

Ofcom Media Literacy Bulletin

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Introduction

Season's Greetings and welcome to the eighth edition of Ofcom's quarterly media literacy bulletin.

The bulletin is your opportunity to keep up to date with the latest media literacy developments, whether from Ofcom or our stakeholders.

To achieve this we need your input, so if you want to promote a wider awareness of your media literacy events, proposed research or publications let us know and we will seek to highlight the work in future issues. We also have a dedicated media literacy section on the Ofcom website (http://www.ofcom.org.uk/advice/media_literacy/) where we are happy to link to relevant websites – again let us know if you are aware of useful resources. Please pass on details of the website and the bulletin to any colleagues who may be interested.

Please note that some of the items in this bulletin have been produced for us by stakeholders; whilst we want to keep you aware of relevant developments the views or opinions in those items are those of the authors and should not be attributed to Ofcom.

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News

Raising standards for internet filtering software

The Home Secretary today launched a new British Standard for domestic internet control software.

The Home Office and Ofcom - who are joint sponsors of this work - have developed a Standard with the British Standards Institute (BSI) against which products that help parents and carers manage their children's internet access can be tested and awarded a kitemark.

The Standard sets out the minimum performance requirements for access control systems designed to allow adult internet users to control children's access to inappropriate internet-based content and services. The Standard specifies requirements covering:

- ease of installation, configuration and use;
- effectiveness;
- minimum features;
- ease of updating;
- quality of instructions;
- consumer communications and support.

By using a kite-marked product or service, parents and carers will have greater confidence in the ability of the access control system to:

- prohibit access to internet-based content that is not suitable or desirable – for example adult (sexually explicit) content or material containing graphically violent images, videos and text;
- prohibit communications via internet-based services that are not suitable or desirable – for example instant messaging clients or peer to peer (P2P) sharing;
- prevent unauthorised users from changing or disabling the access control system;
- provide a default level of protection upon implementation with no user intervention (except install where required);
- remain up to date (within the terms of any licensing or subscription requirements).

In addition, the Standard seeks to ensure that parents and carers have confidence in the ability to obtain suitable system support should they encounter problems with installing, configuring, implementing, maintaining or using the access control system.

However no access control system can be effective 100% of the time and despite rigorous controls, there may still be occasions when inappropriate materials may be accessed. In such instances, information regarding the issues and strategies for protection are essential in helping children and young people become safe and discriminating users of internet-based content and services.

The Standard covers both those products installed locally (i.e. by a parent or carer on a home computer) and remotely managed products/services (i.e. those products or services offered by internet Service Providers).

The Home Office Taskforce and Ofcom will encourage providers to seek accreditation, encourage services to improve child protection and to encourage take-up of the software by parents.

It is anticipated the Kite-marked products will be fully available in the shops in spring.

Ofcom's Annual Plan Consultation

Ofcom published its Annual Plan Consultation on 12 December 2006. The Plan includes a section on communications capability and media literacy:

- **Promoting communications capability, including media literacy**

A new priority in 2007/8 will be to place a much greater emphasis on facilitating improved communications capability, particularly among vulnerable groups and for parents who want to protect their children. An important aspect of this is media literacy, which refers to the skills, knowledge and understanding people need in order to use media effectively, and is vital in enabling people to get the most out of communications services and protect themselves and their children from harmful content. The value of media literacy is explained more fully in figure 1 below.

Ofcom's main purpose in promoting media literacy is to help people become more informed and empowered, as both consumers and citizens. This will continue to be a crucial activity, with the aim of raising people's awareness of:

- how to use web browsers, electronic programme guides and other tools, in order to navigate safely and effectively;
- how to manage audio and visual content using:

information, such as content labelling and trust marks; and

tools, such as parental controls, internet filtering and firewalls; and

- how to improve people's understanding of:

editorial and commercial agendas;

the difference between reportage and advocacy; and

the context in which content is supplied.

During 2007/8 our work on media literacy will be divided into two areas.

- To maximise our impact, we will be reviewing how we engage with other organisations that have a role in facilitating media literacy, including government. In doing so, we will build on our working

relationships with key stakeholders, including the Broadband Stakeholder Group, the BBC, the Media Literacy Task Force and the Community Media Association.

