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# Ofcom's Plan of Work 2020/21

July 2020 update on outputs and milestones

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[Ofcom's Plan of Work 2020/21 update](#) – Welsh overview

# 1. Overview

## **July 2020 update on outputs and milestones**

When we issued our 2020/21 Plan of Work, recognising the evolving situation with the ongoing coronavirus pandemic we committed to publishing quarterly updates to our plan. This paper serves as an update to the activities and milestones in our 2020/2021 work programme.

We have undertaken a review of the milestone outputs detailed in our work programme to ascertain any timing changes since publication and provide an updated table of our project work.

As we progress through the year, we will continue to monitor our work programme and will publish a refreshed 2020/21 Plan of Work in September.

This will provide us with an opportunity to reassess our work programme against the ongoing impacts of coronavirus on both Ofcom and the companies we regulate. We expect to provide updates on timelines and identify emerging risks that could challenge our ability to deliver and how we may mitigate these issues.

We remain broadly on track to delivering our work programme for 2020/21. However, we have amended timings on some projects and have added more detail to others. The changes that have been made are:

- 5 projects have been deferred by a quarter;
- 4 projects have set out additional detail;
- 1 project was clarified adding a milestone date; and
- 1 project was put on hold.

A full list of our programme of work can be found in Annex 1, with changes to project milestones highlighted.

## A1. Update of project work 2020/21

Project Details	Milestones
<p><b>Broadband Universal Service Obligation (USO).</b> The broadband universal service obligation has now launched. Ofcom has designated two universal service providers (USPs) to deliver the service; established the obligations that USPs must meet to deliver the scheme in accordance with the legislation; and made proposals to determine how the costs incurred by a USP may be compensated. Consumers have been able to request the service since March 2020. We are also continuing our work more generally to improve access to broadband services in the hardest to reach and most remote locations and to understand how people’s future needs for connectivity will evolve in future.</p>	<p>Statement on funding regs published in Q1. No further milestones planned</p>
<p><b>Wholesale Fixed Telecoms Market Review.</b> We published our main consultation on our proposals for fixed telecoms services in early 2020 and intend to publish our final statement in Q4 2020/21. This will cover wholesale voice/broadband connections and wholesale leased lines. We are seeking to establish a regulatory framework designed to promote network competition where this is feasible, ultrafast network coverage and enable the smooth replacement of the legacy copper network with fibre services. Any remedies will come into effect from Q1 2021/22.</p>	<p>Statement Q4 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Wholesale Calls and Interconnection.</b> We will undertake the next round of market reviews for fixed, mobile and 070 call termination and fixed call origination. As part of this review we will be considering what is necessary to assist the transition from traditional PSTN (public switched telephone network) services to IP-based voice services including arrangements for Interconnection. We will consult on formal proposals in Q2 2020/21. Any changes to regulation are likely to come into effect from Q1 2021/22.</p>	<p>Consultation Q2 2020/21 Statement Q4 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Telecoms regulation in the Hull Area.</b> We will consult on our proposals for fixed telecoms services in the Hull Area in Q2 2020/21 and intend to publish our final statement in Q4 2020/21. This will cover all wholesale voice/broadband and leased-line markets. Any remedies will come into effect from Q1 2021/22.</p>	<p>Statement Q4 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Award spectrum bands as they are cleared and released.</b> We are considering responses to our further consultation on technical matters and intend to publish a final position in Q2. Alongside this, we are working through operational impacts of Covid-19, with a view to restoring readiness to award licences in the 700 MHz and 3.6-3.8 GHz spectrum bands by auction, and aim to ensure any external action which might delay the auction, including through legal challenges, are dealt with as quickly as possible.</p>	<p>Auction TBC</p>
<p><b>700 MHz clearance programme.</b> We will continue to work to clear digital television services from the 700 MHz band in order to release this spectrum for mobile data. We will continue to administer a grant scheme to fund incremental costs that broadcasters incur as a result of the infrastructure changes associated with 700 MHz clearance. Decision taken to postpone final two 700 MHz clearance events scheduled</p>	<p>Update on 700 MHz clearance Sep-20 Final update on 700 MHz clearance Dec-20</p>

