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The Consumer Panel to conduct major research into the consumer experience of the communications market

The Ofcom Consumer Panel – the independent body set up to advise Ofcom on consumer interests in the broadcasting and telecommunications sectors – has commissioned its first large-scale market research project into the current small business and consumer experience of the communications market. This will be an annual survey to test changing consumer concerns year on year.

The research will focus on the consumer experience of telecommunications (fixed and mobile), the internet (including broadband) and broadcasting - including digital switchover – and use of technology.

The results of this research will provide the Panel with evidence of real consumer concerns, specifically looking at:

- How well consumers are informed about the range of services available in the communications market now and in the future.
- Why consumers choose the products they do and the difficulties they face in making effective purchasing decisions.

Following a tendering exercise the Panel has commissioned innovative research involving a quantitative survey of 2,800 people to be conducted by Saville Rossiter-Base, and a qualitative research project by MORI. The latter will include researching in detail the very different consumers whose interests the Panel represents. MORI will be using qualitative techniques based on observation and 'peer' research to ensure that the Panel develops a real and detailed understanding of the consumer experience.

The Panel will use the insights revealed by the research to inform its work in a number of areas including advice on digital switchover and to Ofcom on its Strategic Review of Telecoms.

The research is due to be completed by November 2004 with publication of full results due in January 2005.

Colette Bowe, Chairman of the Consumer Panel, said: "The research will allow us to enter the consumer's world and provide us with evidence of how they experience the communications market in everyday life".

Ends

Notes for editors

1. The Consumer Panel is the independent advisory body set up under section 16 (2) of the Communications Act 2003 to advise Ofcom on the consumer interests in broadcasting and telecommunications.

2. The Panel's eleven members appointed by Ofcom are:

Colette Bowe, Chairman
Ruth Evans, Deputy Chairman
Azeem Azhar
Fiona Ballantyne
Nainish Bapna
Roger Darlington
Simon Gibson
Graham Mather
Kevin McLaughlin
Kate O'Rourke
Bob Twitchin

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