- Underpinning our activities will be a substantial programme of research designed to understand how people relate to content and services. We will return to some of the questions we asked in our Media Literacy Audit (MLA) in order to monitor developments. We will also undertake specific qualitative research into the barriers to, and factors which enable, effective use and understanding of media, focusing on skills gaps identified by the MLA.

Media literacy

Media literacy refers to the skills, knowledge and understanding needed by people to use media effectively.

Media literate people will be able to exercise informed choices; understand the nature of content and services; be able to take advantage of the full range of opportunities offered by new communications technologies; and be better able to protect themselves and their families from harmful or offensive materials.

The closing date for responses to the Consultation is 20 February 2007.

The full document can be found at

http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/annual_plan2007/annual_plan200708/

AVMS Update

A year ago the European Commission tabled proposals for a new Audiovisual Media Services Directive, to replace the Television without Frontiers Directive, which regulates the cross-border provision of broadcasting services in Europe. The text is now being discussed by the European Council and the European Parliament. The Commission's proposals extend the scope of the Directive to cover, in addition to television broadcasting, also non-linear (i.e., on-demand) content. The Commission proposed to apply a minimum set of rules to all audiovisual media services, and to maintain a higher level of regulation for television broadcasting. It also proposed to introduce some flexibility as regards advertising restrictions.

On 13 November 2006 the Council agreed a "general approach" on a new text which clarified and narrowed the scope of the Commission's proposals. The Directive will now only be extended to cover services which are essentially like traditional TV (i.e., they consist principally of the provision of video programmes), but delivered on-demand. On the same day, the Culture Committee (which is leading the discussions in the European Parliament), published its report which was voted on at the European Parliament on 12 December 2006.

Broadly, the Council and the Parliament are in agreement on a number of issues, in particular as regards the need to narrow the scope of the proposals, to protect country of origin principle, and to emphasize the importance of self and co-regulation as a means of implementation. There is still a divergence of approaches on the

extent to which advertising rules should be liberalised. Importantly, there are references to media literacy for the first time in a European Directive. The Council text refers to media literacy levels as an important criterion to consider in any future revision of the Directive, while the Culture Committee report specifically requires that Member States promote the development of media literacy amongst consumers. These references should be welcome as they highlight the importance of media literacy as a key element of the regulatory ecology in the communications sector.

European Commission's media literacy consultation

To cultivate and improve media literacy in the digital age, the European Commission launched an EU-wide survey of best practices in October 2006, and will set out its findings and proposals in a Communication in 2007. The survey questionnaire seeks the public's views on media literacy in connection with digital technologies, and information about initiatives in commercial communications, film and the online world. The consultation, which supplements the current work of experts under the chairmanship of the European Commission, will be open until 15 December 2006.

The findings will guide discussions, notably within the media literacy expert group. They will lead to the adoption of a Commission Communication in the second part of 2007. The consultation is open to all parties including media organisations and industry, formal and non-formal education institutions, content-providers and producers, research and cultural institutions, regulators, and citizens' and consumers' associations.

Ofcom's response to the consultation will be available on the Ofcom website after the closing date of 15 December 2006.

Further information on the public consultation and the consultation document can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/comm/avpolicy/media_literacy/index_en.htm

New website for children to chart the safer route through premium rate

By Frank Fitzpatrick, External Affairs Manager, ICSTIS*

Children have more exposure to premium rate services in the media than ever before as this payment mechanism becomes increasingly popular and mainstream.

From voting for a favourite pop star, entering a competition or texting to order a ring tone, young consumers are tuned into new technology and, as Ofcom's survey shows¹, children also have more access: 65% of 8–15 year olds now own a mobile phone.

* Please note that opinions expressed in items written by third parties are those of the authors and should not be attributed to Ofcom.

¹ *Media Literacy Audit: Report on media literacy amongst children 2 May 2006*
http://www.ofcom.org.uk/advice/media_literacy/medlitpub/medlitpubrssi/children/

ICSTIS, the premium rate regulator launched, on 4 December 2006, a new website specifically designed to help children stay safe and savvy in the modern world - www.phonebrain.org.uk

The website reflects the needs and concerns of children, their parents and their teachers. The new site has been developed through in-depth research and workshops with young people to ensure that the site is on their wavelength and communicates messages clearly.

