

## **Ofcom's independent Consumer Panel says consumers must come first in BT access decision**

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The Ofcom Consumer Panel today urged the communications regulator to create a clear set of performance indicators for BT in the wake of its access decision, stressing that consumers need to know what benefits they will see and in what timescale.

The Panel – the independent body set up to advise Ofcom on consumer interests - also warned that BT's competitors must make new investment in infrastructure and services to create more choice and innovation for customers.

Colette Bowe, Chairman of the Ofcom Consumer Panel commented:

“What we want is a set of measures by which the success of the network will be measured in terms of delivery to the consumer. We expect this to be rigorous and time specific. As consumers we all have the right to know what the benchmarks of success are in this process and – most importantly – what Ofcom will do if the approach doesn't work.

She continued:

“BT's competitors have been lobbying for this level playing field for a long time - now they must make the adequate investment to create new choices and better and cheaper products and services in the market place. This is the real test of whether Ofcom's actions will deliver for consumers.”

“Our research has shown that particular consumers are most likely to miss out on new technologies namely disabled people, older people, low-income households and even small businesses. Equality of access to the network needs to have tangible benefit for consumers, not put them at risk.”

In its advice to Ofcom, the Panel also argues that BT's new Equality of Access Board should include a champion of consumer choice and be overseen by an independent adjudicator.

This year the Ofcom Consumer Panel published the UK's largest piece of consumer research to date into what concerns UK consumers have in the communications market and what their understanding of it is. The research highlights much confusion amongst consumers about the benefits of new technologies and difficulty in comparing tariffs and services.

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