



Communications Act 2003

2003 CHAPTER 21

PART 1 **U.K.**

FUNCTIONS OF OFCOM

Transferred and assigned functions

1 **Functions and general powers of OFCOM** **U.K.**

- (1) The Office of Communications (“OFCOM”) shall have the following functions—
 - (a) the functions transferred to OFCOM under section 2; and
 - (b) such other functions as may be conferred on OFCOM by or under any enactment (including this Act).
- (2) OFCOM shall also have any functions in relation to telephone numbers that are conferred on them by the law of the Isle of Man or of any of the Channel Islands.
- (3) OFCOM may do anything which appears to them to be incidental or conducive to the carrying out of their functions, including borrow money.
- (4) OFCOM are not to borrow money except with the consent of the Secretary of State, or in accordance with a general authorisation given by him.
- (5) OFCOM’s powers under subsection (3) include, in particular—
 - (a) power to undertake research and development work in connection with any matter in relation to which they have functions;
 - (b) power to promote the carrying out of such research and development by others, or otherwise to arrange for it to be carried out by others;
 - (c) power to institute and carry on criminal proceedings in England and Wales or Northern Ireland for an offence relating to a matter in relation to which they have functions; and
 - (d) power, in such cases and in such circumstances as they may think fit, to make payments (where no legal liability arises) to persons adversely affected by the carrying out by OFCOM of any of their functions.

Status: Point in time view as at 10/01/2024.

Changes to legislation: There are outstanding changes not yet made by the legislation.gov.uk editorial team to Communications Act 2003. Any changes that have already been made by the team appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

- (6) In exercise of their powers under subsection (3), OFCOM must establish and maintain separate offices in each of the following parts of the United Kingdom—
- (a) England;
 - (b) Wales;
 - (c) Scotland; and
 - (d) Northern Ireland.
- (7) Part 2 of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994 (c. 40) (contracting out) is to have effect in relation to the functions conferred on OFCOM by or under any enactment as if—
- (a) OFCOM were an office holder within the meaning of that Part; and
 - (b) a power of OFCOM to make subordinate legislation were excluded from section 69 of that Act to the extent only that it is exercisable by statutory instrument.
- (8) In this section “telephone numbers” has the same meaning as in Chapter 1 of Part 2.

Commencement Information

- I1** S. 1(1) (2) (4) (5)(a) (b) (d) (6)-(8) in force at 29.12.2003 by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), [art. 3\(1\)](#), [Sch. 1](#) (with [art. 11](#))
- I2** S. 1(3) in force at 25.7.2003 for specified purposes by [S.I. 2003/1900](#), [arts. 1\(2\)](#), [2\(1\)](#), [Sch. 1](#) (with [art. 3](#)) (as amended by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), [art. 1\(3\)](#))
- I3** S. 1(3) in force at 29.12.2003 in so far as not already in force by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), [art. 3\(1\)](#), [Sch. 1](#) (with [art. 11](#))
- I4** S. 1(5)(c) in force at 25.7.2003 for specified purposes by [S.I. 2003/1900](#), [arts. 1\(2\)](#), [2\(1\)](#), [Sch. 1](#) (with [art. 3](#)) (as amended by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), [art. 1\(3\)](#))
- I5** S. 1(5)(c) in force at 29.12.2003 in so far as not already in force by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), [art. 3\(1\)](#), [Sch. 1](#) (with [art. 11](#))

2 Transfer of functions of pre-commencement regulators **U.K.**

- (1) As from such date as the Secretary of State may appoint for the coming into force of this section, the functions that are set out in Schedule 1 (functions of the Secretary of State and of the pre-commencement regulators) shall become functions of OFCOM in accordance with that Schedule.
- (2) References in any enactment to a person who is a person from whom functions are transferred by virtue of this section are to have effect, so far as necessary for the purposes of the transfers, as references to OFCOM.
- (3) The functions of OFCOM are to include the carrying out of the transferred functions, at times after the time when they become functions of OFCOM, in relation to anything occurring before that time.
- (4) The provisions of this section have effect subject to—
- (a) the modifications made by this Act of the enactments relating to the transferred functions; and
 - (b) any express transitional or consequential provisions made by or under this Act in relation to those enactments.