The new website is intended to be fun, interactive and relevant. It explains new technology, exposes potential problems and guides young users through modern issues that affect them and their friends.

Essential information will be presented in a variety of formats including fact boxes, real life stories, jargon busters and educational games.

For more information contact: Kate Belson at ICSTIS External Affairs on 0207 7940 7464.



New section of BBFC website

By Sue Clark, Head of Communications, British Board of Film Classification*

The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) is committed to improving media literacy and to that end will launch a new information website early next year designed specifically for parents. This will join the BBFC's other websites: Cbbfc, which is aimed at children aged 7 and above; Sbbfc, for students, teachers and anyone interested in film; and the BBFC's main website. Pbbfc will offer extended and more detailed consumer advice for all new films so parents know exactly what they can expect.

For example, it will tell them exactly what swearing or offensive language has been used, give examples of sex references or innuendo, and describe stronger moments (such as scenes when lead characters are in danger). By doing this parents will be able to make an informed choice about family viewing in the cinema and in the home.

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Initially the site will cover U, PG and 12A releases for cinema. It will also offer clear information about the content of video games and video/DVD releases with particular interest to parents.

In 2007 the website Cbbfc, which is aimed at children aged 7 and above, will also be re-launched. The re-launched site will feature more interactive and animated elements – such as a child friendly character to guide visitors round the site, and more opportunities for child users to contact the BBFC, submit reviews and pictures, enter competitions and play games.

The resources on the Sbbfc website (aimed at secondary school pupils and young people, particularly those studying media related subjects) will also be developed over the coming year. Not least to ensure it is easier than ever for teachers and students to join in with the Board's education programme which includes school and university visits, seminars, student interviews and INSET days. The site already includes case studies on famous films and classification decisions, time lines, student guides, news stories and features.

Community radio update

Community groups have been quick to pick up on the opportunities presented by the new licensing arrangements for community radio stations, which represent a new tier of local, not-for-profit, radio services in the UK.

At present there are 107 licensed community stations in the UK, with 36 already on air. Ofcom is now inviting applications for the second round of licensing for community radio on a region-by-region basis. Ofcom received 21 applications for the first region (South-west England and Southern and Mid-Wales). Applications are now being accepted for Scotland and Northern Ireland (closing date 16 Jan 2007).

Further details of Ofcom's community radio work can be found at www.ofcom.org.uk/radio/ifi/rbl/commun_radio/.

ThinkuKnow launched

The UK's dedicated organisation focused on tackling child sex abuse – the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre - launched in November an education campaign that will be going into schools, foster homes and other youth environments across the UK.

The programme – called ThinkuKnow – will focus on online safety and is the first campaign designed by a partnership of police, child protection specialists, industry and children. The site also introduces a dedicated online reporting mechanism. That means children can report any instances of inappropriate online contact at <http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/report/>

The programme – based on “have fun, stay in control, know how to report” - will be delivered in schools by over 1000 trained police officers, teachers and child protection teams. It will offer an interactive pack that will explore online experiences, look at issues such as social networking, gaming sites and more traditional chat rooms and offer vital “safety first” advice to children, young people and their parents.

The pack includes hard hitting education films, teachers' packs and online resources at www.thinkuknow.net. Training, which is free, can be requested at <http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/teachers/order.aspx>

Media Literacy Planning Events in the Nations

A series of planning events has been held in Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh and London to focus on addressing the key issues identified in Ofcom's Media Literacy Audit for television, radio, mobile and internet. The sessions, hosted by Ofcom and the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), the Scottish Adult Learning Partnership, The Educational Guidance Service for Adults (EGSA) and NIACE Dysgu Cymru attracted over 150 key stakeholders. The findings will be published early next year.

Associate Parliamentary Media Literacy Group (APMLG)

The APMLG met in October 2006 to discuss digital inclusion and older people. Representatives from Ofcom's Consumer Panel, Citizens Online and Help the Aged gave presentations to parliamentarians and members of the group. Presentations from the meeting are available on at www.apmlg.org.uk

In December the Group discussed the *Challenges for Regulating Content in a Converged Communications World*. The meeting explored regulatory responses, both at European and national level, to the challenges created by convergence and the implications of the draft Audiovisual Media Services Directive.

