is subject to the approval of the Chair, in conjunction with the Ofcom Director of Consumer Policy.

CFC does not seek to establish consensus on policy issues. However, members may form *ad hoc* alliances from time to time on specific issues, including submitting joint responses to consultations, or joint policy statements. Members are expected to aim to respond to consultations within their remit, and to circulate their responses.

CFC operates through quarterly general meetings held at Ofcom premises (with communications support provided by Ofcom for members with special needs), and between meetings through an online presence as well as email, phone and occasional special meetings.

Ofcom provides secretarial support to the Forum, and appoints an independent Chairperson chosen after consultation with members. The appointment is for two years (but can be renewed) and is paid.

Amended September 2014