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Commencement Information

- I6** S. 2 in force at 29.12.2003 for specified purposes by S.I. 2003/3142, art. 3(1)(3), **Sch. 1** (with art. 11)
- I7** S. 2 in force at 1.4.2004 in so far as not already in force by S.I. 2003/3142, art. 4(2), **Sch. 2** (with art. 11) (as amended (4.3.2004) by S.I. 2004/545, art. 2(2)(3)(a))

f¹ Strategic priorities

Textual Amendments

- F1** Ss. 2A-2C and cross-heading inserted (31.7.2017) by Digital Economy Act 2017 (c. 30), ss. 98(1), 118(6); S.I. 2017/765, reg. 2(aa)

2A Statement of strategic priorities **U.K.**

- (1) The Secretary of State may designate a statement for the purposes of this section if the requirements set out in section 2C (consultation and parliamentary procedure) are satisfied.
- (2) The statement is a statement prepared by the Secretary of State that sets out strategic priorities of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom relating to—
 - (a) telecommunications,
 - (b) the management of the radio spectrum, and
 - (c) postal services.
- (3) The statement may, among other things, set out particular outcomes identified with a view to achieving the strategic priorities.
- (4) This section does not restrict the Secretary of State's powers under any other provision of this Act or any other enactment.
- (5) A statement designated under subsection (1) must be published in such manner as the Secretary of State considers appropriate.
- (6) A statement designated under subsection (1) may be amended (including by replacing the whole or a part of the statement with new content) by a subsequent statement designated under that subsection, and this section and sections 2B and 2C apply in relation to any such subsequent statement as in relation to the original statement.
- (7) Except as provided by subsection (8), no amendment may be made under subsection (6) within the period of 5 years beginning with the day on which a statement was most recently designated under subsection (1).
- (8) An earlier amendment may be made under subsection (6) if—
 - (a) since that day—
 - (i) a Parliamentary general election has taken place, or
 - (ii) there has been a significant change in the policy of Her Majesty's government affecting any matter mentioned in subsection (2)(a), (b) or (c), or
 - (b) the Secretary of State considers that the statement, or any part of it, conflicts with any of OFCOM's general duties (within the meaning of section 3).

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2B Duties of OFCOM in relation to strategic priorities U.K.

- (1) This section applies where a statement has been designated under section 2A(1).
- (2) OFCOM must have regard to the statement when carrying out—
 - (a) their functions relating to telecommunications,
 - (b) their functions under the enactments relating to the management of the radio spectrum, and
 - (c) their functions relating to postal services.
- (3) OFCOM must within the period of 40 days beginning with the day on which the statement is designated, or such longer period as the Secretary of State may allow—
 - (a) explain in writing what they propose to do in consequence of the statement, and
 - (b) publish a copy of that explanation in such manner as OFCOM consider appropriate.
- (4) OFCOM must, as soon as practicable after the end of—
 - (a) the period of 12 months beginning with the day on which the first statement is designated under section 2A(1), and
 - (b) every subsequent period of 12 months,publish a review of what they have done during the period in question in consequence of the statement.

2C Consultation and parliamentary procedure U.K.

- (1) This section sets out the requirements that must be satisfied in relation to a statement before the Secretary of State may designate it under section 2A.
- (2) The Secretary of State must consult the following on a draft of the statement—
 - (a) OFCOM, and
 - (b) such other persons as the Secretary of State considers appropriate.
- (3) The Secretary of State must allow OFCOM a period of at least 40 days to respond to any consultation under subsection (2)(a).
- (4) After that period has ended the Secretary of State—
 - (a) must make any changes to the draft that appear to the Secretary of State to be necessary in view of responses to the consultation, and
 - (b) must then lay the draft before Parliament.
- (5) The Secretary of State must then wait until the end of the 40-day period and may not designate the statement if, within that period, either House of Parliament resolves not to approve it.
- (6) “The 40-day period” is the period of 40 days beginning with the day on which the draft is laid before Parliament (or, if it is not laid before each House on the same day, the later of the days on which it is laid).
- (7) When calculating the 40-day period, ignore any period during which Parliament is dissolved or prorogued or during which both Houses are adjourned for more than 4 days.]