EU Media Literacy Expert Group

The third meeting of the EU Media Literacy Expert Group in Brussels included discussion of the current EU media literacy consultation. The Commission staff outlined the intention to issue a Communication with recommendation early next year.

Council of Europe conference

Ankara hosted a media literacy conference in November supported by the Council of Europe. Ofcom outlined its work to promote media literacy in the UK and showcased examples of how industry can deliver high quality activity in this area.

Insafe plus

Insafe plus held its first training meeting in Bruges in December 2006. Discussions included the Safer Internet programme, internet safety and education, media literacy and e-skills. Examples of best practice were showcased together with hands on sessions around 3G mobile phones, online communities and innovative portals.

ICM survey suggests online video erodes TV viewing time

A survey of 2070 people by ICM for the BBC found that 43% of Britons who watch video from the internet or on a mobile device at least once a week said they watched less normal TV as a result. Three quarters of users said they now watched more mobile and online content than they did a year ago.

In the survey, one in five people who watched online or mobile video at least once a week said they watched a lot less TV as a result. Another 23% said they watched a bit less, while just over half said their TV viewing was unchanged. 3% said viewing online video encouraged them to watch more TV.

However, only 9% of the population said that they watched online or mobile video regularly. 13% said they watched occasionally, while 10% said they expected to start watching in the next 12 months. But two-thirds of the population said they did not watch online and could not envisage starting in the next 12 months.

The survey found that online and mobile video is far more popular among the young, with 28% of those aged 16-24 saying they watched more than once each week. An average of 10% aged 25-44 were regular online and mobile video viewers, with that figure falling to just 4% of over-45s.

ICM interviewed a random sample of 1,008 adults aged 18+ recruited from the ICM online panel between 17-19 November. They also interviewed a random sample of 1,062 people aged 16+ by telephone.

Sumo TV launches user-generated content channel

Sumo TV, available on Sky Channel 146, will show clips from the website of the same name. Every time a clip is broadcast, the originator of the content will receive a percentage of the revenues generated.

Clips that are popular online may end up also being broadcast. All content will be monitored by Cellcast, the company behind the channel.

Viewers can also take part in live TV shows, via text messaging, webcams, video messaging and 3G streaming.

4oD launched 6 December

Previously available only to cable customers, 4oD (Channel 4's on demand service) is now available to download via the internet. The new service offers 500 hours of archive material as well as a 30-day catch up service.

<http://www.channel4.com/4od/>

BT Vision

Earlier this month BT launched its new BT Vision service which will allow BT's broadband customers to watch existing Freeview channels, as well as films, music, sports and entertainment programmes on demand. BT will not charge a traditional subscription fee for the service, but there are monthly charges for access to the various catch-up TV, music and classic TV channels offered over the platform.

Starting next year there will also be access to a new sports channel. This will be launched in conjunction with Setanta, the Irish satellite broadcaster. BT Vision customers need to buy a V-Box, which incorporates a digital TV receiver and can record up to 80 hours of TV.

All paid-for content will be delivered to customers' TV sets via the internet.

<http://www.btvision.bt.com/>

Open University launches OpenLearn

The Open University has launched a new website – OpenLearn – which will make educational resources freely available on the internet, with state-of-the-art learning support and collaboration tools to connect learners and educators. The site covers a range of subjects from arts and history to science and nature, at all study levels from access to postgraduate. Available to learners and educators throughout the UK and worldwide, the project will be of particular significance in the Open University's efforts to widen access to hard-to-reach groups and tackle educational disadvantage both within the developed and developing worlds.

<http://openlearn.open.ac.uk/>

Publications

The Community Radio Sector: Looking to the Future

Department for Culture, Media and Sport – November 2006

The DCMS has recently published research into the social and economic impacts of community radio. The study looked at 13 stations, some of which target special interest groups. It found that the stations have delivered important social gains across a range of issues, but particularly in respect of volunteering, work placement and training opportunities. The stations have also given local communities a voice, thereby promoting active citizenship. The report argues that the sector offers a huge potential for helping to deliver messages from the centre at the very local level.

