

Press Release

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Make it easier to use mobile phones - Consumer Panel calls on industry for better design and labelling

Simple changes to the design of mobile phones could make them significantly easier for all users, the Communications Consumer Panel concludes in research published today. The Panel is calling on manufacturers to improve design, and to work with operators, retailers and voluntary groups to develop an industry-wide labelling system so consumers can see at-a-glance if the handset will meet their needs.

“Our research shows that making it easier to use mobile phones will benefit everyone, including older and disabled people”, Communications Consumer Panel Chair Anna Bradley said. “We all like phones that are simple and intuitive to use. For many of us this is a nice-to-have, but for some older and disabled consumers a few simple improvements can make the difference between being able to use a mobile phone or not. Happily we all want many of the same things from phones, so we will all be winners if some simple steps are taken.”

The *Making mobiles easier to use* research found that increasing the ability for consumers to customise their phones could greatly improve usability for a wide range of users. It also highlighted the need for retailers to provide better staff training to help people choose the phone that meets their needs. Report findings showed that many older and disabled people feel intimidated when they buy phones.

Recommendations

Recommendations include:

- Manufacturers, operators, retailers and voluntary and third sector organisations should work together to design and promote mobile phones that meet the needs of different groups of older and disabled users. This could include the development of an industry-wide, consumer-facing labelling system that lets consumers know at a glance whether a handset is likely to meet their needs.
- Manufacturers should increase the facility to customise their phones and create pre-set profiles, with some of those most likely to be beneficial to older and disabled people available pre-loaded.
- Retailers should stock a wider range of phones, including a range of specialist models; provide sales and support staff with better information and training about the likely needs of older and disabled users and the phones and features available to meet those

needs; and pass that information on in ways that are geared to the needs of older and disabled people.

The research was carried out by the independent charity Ricability, which tests products for older people and people with disabilities.

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

Easier to use mobile phones is available on the Communications Consumer Panel website www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk