

Press Release

For immediate release 27 July 2010

Panel welcomes Ofcom move to reduce silent calls nuisance

The Consumer Panel has welcomed Ofcom's plans to tackle the problem of silent calls by introducing a limit to the number of times a company can make an automated call to a consumer in any 24-hour period, but is urging the regulator to monitor the impact of the change on consumers.

In the Panel's response to the consultation on silent calls, Anna Bradley, Consumer Panel Chair, called for effective enforcement action where silent calls are malicious: "Silent calls cause a lot of annoyance and anxiety, particularly for older people who live alone. The proposed rules should mean that consumers will be better protected. But Ofcom will need to monitor companies that use automated calling systems, and take tough action where they find malpractice."

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)
- Louisa Bolch
- Kim Brook (member for Wales)
- Colin Browne
- Roger Darlington (member for England)
- Maureen Edmondson (member for Northern Ireland)
- Leen Petre
- Damian Tambini
- Bob Warner

For a copy of the Communications Consumer Panel response *Tackling abandoned and silent calls* go to our website www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk

What are silent calls?

The consultation explains that silent and abandoned calls are usually made to consumers by companies using automated calling systems (ACS), also known as predictive diallers. These are essentially machines that can automatically dial telephone numbers, generating outbound calls to consumers. If the called party answers the call, then the dialler automatically transfers the call to an available agent. If no agent is available, then the call is disconnected, which results in the consumer receiving an abandoned call. If no recorded information message is played then the call will be silent. Ofcom's proposals will mean that if this happens that subsequent calls within a 24-hour period can only be made with a live operator.