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General duties in carrying out functions

3 General duties of OFCOM U.K.

- (1) It shall be the principal duty of OFCOM, in carrying out their functions—
 - (a) to further the interests of citizens in relation to communications matters; and
 - (b) to further the interests of consumers in relevant markets, where appropriate by promoting competition.
- (2) The things which, by virtue of subsection (1), OFCOM are required to secure in the carrying out of their functions include, in particular, each of the following—
 - (a) the optimal use for wireless telegraphy of the electro-magnetic spectrum;
 - (b) the availability throughout the United Kingdom of a wide range of electronic communications services;
 - (c) the availability throughout the United Kingdom of a wide range of television and radio services which (taken as a whole) are both of high quality and calculated to appeal to a variety of tastes and interests;
 - (d) the maintenance of a sufficient plurality of providers of different television and radio services;
 - (e) the application, in the case of all television and radio services, of standards that provide adequate protection to members of the public from the inclusion of offensive and harmful material in such services;
 - (f) the application, in the case of all television and radio services, of standards that provide adequate protection to members of the public and all other persons from both—
 - (i) unfair treatment in programmes included in such services; and
 - (ii) unwarranted infringements of privacy resulting from activities carried on for the purposes of such services.
 - [^{F2}(g) the adequate protection of citizens from harm presented by content on regulated services, through the appropriate use by providers of such services of systems and processes designed to reduce the risk of such harm.]
- (3) In performing their duties under subsection (1), OFCOM must have regard, in all cases, to—
 - (a) the principles under which regulatory activities should be transparent, accountable, proportionate, consistent and targeted only at cases in which action is needed; and
 - (b) any other principles appearing to OFCOM to represent the best regulatory practice.
- (4) OFCOM must also have regard, in performing those duties, to such of the following as appear to them to be relevant in the circumstances—
 - (a) the desirability of promoting the fulfilment of the purposes of public service television broadcasting in the United Kingdom;
 - (b) the desirability of promoting competition in relevant markets;
 - (c) [^{F3}(subject to subsection (5A))] the desirability of promoting and facilitating the development and use of effective forms of self-regulation;
 - (d) the desirability of encouraging investment and innovation in relevant markets;
 - (e) the desirability of encouraging the availability and use of high speed data transfer services throughout the United Kingdom;

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- [^{F4}(ea) the desirability of ensuring the security and availability of public electronic communications networks and public electronic communications services;]
- [^{F5}(eb) the desirability of ensuring that relevant markets facilitate end-to-end connectivity in the interests of consumers in those markets;]
- (f) the different needs and interests, so far as the use of the electro-magnetic spectrum for wireless telegraphy is concerned, of all persons who may wish to make use of it;
 - (g) the need to secure that the application in the case of television and radio services of standards falling within subsection (2)(e) and (f) is in the manner that best guarantees an appropriate level of freedom of expression;
 - (h) the vulnerability of children and of others whose circumstances appear to OFCOM to put them in need of special protection;
 - (i) the needs of persons with disabilities, of the elderly and of those on low incomes;
 - (j) the desirability of preventing crime and disorder;
 - (k) the opinions of consumers in relevant markets and of members of the public generally;
 - (l) the different interests of persons in the different parts of the United Kingdom, of the different ethnic communities within the United Kingdom and of persons living in rural and in urban areas;
 - (m) the extent to which, in the circumstances of the case, the furthering or securing of the matters mentioned in subsections (1) and (2) is reasonably practicable.
- [^{F6}(4A) In performing their duties under subsection (1) in relation to matters to which subsection (2)(g) is relevant, OFCOM must have regard to such of the following as appear to them to be relevant in the circumstances—
- (a) the risk of harm to citizens presented by regulated services;
 - (b) the need for a higher level of protection for children than for adults;
 - (c) the need for it to be clear to providers of regulated services how they may comply with their duties set out in Chapter 2, 3, 4 or 5 of Part 3, Chapter 1, 3 or 4 of Part 4, or Part 5 of the Online Safety Act 2023;
 - (d) the need to exercise their functions so as to secure that providers of regulated services may comply with such duties by taking measures, or using measures, systems or processes, which are (where relevant) proportionate to—
 - (i) the size or capacity of the provider in question, and
 - (ii) the level of risk of harm presented by the service in question, and the severity of the potential harm;
 - (e) the desirability of promoting the use by providers of regulated services of technologies which are designed to reduce the risk of harm to citizens presented by content on regulated services;
 - (f) the extent to which providers of regulated services demonstrate, in a way that is transparent and accountable, that they are complying with their duties set out in Chapter 2, 3, 4 or 5 of Part 3, Chapter 1, 3 or 4 of Part 4, or Part 5 of the Online Safety Act 2023.]
- (5) In performing their duty under this section of furthering the interests of consumers, OFCOM must have regard, in particular, to the interests of those consumers in respect of choice, price, quality of service and value for money.
- [^{F7}(5A) Subsection (4)(c) does not apply in relation to the carrying out of any of OFCOM's online safety functions.]