for April '20. The programme is paused until the COVID-19 risk subsides. We are working with programme stakeholders to determine an achievable timescale for delivering clearance of the 700 MHz band.	
<b>Enabling additional spectrum for mobile including 5G services.</b> We will engage internationally at both European and global level to ensure that technical conditions for the priority spectrum bands are appropriate for mobile, including 5G services. We will work to understand future mobile spectrum demand. We will progress our work to open access to more spectrum for radio local access networks (RLAN) including WIFI. We will continue to engage with industry to support the expanding role of wireless innovation across different sectors.	Statement on RLAN Q2 2020/21
<b>Improve mobile coverage.</b> We will continue to support the UK Government and the mobile operators in the delivery of the Shared Rural Network, as well as playing our role in holding operators to account on their licence obligations. As part of this we will continue to report publicly on mobile operators' progress in improving coverage. We are taking action to enable spectrum-based solutions that could be used to improve coverage both indoors and in rural communities. This will include licence exemption for mobile phone repeaters, where we will bring forward proposals to extend them to more frequency bands, include other technologies (e.g. 5G) and remove unnecessary restrictions. We will also take a look at options for making multi-operator femto cells licence exempt. Both of these actions will help consumers who are currently suffering from poor mobile phone coverage in their own homes to improve mobile reception for themselves, without the need for operator intervention. We will continue to explore options to improve coverage in buildings, in cars and on trains.	Consultation (mobile phone repeaters) Q3 2020/21
<b>Spectrum sharing.</b> We will look at implementing an automated authorisation approach for access to the shared bands to ensure that the shared spectrum is used effectively and efficiently.	Ongoing
<b>Home Broadband performance measurement.</b> We will publish data on the performance delivered by different services and how they vary by a number of factors including technology, service provider, package, geography and time of day. We will analyse crowd-sourced data to examine how mobile network performance varies by a range of factors including technology, mobile network operator, geography and time of day.	Home broadband performance report - complete Mobile broadband performance report - Q3 2020/21
<b>Spectrum management strategy.</b> We will review and update our spectrum management strategy and set out a plan for implementing changes.	Spectrum strategy consultation Q3 2020/21 Statement Q1 2021/22
<b>Supporting innovation in the 100-200 GHz range.</b> We will publish a statement on supporting innovation in this spectrum range.	Statement Q2 2020/21
<b>Future regulatory financial reporting.</b> We will publish our final decisions in relation to BT's financial reporting obligations arising from the Wholesale Fixed Telecoms Market Review.	Statement Q4 2020/21

<p><b>Ex-post evaluation.</b> We will publish an in-depth evaluation of the impact of our quality of service obligations on Openreach’s service level performance. In future, we plan to publish at least one in-depth evaluation of our previous policies annually.</p>	<p>In May we published an in-depth evaluation of the impact of our quality of service obligations on Openreach’s service level performance. In future, we plan to publish at least one in-depth evaluation of our previous policies annually.</p>
<p><b>Coronavirus response to protect vulnerable customers.</b> We will proactively monitor and intervene where necessary to protect consumers during this crisis, with particular focus on protecting those who are vulnerable.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Fairness for Customers commitments.</b> We will continue to monitor companies’ performance against these commitments. We will also publish a progress report, reviewing whether companies are delivering what they have promised. This is alongside our regular reporting on customer complaints and satisfaction.</p>	<p>Report Q4 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Broadband differential pricing practices.</b> We are continuing our work to ensure more broadband customers are on fair deals. We will monitor customer outcomes following the implementation of voluntary pricing commitments from industry.</p>	<p>Publication Q2 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Affordability of broadband services.</b> We will continue to monitor where households have difficulty paying for communications services, in particular in relation to broadband and consider if any measures are needed to support consumers who are financially vulnerable. If we identify a potential need for a targeted tariff to protect those in low income homes, we would work with the Government to consider how such a tariff might be implemented.</p>	<p>Publication Q3 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Consumer information on gigabit-capable / ultrafast broadband.</b> People and businesses need the right information to make informed decisions about the broadband services best for them. We will consider the benefits of more information about the characteristics and capabilities of gigabit-capable / ultrafast fixed and mobile broadband technologies and how it should be communicated.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Monitoring the impact of end-of-contract and annual best tariff notifications.</b> From February 2020, broadband, mobile, landline and pay-TV companies are required to tell customers when their contracts are coming to an end and show them the best deals they have available. Out-of-contract customers will also have to be sent reminders and shown the best deals every year. We expect these notifications to have a significant positive impact in helping customers engage with the market and take advantage of the wide choice of offers available. We will be reviewing how providers have implemented these notifications, their impact on customer behaviour and whether consideration of other remedies, such as collective switching, may be appropriate.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