DCMS is currently providing a Community Radio Fund (CRF), which allows up to £500,000 per annum to be allocated to the radio stations and this funding is in place until the financial year 2007/08. In order to assist DCMS Ministers with their thinking

on Departmental spending priorities, it was decided to undertake a study to gather available evidence on the impact of the community radio sector.

Linguistic diversity has been embraced by several of the stations and specific programming and support systems for those without English as a first language have been put in place. Collaborative working with schools, colleges of further and higher education, local authorities and businesses represents an important part of the sector's activities. Some stations have been able to use these relationships to lever in funds to support their work, while others are still exploring the boundaries.

All the stations recognise the part they can play in helping to foster social inclusion and active citizenship.

The report can be found at
www.culture.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/6B1BDF61-7BBA-4897-B370-C73946436F88/0/communityradioreport.pdf

The Community Media Association is the UK representative body for the Community Media sector and is committed to promoting access to the media for people and communities. It aims to enable people to establish and develop community based communications media for empowerment, cultural expression, information and entertainment.

Further information on the Community Media Association can be found at
<http://www.commedia.org.uk/>

New restrictions on the television advertising of food and drink products to children

On 17 November 2006 Ofcom published details of significant restrictions intended to limit children's exposure to television advertising of food and drink products high in fat, salt and sugar. The report follows extensive public consultation and a detailed programme of audience and focus group research, economic analysis and peer review of available scientific evidence.

Ofcom has published the following measures:

Restrictions

- Ofcom has decided that one of its regulatory objectives is to reduce significantly the exposure of children under 16 to the advertising of food and drink products that are high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS).
- Ofcom will seek to achieve this by the most targeted and proportionate means possible, balancing this objective against its statutory duties to secure television programmes of high quality and wide appeal.
- Ofcom has also decided that restrictions targeting the advertising of HFSS products will use the current Nutrient Profiling scheme developed by the Food Standards Agency.
- On the balance of the evidence, Ofcom believes that the best way to achieve its objectives would be a total ban on HFSS food and drink advertisements in

and around all programmes of particular appeal to children under the age of 16, broadcast at any time of day or night on any channel.

- This would include a total ban in and around all children's programming and on dedicated children's channels as well as in youth-oriented and adult programmes which attract a significantly higher than average proportion of viewers under the age of 16.
- As a result of Ofcom's decision to target regulation to ensure the protection of the under-16s – as opposed to the under-9s, as first proposed – there will be a short and focused consultation to seek views on extending restrictions to protect these older children. This will close before Christmas with the final determination in January 2007.
- In addition to general content rules requiring responsible advertising to all children at all times, Ofcom has also put forward new rules on the content of advertisements targeted at primary school children. These rules would ban the use of celebrities and characters licensed from third-parties (such as cartoons), promotional claims (such as free gifts) and health or nutrition claims.
- All restrictions on product advertising will apply equally to product sponsorship.
- The restrictions would apply to all broadcasters licensed by Ofcom and based in the UK, including international broadcasters transmitting from the UK to audiences overseas.

Effectiveness and Revenue Impact

- Under this package of measures, in households where children's viewing includes a large number of programmes targeted at adults as well as programmes for children and young people, children under 16 would see 41% fewer HFSS food and drink advertisements. For under-9s the reduction would be 51%.
- There would be greater reductions in digital television households where children's programmes, dedicated children's channels and programmes of particular appeal to under-16s make up a growing share of viewing by the young.

Ofcom has estimated that the impact on total broadcast revenues would be up to £39m per year, falling to around £23m as broadcasters mitigate revenue loss over time. The commercial public service broadcasters (ITV plc, GMTV, Channel 4, and five) could lose up to 0.7% of their total revenues. Children's and youth-oriented cable and satellite channels could lose up to 8.8% of their total revenues; up to 15% of total revenues in the case of dedicated children's channels.

The statement and further consultation can be found at:

http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/foodads_new/

Get Safe Online's second Annual report

Get Safe Online, the UK's first national internet security awareness campaign, is now in its second year. It is a joint initiative between Government, the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) and BT, eBay.co.uk, HSBC, Microsoft and SecureTrading. The campaign continues to raise awareness and to help educate the general public and small businesses about the dangers of e-crime and how to use the internet safely and securely, primarily through the campaign website www.getsafeonline.org

According to Get Safe Online's latest research, 52% of internet users do their banking online, nearly a third (32%) pay their utility bills online and almost a quarter (23%) buy their groceries online. More than half the UK's internet population is regularly using community and social networking sites, and increasing numbers of people are choosing to date online and to blog. Get Safe Online's latest research reveals people are more afraid of internet crime than 'physical' crimes such as burglary, being mugged and having their car stolen.