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(6) Where it appears to OFCOM, in relation to the carrying out of any of the functions mentioned in section 4(1), that any of their general duties conflict with one or more of their duties under sections 4, 24 and 25, priority must be given to their duties under those sections.

[^{F8}(6A) Where it appears to OFCOM, in relation to the carrying out of any of their functions in relation to postal services, that any of their general duties conflict with their duty under section 29 of the Postal Services Act 2011 (duty to secure provision of universal postal service), priority must be given to their duty under that section.]

[^{F9}(6ZA) Where it appears to OFCOM, in relation to the carrying out of any of their online safety functions, that any of their general duties conflict with their duty under section 24, priority must be given to their duty under that section.]

(7) Where it appears to OFCOM that any of their general duties conflict with each other in a particular case, they must secure that the conflict is resolved in the manner they think best in the circumstances.

(8) Where OFCOM resolve a conflict in an important case between their duties under paragraphs (a) and (b) of subsection (1), they must publish a statement setting out—
(a) the nature of the conflict;
(b) the manner in which they have decided to resolve it; and
(c) the reasons for their decision to resolve it in that manner.

(9) Where OFCOM are required to publish a statement under subsection (8), they must—
(a) publish it as soon as possible after making their decision but not while they would (apart from a statutory requirement to publish) be subject to an obligation not to publish a matter that needs to be included in the statement; and
(b) so publish it in such manner as they consider appropriate for bringing it to the attention of the persons who, in OFCOM's opinion, are likely to be affected by the matters to which the decision relates.

(10) Every report under paragraph 12 of the Schedule to the Office of Communications Act 2002 (c. 11) (OFCOM's annual report) for a financial year must contain a summary of the manner in which, in that year, OFCOM resolved conflicts arising in important cases between their general duties.

(11) A case is an important case for the purposes of subsection (8) or (10) only if—
(a) it involved one or more of the matters mentioned in subsection (12); or
(b) it otherwise appears to OFCOM to have been of unusual importance.

(12) Those matters are—
(a) a major change in the activities carried on by OFCOM;
(b) matters likely to have a significant impact on persons carrying on businesses in any of the relevant markets; or
(c) matters likely to have a significant impact on the general public in the United Kingdom or in a part of the United Kingdom.

(13) This section is subject to sections 370(11) and 371(11) of this Act and to section 119A(4) of the Enterprise Act 2002 (c. 40) (which applies to functions conferred on OFCOM by Chapter 2 of Part 5 of this Act).

(14) In this section—

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“citizens” means all members of the public in the United Kingdom;
 “communications matters” means the matters in relation to which OFCOM have functions;
 [^{F10}“content on regulated services” means—
 (a) regulated user-generated content present on regulated services,
 (b) search content of regulated services,
 (c) fraudulent advertisements present on regulated services, and
 (d) regulated provider pornographic content present on regulated services;]
 [^{F11}“end-to-end connectivity” has the meaning given by section 74(3);]
 “general duties”, in relation to OFCOM, means—
 (a) their duties under subsections (1) to (5); and
 (b) the duty which, under section 107(5), is to rank equally for the purposes of subsections (6) and (7) with their duties under this section;
 [^{F10}“online safety functions” has the meaning given by section 235 of the Online Safety Act 2023, except that it does not include OFCOM’s general duties;]
 “relevant markets” means markets for any of the services, facilities, apparatus or directories in relation to which OFCOM have functions.

[^{F12}(15) In this section the following terms have the same meaning as in the Online Safety Act 2023—

“content” (see section 236 of that Act);
 “fraudulent advertisement” (see sections 38 and 39 of that Act);
 “harm” (see section 234 of that Act);
 “provider”, in relation to a regulated service (see section 226 of that Act);
 “regulated user-generated content” (see section 55 of that Act);
 “regulated provider pornographic content” (see section 79 of that Act);
 “regulated service” (see section 4 of that Act);
 “search content” (see section 57 of that Act).]

