

Update on Ofcom's information gathering processes

In June 2020 we launched the [Information Registry](#), a new Ofcom team dedicated to co-ordinating and managing information requests across the organisation. This update summarises the Registry's work in the six months since its launch and sets out its priorities for the year ahead in order to effectively support the activities set out in Ofcom's [Annual Plan of Work 2021/22](#), published for consultation today.

Background

As an evidence-based regulator, the collection of accurate, complete and timely information from regulated companies is vital for Ofcom's work. But while providing information to Ofcom is a necessary part of operating in the communications sector, we are very conscious of the resource implications these requests can have on companies - particularly in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

We are therefore taking steps to make sure our information gathering work is as efficient as possible and to minimise the impact on businesses.

To this end, in June 2020 Ofcom launched the Information Registry to improve the way we collect and manage information from companies involved in our consumer and competition work. This offers an end-to end process for issuing information requests and collating responses. The Registry is overseen by Ofcom's Director of Enforcement, Gaucho Rasmussen.

The Registry was established as a direct response to stakeholder feedback and was developed with stakeholders' input. We continue to work closely with our stakeholders and see ongoing and constructive feedback as crucial to ensure we manage our information gathering processes effectively.

Work to date

Since launching the Registry, we have received positive feedback from across our stakeholders about the benefits offered by the new team. This includes the creation of a single point of contact to deal with all information request matters, improved visibility of the timing for upcoming information requests and a more consistent approach to process and procedures.

During its first six months of operation the Registry has:

- developed systems to manage formal information requests through a centralised team;
- met regularly with companies in our sectors to improve the visibility for upcoming information requests and to seek feedback on the work of the Registry;
- where possible, issued information requests in draft form to aid visibility as well as provide an opportunity to comment on deadlines and the content of the requests;
- supported key projects across Ofcom's Plan of Work, co-ordinating over 450 information request notices, involving around 150 different stakeholders; and
- expanded its support across a number of Ofcom's regulated sectors.

Throughout the year we have been very conscious of the impact on stakeholders of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, we have sought to balance timely delivery of Ofcom's 2020/21 Plan of Work against the challenges faced by stakeholders at this time, taking a pragmatic approach to managing requests (such as accommodating difficulties in responding to deadlines) and working with project teams to smooth out significant peaks in information gathering where possible.

The year ahead

Now that the architecture for managing information requests has been established, there is a clear opportunity for the Registry to further support stakeholders by taking a more proactive and forward-looking role in coordinating Ofcom's information gathering activities. This will include exploring how we can work with stakeholders to ensure we get the information and data we have requested, within the required deadlines, as well as seeking to engage smaller stakeholders (who may not receive regular requests) to emphasise the importance of compliance.

We have carefully considered feedback on our activities to date and have taken this into account in developing the following priorities for the Registry over the next 6 to 12 months.

Registry workplan 2020/21

In the next six to 12 months, we will:

- continue to develop plans to increase the transparency of upcoming requests, for example, by publishing a high-level outline of information gathering activities for 2021/22;
- work with the Annual Plan of Work team and individual project teams to proactively identify and manage potential peaks of activity, including taking account of significant informal information requests;
- continuously seek feedback from our stakeholders to understand how we can continue to improve our information gathering processes, including increasing the consistency of information required;
- update Ofcom's policy on information gathering, following our previous consultation on the revised policy, taking into account feedback on the Registry;
- engage with smaller stakeholders, by developing a cross-industry advocacy programme to emphasise the importance of compliance with statutory information requests; and
- publish a quarterly update of the Registry's work and the forward-looking workplan.

Regular, timely and constructive feedback from our stakeholders is vital to secure the success of the Registry, and we look forward to working closely with stakeholders in all our regulated sectors to ensure the new team can increase the efficiency of our information gathering activities and effectively support our stakeholders.

You can contact the Information Registry by email on: information.registry@ofcom.org.uk

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