

Ofcom Consumer Panel asks ISP CEOs to address consumer concerns about advertised connection speeds and what they really get

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Internet service providers (ISPs) have been asked for their views about why consumers often do not get the advertised broadband connection speeds that they think they are buying. Colette Bowe, Chairman of the Ofcom Consumer Panel, the independent voice for the consumer and citizen interest in communications markets, has asked the top 6 UK ISP chief executives to come up with solutions that give customers clear information.

The decision to write to ISP chief executives follows increasing consumer concern about broadband speeds. The “up to” speeds advertised in broadband packages are often different from the actual, lower speeds experienced by many subscribers.

[In her letter](#), the Consumer Panel Chairman writes: “...we believe that broadband customers are not at the moment getting enough information. We are of course aware of the technical reasons for the “up to” terminology that you use. I would however like to have your views about how these technical issues might be better addressed in terms of giving clearer information to potential customers.”

Colette Bowe says that at the most basic level consumers need to be able to see what they are buying, what influences the performance of the product or services they are buying and how to do something about it if it doesn't live up to their expectations.

The Consumer Panel has asked ISPs to consider changing their sales practices to include:

- Advising customers what their likely connection speed would be to a specific line
- Extending the cooling off period so that customers can test out the connection speed before they sign a contract.
- Allowing customers to exit from contracts if consumers experience speeds and quality well below the advertised speeds, and whose problems persist rather than be resolved by a technical solution, to exit from the contract early and without penalty.

“We believe that broadband customers are not at the moment getting enough information,” says Colette Bowe.

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NOTES FOR EDITORS AND CSEs

The 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.

The Panel's members appointed by Ofcom are:

Colette Bowe, Chairman
Ruth Evans, Deputy Chairman
Fiona Ballantyne
Roger Darlington
Simon Gibson
Graham Mather

Kevin McLaughlin
Jeremy Mitchell
Kate O'Rourke
Bob Twitchin
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