<p><b>Participation and vulnerability.</b> We work to support the needs and interests of those who are disabled, elderly, on low incomes or living in rural areas, as well as those whose circumstances appear to put them in need of special protection. We will finalise our guide to treating vulnerable consumers fairly and contribute to joint policy work with the UK Regulators Network to improve outcomes for vulnerable consumers.</p>	<p>Publication Q2 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Open communications.</b> We are developing proposals for an open communications initiative. This would enable people and small businesses to share data about their use of telecoms (such as their current tariff or data usage) with third parties to help them navigate the market and get a better deal.</p>	<p>Consultation on Open Communications Q2 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Personalised pricing.</b> We will publish a discussion document on personalised pricing, including the use of data and algorithms that support these practices.</p>	<p>Discussion document Q2 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Price comparison service accreditation scheme.</b> We will conclude our review of our accreditation scheme for price comparison websites to make sure it continues to work for consumers in the modern market, and to ensure alignment with the objectives of the European Electronic Communications Code.</p>	<p>Q3 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Reporting on pricing trends.</b> We will report on pricing trends in fixed, mobile and pay-TV services. This will include a review of the prices available to consumers buying different types of services and a summary of what, on average, consumers are paying. It will also look at tariff structures and how 'discounted' prices vary from standard or 'list' prices, as well as the difference between in-contract and out-of-contract prices.</p>	<p>Publication Q1 2021/22</p>
<p><b>Review of the General Conditions and Universal Service Conditions to implement the European Electronic Communications Code.</b> We will confirm our plans for implementing the end-user rights section of the European Electronic Communications Code, within the context of our broader Fairness for Customers work programme. We have set out a number of proposed changes to our regulatory rules, including new rules on switching and porting, handset locking, accessibility for disabled customers and contract information. We also expect to begin a review of legacy universal service obligations which needs to be completed by the end of Q3 2021/22.</p>	<p>EECC further consultation Q2 2020/21  EECC statement - Q3 2020/21  Switching process consultation - Q3 2020/21  Switching process statement - Q4 2020/21  Consultation on legacy USO services -Q4 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Improving consumer information on fixed and mobile coverage and performance.</b> We continue to provide consumers with accurate and comparable information on fixed and mobile networks via our online checker. We are exploring the options to improve how these consumer-facing tools work, so they remain relevant and accessible. We will continue to review the information that we make available to consumers and take action to improve our metrics.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Migration to voice-over-IP services.</b> We will work with communications providers to help make sure issues raised by their migration to voice-over-IP services, including the potential future switch-off of the PSTN, are identified and addressed with the aim of protecting consumers from harm and minimising disruption.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

