

Press Release

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Consumers hold the key to increasing digital inclusion, Consumer Panel Chair tells conference.

‘Seeing things from the perspective of consumers is crucial if we are to provide the right help and support to get people online’, Anna Bradley, Consumer Panel Chair, will tell delegates today at a conference on using technology to tackle social exclusion.

Anna will present original research exploring the views and attitudes consumers take towards the internet, and the challenges faced by people getting online for the first time. The research clearly shows that ongoing help and support is crucial. Without it even the most confident learners can get stuck and become disengaged with the process.

“People need help and support to get online and get the most out of the internet, but just giving people the equipment or helping them learn to use it is not enough,” Anna says. “There is a gap at the purchase and set-up stage: consumers need help working out what equipment to buy and help setting equipment up when they get it home.”

She will challenge the audience to think about adopting the Panel’s Consumer Framework for Digital Participation: “If we don’t understand the issues from where consumers sit we’ll never be able to provide the right help and support to get them online,” she explains. “That’s why our framework is key - we have brought together all the different things people need to get online and get the most from the internet.”

She will also highlight the needs of disabled and older people, pointing out that a good starting point for the new government is to ensure that online public services and government websites adhere to the government’s own accessibility standards - something that does not always happen now.

Finally, the new Government has signalled its interest in putting public services online with the recent announcement that Martha Lane Fox will be the ‘UK Digital Champion’, tasked with advising Government, the wider public sector and industry on getting more people and more services online. The Panel welcomes the move, but Anna will emphasise the importance of recognising that some people, such as older consumers, are never going to go online. “We must ensure that suitable offline alternatives are put in place for this group,” she says.

Ends

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

The Communications Consumer Panel was established to advise Ofcom on the consumer interest in the markets it regulates. The Panel is independent and sets its own agenda. Visit www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk for more information.

The Panel's members appointed by Ofcom are:

- Anna Bradley (Chair)
- Fiona Ballantyne (member for Scotland)
- Louisa Bolch
- Kim Brook (member for Wales)
- Colin Browne
- Roger Darlington (member for England)
- Maureen Edmondson (member for Northern Ireland)
- Leen Petre
- Damian Tambini
- Bob Warner

For a copy of Anna Bradley's presentation to the Inside Government conference go to www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk

A copy of *The journey to digital participation* can be downloaded from our website at <http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/FINAL%20DP%20RESEARCH%20REPORT%202.pdf>