While this year's Get Safe Online research proves that in the last twelve months people have generally become more 'safety savvy' when online, a knowledge gap still exists. Seventy two per cent of respondents said they could use further information about online safety, compared to 78% of respondents last year. 40% are still not sure where to go for this advice, compared to 48% last year. Encouragingly, more people are taking the precautions necessary to protect their PC. Eighty three per cent of internet users have virus protection (compared to 80% last year) and 78% have a firewall (75% last year). However, many people are still making internet safety mistakes. One fifth of respondents hadn't updated their virus protection in the last month and 23% had opened an e-mail attachment from an unknown source.

Many people are also leaving themselves vulnerable to internet hackers, by not taking enough care to create secure passwords. Fifty one per cent of respondents use the same password for more than one website and one in six (17%) use personal information about themselves in passwords, leaving them vulnerable to computer hackers. Among respondents that hadn't taken basic security precautions, the main reasons were lack of knowledge about the safety measures necessary to take (14%), concerns about the cost of security systems (12%) and general lack of time to install them (11%).

The full report can be found at:

http://www.getsafeonline.org/media/GSO_Cyber_Report_2006.pdf

Communications Market: Digital Television Progress Report for the second quarter of 2006 (April-June)

Ofcom's report shows that by the end of June 2006 70.2% of UK television households (17.7 million) were watching digital television on at least one set in the home - up from 69.7% at the end March this year.

The report also reveals that the large majority of digital television receivers are now being bought for use on additional television sets within the home to complement digital viewing on the household's primary television. The number of secondary television sets (for example, those used in a spare room or a child's bedroom) viewed using digital receivers has more than doubled in the year to June 2006, from just under 3.5m to over 7m.

In total, more than 40% of television sets in the UK are either connected to a digital set-top-box or have an integrated digital tuner demonstrating that a substantial number of households are now going fully digital.

The full report can be found at:

http://www.ofcom.org.uk/research/tv/reports/dtv/dtu_2006_q2/

International Communications Market Report

The publication analyses trends in the £840bn annual turnover global television, radio, telecommunications and wireless communications industries. It also compares UK data, consumer attitudes and industry performance against that of China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the United States.

The Communications Market 2006 International report is available online at:
<http://www.ofcom.org.uk/research/cm/icmr06/>

Media Literacy identified as priority in Ofcom's Disability Equality Scheme

Under the Communications Act 2003, Ofcom has specific responsibilities for the promotion of disability equality. Under Section 3 (4i) of the Act, in the performance of its duties, Ofcom must have regard to the needs of persons with disabilities, of the elderly and of those on low incomes. It also has responsibilities under Employment and training (Sections 27 and 337 of the Act) and Fair access to services (Sections 303, 308 and 309 of the Act).

Ofcom has published its first Disability Equality Scheme (DES). The main aim of the first DES is to ensure that disability equality is not reliant on the commitment of a few individuals but instead is fully integrated as part of Ofcom's normal daily business. It is founded on best practice principles and has been shaped with the involvement of disabled people from across the UK. The DES sets out what Ofcom has done so far and the next steps to ensure that Ofcom plays its role in promoting equality of opportunity and access for disabled people.

Ofcom identified seven priorities that it should concentrate on over the next three years to help promote disability equality. These were:

- Access
- Media literacy
- Content and standards
- Information services and complaints
- Participation and consultation
- Employment and training
- Procurement

The priorities identified during the involvement process are aligned to Ofcom's aims and activities identified in its Annual Plan to ensure that actions to address disability equality are part of our daily activities. These actions include:

- Clarifying the way in which we serve disabled citizens.
- Ensuring broadcasters meet their obligations with respect to subtitling, signing and audio description.
- Promoting media literacy through dialogue with disabled stakeholders, particularly those with learning disabilities
- Effectively implementing content regulation rules to ensure that the portrayal of disabled people on radio and television is balanced and not offensive.