<p><b>Fairer mobile handset pricing.</b> We are continuing our work to ensure fairer, more transparent prices for customers buying mobile handset contracts. In July 2019, alongside our findings on bundled mobile handset contracts, we also consulted on proposed changes to contract durations when handsets are sold with a link to a mobile airtime contract (known as linked split contracts). We will conclude on our proposals as part of the Review of the General Conditions and Universal Service Conditions to implement the European Electronic Communications Code.</p>	<p>Statement Q3 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Standalone landline services.</b> BT implemented price reductions for its customers buying landline services in a standalone contract in April 2018. Its commitments expire in Q4 2020/21 and we will consider what appropriate protections are necessary in the future to ensure that these customers receive value for money for the landline services they buy.</p>	<p>Document to be published Q3/Q4 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Future of numbering policy review.</b> We will continue our strategic review of the telephone numbering plan to make sure it provides what consumers understand, want and need from numbers for the coming decade. In particular, we will be considering the future of area codes, 084/087 numbers and we will continue our programme to address anomalies in the use of and charges for calls to 07 numbers. We will carry out this work alongside our review of the charges for non-geographic numbers.</p>	<p>Consultation on geographic numbering Q2 2020/21. Other elements of review ongoing</p>
<p><b>Public service broadcasting programme: Small Screen Big Debate.</b> We will consider the role of public service broadcasting in a fast-changing media landscape, and impacted by the coronavirus pandemic, by facilitating the ‘Small Screen: Big Debate’ with industry, the UK and devolved governments, Parliament, viewers and listeners.</p>	<p>Consultation Q3 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Ofcom’s annual report on the BBC.</b> We will set out how we have carried out our duties and assess the BBC’s compliance with the specified requirements in the Operating Framework and Operating Licence. We will also publish a report measuring the BBC’s performance in meeting its mission and public purposes across its public services.</p>	<p>Report Q3 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Material changes to the BBC public service activities.</b> We will continue to monitor the BBC public service activities to ensure any material changes have appropriate regulatory scrutiny if required.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Monitoring the BBC’s commercial activities.</b> The BBC’s commercial activities are required to earn a commercial rate of return over an appropriate period to ensure that public money is not used to finance loss-making commercial activities. We require the BBC to report on the financial performance and target rates of return for each of its commercial subsidiaries and each line of business within its commercial subsidiaries. We will also continue to monitor the BBC’s compliance with our requirements in relation to operational separation and transfer pricing.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p><b>BBC Studios review.</b> We are reviewing the evolution of BBC Studios, including how it has implemented our trading and separation requirements. We will publish the findings of our review by the end of 2020/21.</p>	<p>Report Q4 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Responding to Channel 4 Corporation’s annual Statement of Media Policy.</b> We will publish our response to Channel 4 Corporation’s delivery of its media content duties and plans for the following year as set out in its statement.</p>	<p>Report Q1 2020/21</p>

<p><b>Reporting on adults’ media literacy.</b> We will publish our annual Adults’ Media Use and Attitudes report, looking at media literacy among UK adults. It will include data on the media use, attitudes and understanding of adults aged 16 and over, and how these are changing over time. Alongside this, we will publish our annual Adults’ Media Lives report, detailing the findings from our small-scale, longitudinal, ethnographic qualitative research among UK adults – a complement to our quantitative surveys on adults’ media literacy.</p>	<p>Report Q1 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Reporting on children’s media literacy.</b> We will publish our annual Children’s Media Use and Attitudes report, providing evidence on media use, attitudes and understanding among children and young people aged 5-15, as well as information about the media access and use of children aged 3-4. The report will also include parents’ views about their children’s media use, and the ways parents monitor or limit children’s use of different types of media. Alongside this, we will publish our annual Children’s Media Lives report, detailing the findings from our small-scale, longitudinal, ethnographic qualitative research among children and young people – a complement to our quantitative surveys on children’s media literacy.</p>	<p>Report Q4 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Participants in programming.</b> We have been considering amendments to the Broadcasting Code to make sure broadcasters provide due care to programme participants, where required. Our first consultation closed in autumn 2019 and we revised our approach and published a second consultation on 10 March 2020. We aim to publish new rules and a statement later in 2020.</p>	<p>Consultation Published March 2020, Closes July 2020 Statement Q2/Q3 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Media Nations.</b> We will publish this annual report on key trends in the television and video sector, as well as the radio and audio sector.</p>	<p>Q2 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Small-scale DAB.</b> We will advertise the first small-scale radio multiplex licences as soon as practicable.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Advertising policy and regulation.</b> The Government has consulted on additional restrictions on TV advertising for food and drinks high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS), including a pre-watershed ban, with a statement expected in due course. If tighter restrictions are introduced, Ofcom and its co-regulators (BCAP and the ASA) would be required to administer this.</p>	<p>Subject to Government consultation/statement</p>
<p><b>Review of requirements to support fair and effective competition in the provision of EPGs.</b> As required by the Digital Economy Act 2017 we will review the requirements we have imposed on EPG licensees to ensure fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory behaviour.</p>	<p>Q3 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Video-sharing platform regulation.</b> The new Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) introduces requirements for video-sharing platforms (VSPs) to take appropriate measures to protect children from harmful content and to protect the general public from content containing illegal material and incitement to violence or hatred. The UK Government has appointed Ofcom to act as the regulator for UK-established VSPs ahead of the full legislation on online harms. In developing guidance for the VSPs, we will seek views from companies, experts and the public through a consultation later this year once the necessary legislation has passed.</p>	<p>Call for evidence Q2 2020/21, AVMSD transposition Q2 2020/21 anticipated Sept 2020, Consultation Q3 2020/21</p>

