

Press Release

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Consumer Panel calls on Ofcom to set up a video relay service for deaf and partially hearing consumers

The Consumer Panel has called on Ofcom to look at how to introduce a video relay service, and improve access to the existing text relay services for deaf, partially deaf or speech impaired people.

Panel Chair Anna Bradley said that Ofcom's initial research into users' views of existing text relay and other communications services "has highlighted two important things - some people are finding 'work-arounds' to meet their needs, while others are very clear about the improvements they need that could transform their lives. We now want Ofcom to implement changes to text relay and look at creating video relay, although we are conscious that the costs are substantial. These services will be particularly critical for some people, so we would like Ofcom to talk with consumers about how best to deliver the service in a way that ensures it reaches those who need it most".

Ends

CONTACTS

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NOTES TO 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)
- Colin Browne
- Roger Darlington (member for England)
- Maureen Edmondson (member for Northern Ireland)
- Bob Warner

Text Relay connects people using a textphone with people using a telephone or another textphone.

The Ofcom research found that the majority of consumers view text relay as unreliable with limited availability. In preference they use SMS or e-mail to contact friends because it is in real-time and would like to use these services to contact businesses. Nearly half of other EU member states provide text relay services, many are government-funded and provided free.