- Embedding disability equality in our approach to impact assessments in order to improve our policy decisions.
- Seeking to recruit more disabled people to Ofcom's decision making boards.
- Being more creative and pro-active in recruiting and developing disabled colleagues.
- Seeking to ensure that the companies we buy our goods and services from have equal opportunities policies that include disability equality.

The full document is available at:

<http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/des/statement/desstatement.pdf>

The consumer experience of telecoms, internet and broadcasting services

This report evaluates the experience of UK consumers in telecoms, broadcasting and internet markets. Published alongside it is a policy evaluation document which uses the data to assess the impact of Ofcom's regulation and the priorities it has set itself.

The research, entitled 'The Consumer Experience', highlights many benefits from increased competition and new technologies, such as falling prices, increased customer satisfaction and a greater range of services. However, it also reveals concerns over the growing potential for consumer harm as communications markets become more complex.

The report notes that consumers enjoy more choice than ever before, with:

- 122 fixed-line providers and five mobile networks;
- 700 internet service providers;
- 354 television channels, of which 40 are broadcast on digital terrestrial television; and
- 337 analogue radio stations, of which 166 are simulcast on digital radio with a further fifty exclusively broadcast via DAB.

As digital communications services become increasingly important in allowing people to participate in the social and economic life of the UK, the report states that it is important that all citizens have access to, and are able to use, these services. For example, the research shows access to the internet is lowest among the elderly and low-income families and that disabled people have expressed difficulty in using some services.

Among the research's main findings:

- 70.2% of UK television households (17.7 million) are watching digital television on at least one set in the home.
- 26% of UK households have now bought digital terrestrial television receivers, more than twice as many as in any other country;
- there has been a 55% growth in internet users that have taken up broadband in the last 18 months;
- only 25% of low income earners have internet access at home, compared with 88% of high earners;

- many people (24%) have difficulty using mobile phones, especially the disabled (40%).

The policy evaluation document highlights the main concerns identified in the research and explains recent regulatory initiatives Ofcom has already undertaken to respond to each. However, the document also unveils new policy initiatives to deal with some of the issues raised. These include:

- a new project on digital inclusion which will examine issues associated with ensuring that all citizens are able to benefit from new services, regardless of their geographic location or social and economic profile.

The full report can be found at:

<http://www.ofcom.org.uk/research/tce/>

International perspectives on communications

Ofcom has published a series of essays by academics, politicians and regulators that examine the effect of convergence on the global communications sector. It was launched at Ofcom's 2006 international conference which took place in London in November 2006. Video footage of the conference has been posted on YouTube and can be found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_LXncBTwZ8

Both book and conference examined the impact of changes in technology, media consumption and the market and assess the implications for regulation in the future. The essays identify a number of trends which, it is argued, will render obsolete many established policy and regulatory frameworks and create new challenges for those responsible for protecting, and delivering benefits to, consumers.

The book can be bought at The Stationary Office for £25 and is also available for download

<http://www.ofcom.org.uk/research/commsdecade/comms10full.pdf>

Events

Safer Internet Day: 6 February 2007



<http://www.saferinternet.org/ww/en/pub/insafe/news/events/sid2007.htm>

Adult Learners' Week: 19 – 25 May 2007



The first Adult Learners' Week was held in 1992. It was born of an alliance between broadcasters with a commitment to the broad education of the population, practitioners, funders and, above all, learners. There has been substantial growth in participation over the fifteen years, fuelled in part by current learners acting as ambassadors encouraging others to take part. Media Literacy will be a key theme of the 2007 campaign, as it has been for the last two years.

<http://www.niace.org.uk/ALw/2007/Default.htm>

Silver Surfer Day

Silver Surfer Day is organised by Digital Unite. Next year's event will take place on 25 May 2007. The day's events will be announced shortly.

Promote your activity

We want to keep our stakeholders informed about developments in media literacy. Do let us know if you are running an event, undertaking research or have published recently on any aspect of media literacy. We can put information up on our website or in our bulletin. Also let us know if you have colleagues who may be interested in receiving our bulletin.

If you have any other suggestions for this bulletin contact media.literacy@ofcom.org.uk

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