<p><b>Preparing to regulate online harms.</b> On 12 February Government announced that it is minded to appoint Ofcom as the new regulator for online harms. If confirmed, these proposed new responsibilities would constitute a significant expansion to our remit, and preparing for them will be a major area of focus in 2020/21 and beyond. The timing of this work will depend on the UK Government's process for making final decisions and introducing new legislation. In the meantime, we will continue providing technical advice and input to policy development by the Government.</p>	<p>Ongoing / legislation to be introduced to Parliament later in the year</p>
<p><b>Making sense of media.</b> We will continue our work to help improve the online skills, knowledge and understanding of UK adults and children through providing robust research and collaborating with relevant businesses and organisations and their activities.</p>	<p>Development of research programme, plus MSOM Panel / Network engagement Q2/3 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Number-independent interpersonal communications services (NIICS).</b> We will carry out and publish research to understand the services that comprise the NIICS market, as well as consumers' experience of these services, in the context of new provisions under the EECC due to come into force in Q3 2020/21.</p>	<p>Research findings Q1 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Online Nation.</b> We will publish this annual report on what people are doing online, how they are served by online content providers and platforms, and their attitudes to and experiences of using the internet.</p>	<p>Q1 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Continuing to ensure communications providers and operators of essential services are managing security risks.</b> We will work with the UK Government to implement the outcomes of the telecoms supply chain review, engaging with industry, including equipment suppliers. We continue to work closely with the Government, the National Cyber Security Centre and industry to monitor potential risks, providing guidance and advice to support the development of new legislation, which the Government has committed to introduce this year. We will aim to ensure communications providers within the scope of the Government's telecoms security requirements adhere to relevant guidance. The Government's proposed legislation would enhance Ofcom's enforcement powers. We will continue to ensure that communications providers comply with their existing responsibilities in the meantime. We will also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work with industry throughout the year to identify and close gaps in standards and best practice. We will particularly look at converged networks, network stability and network outages; and</li> <li>• continue engaging with communications providers and the National Cyber Security Centre to carry out a rolling threat intelligence-led penetration testing scheme (TBEST) programme. This assesses how well a company stands up to a concerted attack based on techniques used by cyber criminals and hostile nation states.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Review of user needs.</b> We will look at user needs and assess whether the postal services market is meeting the reasonable needs of the people who use it.</p>	<p>Report Q3 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Monitoring the postal market and Royal Mail's performance.</b> We will continue to monitor the postal sector as part of our statutory duty of securing a universal postal service, having regard to financial sustainability and efficiency. We will publish an update in late 2020.</p>	<p>Report Q3 2020/21</p>

