

News story: A New Champion for Mobile and Broadband Customers

The government will legislate to create this new advocate which will have the power to stand up for consumers, ensuring they get the right treatment from mobile, broadband, pay-TV, and landline providers.

This brings Telecoms in line with other essential services sectors, such as energy, water, post or transport which already have dedicated, independent and well-funded consumer advocates.

Well-resourced consumer advocacy plays a vital role in markets. The new advocate will:

- Conduct research and use it to highlight areas where the consumer experience can be improved
- Represent consumers in key policy and regulatory debates, as the rollout of full fibre broadband and 5G mobile technology gathers pace
- Provide direct support and advice to consumers, particularly the most vulnerable, who can struggle to engage with what is an increasingly complex market, as the Extra Help Unit does in the energy sector
- Work directly with industry to help them improve consumer outcomes, for example by bringing together industry best practice
- Support our digital connectivity ambitions by running campaigns to help consumers get the best deals and upgrade to better and faster services, similar to the Big Energy Saving Week

Minister for Digital Margot James said:

“It’s clear that some mobile and broadband customers are vulnerable to unfair business practices.

“We’ve already strengthened Ofcom’s powers to improve outcomes for consumers but a strong, independent consumer champion will empower customers and hold telecoms companies to account, as well as working with them to drive improvements in their services.

“The consumer advocate will help deliver a Britain that works for everyone putting more money into the pockets of ordinary working people.”

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) will launch a

consultation outlining further details over the summer, including options for creating the new advocate and how it could be funded.

As part of its modern Industrial Strategy, the Government is committed to improving consumer confidence alongside continued investment in the roll out of faster, more reliable broadband and mobile technologies across the UK.

Telecoms consumers are getting increasingly good value for money with the geographical coverage of faster and more reliable broadband and mobile networks increasing, and average monthly spending falling over the last decade. However, issues with the consumer experience in the sector remain, including the existence of a number of unfair practices, including:

- People still being charged for handsets that they have already paid off, with Ofcom estimating UK mobile customers could be overpaying by up to £330 million each year
- Loyal broadband customers paying a 'loyalty penalty' of nearly £1 billion each year according to the CMA
- The Institute of Customer Service Satisfaction Index revealing telecommunications and media consistently compares poorly against other markets, ranking second last in January 2018 and third last in January 2019, ahead of Utilities and Transport
- Households that sign up to combined TV and broadband packages being hit with loyalty penalties of up to almost £700 a year, according to Which?

Press release: UK co-sponsors a UN resolution to commemorate victims of acts of violence based on religion or belief

Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) intersects with many other human rights. Where FoRB is under attack, other human rights are often threatened too.

The UK remains deeply concerned about violations of Freedom of Religion or Belief in many parts of the world. This year alone, we have seen a staggering number of attacks on places of worship: from the Philippines to Burkina Faso; New Zealand to Sri Lanka. All faiths and beliefs are vulnerable, and there is

an urgent need to strengthen efforts to protect and promote the right to FoRB for all individuals.

The Resolution, tabled by Poland, marks an important step taken by the international community to defend the right to FoRB, and shows solidarity with victims of violence who are targeted because of their faith or belief.

The Resolution raises awareness within the international community of the scale of violence motivated by intolerance, and it promotes inter-religious and intercultural dialogue. It also encourages States to provide support and assistance to victims and their families.

The Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, said:

I welcome the adoption of the Resolution tabled by Poland. Violence and discrimination based on religion or belief blight the lives of millions of people around the world.

Protecting the right of people to practise their faith, or to have no faith at all, is an ongoing battle. No country is immune from intolerance.

I am proud that the UK co-sponsored this important resolution and call on all states to maintain momentum on combating intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief.

[News story: New framework to improve integration support](#)

The Indicators of Integration framework is a resource for local authorities, charities and those working with groups in society at risk of poor integration.

The [framework](#) has been produced by the Home Office in collaboration with a group of leading academics and with input from local authorities, charities and from refugees themselves. It provides practical ways to understand and measure the integration of refugees and migrants.

Local authorities, charities and academics will come together today at a launch event in London to explore how best to use the framework and accompanying toolkit.

Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes said:

The UK has a proud history of providing protection to those that need it and we are committed to supporting individuals integrate and rebuild their lives here.

This important report will help organisations across the UK meet the vital needs of refugees and migrants as they make this country their home.

The academic team who worked on the report said:

We welcome this new framework, which builds upon our previous work and the growing evidence of how these factors shape the experience of integration, as a potentially powerful tool to inform those working with refugees and migrants in the UK and, indeed, globally.

