

Title:

Mr

Forename:

Tony

Surname:

Shipley

Representing:

Organisation

Organisation (if applicable):

PhoneAbility

Email:

What do you want Ofcom to keep confidential?:

Keep nothing confidential

If you want part of your response kept confidential, which parts?:

n/a

Ofcom may publish a response summary:

Yes

I confirm that I have read the declaration:

Yes

Ofcom should only publish this response after the consultation has ended:

You may publish my response on receipt

Additional comments:

PhoneAbility welcomes the opportunity to comment upon Ofcom's draft Annual Plan for 2012-13. While we appreciate that Ofcom needs to concentrate its limited resources very specifically, in view of the larger range of responsibilities that it now has to embrace, we are disappointed that electronic communications services for disabled people do not receive a

mention in any of the priority categories. Hearing-impaired people, in particular, have been very much neglected by service providers for several years now, despite technological solutions to their telecommunication difficulties being more generally available. Since the barriers to take-up of these solutions are primarily a matter of the costs to the users, the result is a form of discrimination against disabled people on economic grounds.

We recognise that improvements to relay services, which form the major component of the desired actions for hearing-impaired people, are an area of 'work in progress'. We also recognise that the nature of this work in progress, with further consultations now in planning, defines its own time-scale, but we consider that the omission of this action line from any priority listing will be seen by the potential beneficiaries as an indication that there is little urgency to complete the task.

We also note with regret that there is no mention of any intention to pursue the duty of encouraging the availability of terminal equipment that is accessible to disabled users. Ofcom's powers in this regard may be limited but we consider that this does at least merit some mention in the proposed Annual Plan.

We would have liked to see some mention of action to reduce nuisance calls, especially the sales calls which seem to get through in spite of Telephone Preference Service listing. A particularly disturbing aspect of these is the silent call, usually generated by auto-dialling equipment. When the call is answered there is silence, and this is particularly disturbing for vulnerable subscribers.

Another nuisance issue that has been brought to our attention is the way in which 'cookies' are planted in computers when they are connected to the internet. Some of these are helpful, in that they can speed access to frequently visited websites, while others are intrusive and even malicious. It is not clear to us how far this matter falls within Ofcom's jurisdiction, as it seems to involve a number of scenarios ranging from ePrivacy to internet fraud, but we would welcome an assurance that the topic is under active consideration.