

Ofcom's independent Consumer Panel welcomes Select Committee's call for more grassroots support for Digital Switchover

29 March 2006

The Ofcom Consumer Panel today welcomed the Culture, Media and Sport Committee's (DCMS) recommendation that high priority and a grassroots action plan to help vulnerable people is needed in the delivery of digital switchover. Responding to the Committee's 'Analogue Switch-Off' report, the independent Consumer Panel reiterated the urgency with which the needs of socially isolated people should be addressed.

In a report to the Secretary of State over ten months ago, the Panel warned that vulnerable consumers who do not benefit from the support of friends, families or carers to help them, must be given practical support to enable them to participate in the digital switchover.

Colette Bowe, Chairman of the Ofcom Consumer Panel who gave evidence to the Select Committee enquiry commented:

"The reality is that many people rely on family and friends to help them choose and use complicated new TV equipment. In our report, we set out a model of practical support for socially isolated people to be delivered by local grassroots organisations. If the Government and Digital UK act on our recommendations, it will help to protect people who don't have access to help from going without television when the analogue signal is switched off.

She continued:

"We therefore wholeheartedly welcome the Select Committee's view that current plans for practical support for all citizens must be reviewed as a matter of urgency."

Ends

Notes for Editors and CSEs

The Ofcom 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.ofcomconsumerpanel.org.uk for more information about the Panel as well as a copy of the UK consumer research.

The Panel was asked by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in July 2004 to report on measures to protect the interests of the most vulnerable consumers during the switchover transition. It issued its report "Supporting the most vulnerable consumers through digital switchover" in November 2004. This included calling for a process to be developed by Digital UK, working with the voluntary sector and local government, to provide a practical support scheme.

The Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee will publish its report on its inquiry into Analogue Switch-Off on Wednesday 29 March 2006.

The Panel's members appointed by Ofcom are:

Colette Bowe, Chairman
Ruth Evans, Deputy Chairman

Azeem Azhar
Fiona Ballantyne
Roger Darlington
Simon Gibson
Graham Mather
Kevin McLaughlin
Kate O'Rourke
Bob Twitchin
Allan Williams