<p><b>Review of the future regulatory framework for post.</b> In 2017, we said that our approach to postal regulation should remain in place until 2022. During 2019/20 we have been carrying out a number of projects which form the building blocks for the 2022 review. This includes a review of user needs, an assessment of the parcels market, bottom up cost modelling and a review of Royal Mail's efficiency. During 2020/21 we will bring this work together under this umbrella review. Incremental pieces of work will be required: e.g. reviewing access competition and whether extra consumer protections are required.</p>	<p>Consultation Q4 2020/21</p>
<p><b>Data Innovation Hub.</b> We will continue to build a central team to contribute to data science initiatives and support colleagues around the organisation to maximise insight and efficiency from data related activities. This will improve our tools and processes to support policy development.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Testing a new approach to improve UK telephone number management and improving trust in telephone numbers.</b> Phone numbers convey information about who is calling when displayed on devices like smartphones. People can use this information to decide whether or not to answer calls. That identity information must be trustworthy but it is under threat by fraudsters spoofing phone numbers to carry out scams. Following collaboration with industry to test the use of innovative blockchain technology as a future-proofed approach to number management, we will set out our initial assessment of proposals to change the way numbers are used by modern networks, which we believe is necessary to tackle nuisance and scam calls. Our proposals could also support better processes for porting numbers and routing calls to these numbers when customers switch between competing providers, as well as improve number management.</p>	<p>Consultation on hold. Trials are ongoing but delayed by COVID-19</p>
<p><b>Salisbury copper retirement trial.</b> We will provide support to Openreach's copper retirement trial in Salisbury, using our convening power to support the trial in protecting vulnerable consumers and users of special services, so that lessons from the trial can support wider investment in new networks.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Emergency call handling performance.</b> We will review and, where necessary, propose improved capabilities for emergency call handling, so people have confidence in being able to contact the emergency services.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Innovation in regulatory approaches.</b> We will identify new opportunities to innovate in our approach to regulation. In particular we will adopt new approaches to policy-making and explore ways to improve how we work and foster innovation. We will attend the Nesta-run States of Change program with our New Comms 2020 team, use current projects as test-beds to trial new policy techniques and improve the use and promotion of existing innovation at Ofcom.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Diversity and Inclusion Report.</b> We published our first progress report on our 2018-2022 Diversity and Inclusion programme in July 2019. This programme outlines the diversity and inclusion actions we will take, including a detailed account of our objectives and programme of work, both as an employer and as the UK's communications regulator. An update on our strategy will be published later in the autumn. We will also confirm new five-year diversity targets for Ofcom, as the current targets which were set in 2015 expire at the end of 2020. We will also publish our annual diversity report, which looks at diversity and equality at Ofcom, in the</p>	<p>Report Q3 2020/21</p>

autumn. It looks at the diversity profile of colleagues at Ofcom overall and in areas such as recruitment, performance and promotions. The report helps us to determine our strategic diversity and inclusion priorities and objectives for the coming year.	
<b>Equal pay and gender-ethnicity pay.</b> We want to promote a culture where all colleagues, whatever their gender or background, are valued on their merits and talents, and treated equally. Publishing our pay data is an important part of understanding where we need to improve. The report will explain our gender and ethnicity pay data for the period 2020/21.	Report Q4 2020/21
<b>Monitoring diversity and equality of opportunity in broadcasting.</b> We will continue to report on diversity in the UK TV and radio industries to provide a picture of how well individual broadcasters – and the industry as a whole – are promoting equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion within their organisations.	Annual report Q3 2020/21
<b>On demand programme services (ODPS) accessibility code.</b> Following the introduction of new requirements in relation to accessibility of ODPS, we will publish our ODPS accessibility code.	Anticipated Q4 2020/21
<b>Implementation of relevant European legislation.</b> We will work with the UK Government to support its transposition of relevant European legislation into national law. In doing this, we will work to ensure that legislation is proportionate and appropriate, reflects the challenges facing the sector and meets people’s needs now and in the future.	Ongoing
<b>Strategic implications of the changing nature of our relationship with the EU.</b> We will provide advice to the UK Government as required to support its discussions with the EU on the detail of our future relationship. Where relevant, we will also provide advice on any legislative changes needed to underpin the future relationship between the UK and the EU. As the process evolves, we will continue to engage with the businesses and organisations we regulate to understand their positions and priorities.	Ongoing