The indicators represent the most comprehensive approach yet to capturing the multi-dimensionality and multi-directionality of integration.

By using the framework, organisations can design more effective integration strategies, monitor services and better evaluate progress.

Professionals will be able to use the framework to develop strategies and assess the effectiveness of integration based on fourteen key areas, such as work, education, housing, health and culture. They will also have access, through the accompanying toolkit, to common questions and tools for measuring impact.

It will allow for a more joined-up approach across local, regional and national programmes to better understand integration outcomes over time and facilitate the understanding of good practice.

Further information on the framework

- the team of academics includes Alison Strang (Queen Margaret University), Linda Morrice (University of Sussex), Jenny Phillimore (University of Birmingham) and Lucy Michael (Ulster University)
- the government's [integrated communities action plan](#) defined integration as 'communities where people, whatever their background, live, work, learn and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities'

The 14 key domains of integration are:

1. work
2. education
3. housing
4. health and social care
5. leisure
6. social bonds – with those you share a sense of identity

7. social bridges – with people from different backgrounds
 8. social links – with institutions
 9. language and communication
 10. culture
 11. digital skills
 12. safety
 13. stability
 14. rights and responsibilities
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[News story: HMS Queen Elizabeth step closer to operations with transatlantic training](#)

The UK's largest and most advanced warship ever will be making the transatlantic journey for the second consecutive year to train alongside the UK's closest ally. She will also make a number of port calls whilst deployed before returning ahead of Christmas.

Whilst in the Washington area she will host the Atlantic Future Forum, which aims at bringing the US and UK industry and military together to address the changing nature of warfare and shared threats both allies face at home and abroad.

Defence Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

HMS Queen Elizabeth represents the best of British innovation and is a true embodiment of our international ambition. The fact that this important ship will have visited the US twice within her short service thus far is testament to our enduring transatlantic defence relationship.

In the week that we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the D-Day landings it is only right that we continue to look at how we can deepen our global partnerships to promote peace and deter future conflict.

The deployment, known as 'WESTLANT 19', will see HMS Queen Elizabeth and her crew conduct vital deck and warfare trials with UK F-35 jets from 17 Test and Evaluation Squadron based in the USA and 617 Squadron based at RAF Marham, as well rotary wing training with Merlin and Wildcat helicopters.

Whilst Stateside, she will also welcome United States Marine Corps F-35s on deck, further developing the deep and historic tradition of the UK and US

armed forces operating seamlessly side by side.

HMS Queen Elizabeth remains set to be deployed on global operations from 2021 and when Prince of Wales joins her in the fleet in the near future, the UK will have one carrier available at very high readiness at all times.

[News story: Smart, affordable global energy systems: apply for funding](#)

The UK has committed to [helping 3.2 million people in sub-Saharan Africa access household electricity for the first time by 2021](#).

Innovate UK has up to £22 million to invest in innovative, market-focused energy technologies for sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, through the [Energy Catalyst funding programme](#).

Round 7 of the Energy Catalyst will encourage the development of products and services that help poorer households and enterprises in the regions to access secure, low cost and low carbon energy.

The Energy Catalyst is run by Innovate UK (part of UK Research and Innovation) and co-funded by partners including the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council. It is part of the [Global Challenges Research Fund](#) and [Transforming Energy Access programme](#).

The 'Energy Trilemma'

Successful projects will address the [World Energy Council's 'Energy Trilemma'](#):

- cost – reducing prices to make energy accessible to everyone
- emissions – generating cleaner energy with lower emissions to protect the environment
- security of supply – putting reliable infrastructure in place to keep energy flowing without disruption or shortage

Funding for different project stages

The competition offers 3 strands for projects in different stages of development:

- early stage – for feasibility studies exploring an idea's technical potential
- mid-stage – funds research and development
- late stage – supports projects undertaking prototyping and pilot testing

To apply for mid-stage or late-stage funding some of the research, testing or demonstration must be carried out in sub-Saharan Africa or South Asia by either a UK or international partner.

Competition information

- the competition opens on 17 June 2019
- a briefing event will take place in London on 13 June 2019
- the competition closes on 18 September 2019
- early stage projects can have total costs of £50,000 and £300,000, and last up to 12 months
- for mid stage projects, costs can be from £50,000 to £1.5 million, lasting 12 to 24 months
- for late stage projects, costs can be £50,000 to £5 million, lasting between 12 and 36 months
- projects must be led by a UK based business
- projects must start by 1 April 2020 and end by 31 March 2023