Textual Amendments

- F2** S. 3(2)(g) inserted (26.10.2023) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), **ss. 91(2)**, 240(4)
F3 Words in s. 3(4)(c) inserted (26.10.2023) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), **ss. 91(3)**, 240(4)
F4 S. 3(4)(ea) inserted (31.12.2020) by [The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy \(Amendment etc.\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019 \(S.I. 2019/246\)](#), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 2**; 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)
F5 S. 3(4)(eb) inserted (21.12.2020) by [The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy \(Amendment\) \(European Electronic Communications Code and EU Exit\) Regulations 2020 \(S.I. 2020/1419\)](#), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 2(2)**
F6 S. 3(4A) inserted (26.10.2023) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), **ss. 91(4)**, 240(4)
F7 S. 3(5A) inserted (26.10.2023) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), **ss. 91(5)**, 240(4)
F8 S. 3(6A) inserted (1.10.2011) by [Postal Services Act 2011 \(c. 5\)](#), s. 93(2)(3), **Sch. 12 para. 57**; S.I. 2011/2329, art. 3
F9 S. 3(6ZA) inserted (26.10.2023) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), **ss. 91(6)**, 240(4)
F10 Words in s. 3(14) inserted (26.10.2023) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), **ss. 91(7)**, 240(4)
F11 Words in s. 3(14) inserted (21.12.2020) by [The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy \(Amendment\) \(European Electronic Communications Code and EU Exit\) Regulations 2020 \(S.I. 2020/1419\)](#), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 2(3)**

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F12 S. 3(15) inserted (26.10.2023) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), **ss. 91(8)**, 240(4)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C1 S. 3 excluded by 2002 c. 40, s. 119(4) (as inserted (29.12.2003) by [Communications Act 2003 \(c. 21\)](#), **ss. 385**, 411(2) (with [Sch. 18](#)); [S.I. 2003/3142](#), art. 3(1), [Sch. 1](#) (with art. 11))

Commencement Information

I8 S. 3 in force at 29.12.2003 by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), art. 3(1), [Sch. 1](#) (with art. 11)

4 **Duties** ^{F13} **in relation to certain regulatory functions** **U.K.**

- (1) This section applies to the following functions of OFCOM—
 - (a) their functions under Chapter 1 of Part 2;
 - (b) their functions under the enactments relating to the management of the radio spectrum;
 - (c) their functions under Chapter 3 of Part 2 in relation to disputes referred to them under section 185;
 - (d) their functions under sections 24 and 25 so far as they relate to information required for purposes connected with matters in relation to which functions specified in this subsection are conferred on OFCOM; and
 - (e) their functions under section 26 so far as they are carried out for the purpose of making information available to persons mentioned in subsection (2)(a) to (c) of that section.
- (2) It shall be the duty of OFCOM, in carrying out any of those functions, to act in accordance with the ^{F14}six requirements set out in the following provisions of this section].
- (3) The first ^{F15}... requirement is a requirement to promote competition—
 - (a) in relation to the provision of electronic communications networks and electronic communications services;
 - (b) in relation to the provision and making available of services and facilities that are provided or made available in association with the provision of electronic communications networks or electronic communications services; and
 - (c) in relation to the supply of directories capable of being used in connection with the use of electronic communications networks or electronic communications services.
- ^{F16}(4)
- (5) The ^{F17}[second] requirement is a requirement to promote the interests of all ^{F18}[members of the public in the United Kingdom].
- (6) The ^{F19}[third] requirement is a requirement to take account of the desirability of OFCOM's carrying out their functions in a manner which, so far as practicable, does not favour—
 - (a) one form of electronic communications network, electronic communications service or associated facility; or
 - (b) one means of providing or making available such a network, service or facility, over another.

^{F20}(6A) The ^{F21}[third] requirement does not apply to—

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- (a) the imposition, in relation to a wireless telegraphy licence, of a limitation of a kind falling within section 9ZA(1) of the Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006; or
 - (b) the review, variation or removal of such a limitation.]
- (7) The [^{F22}fourth] requirement is a requirement to encourage, to such extent as OFCOM consider appropriate for the purpose mentioned in subsection (8), the provision of network access and service interoperability.
- (8) That purpose is the purpose of securing—
- (a) efficiency and sustainable competition ^{F23} ...; ^{F24} ...
 - [^{F25}(aa) efficient investment and innovation; and]
 - (b) the maximum benefit for the persons who are customers of communications providers and of persons who make [^{F26}associated facilities] available.
- (9) The [^{F27}fifth] requirement is a requirement to encourage such compliance with the standards mentioned in subsection (10) as is necessary for—
- (a) facilitating service interoperability;
 - [^{F28}(aa) facilitating end-to-end connectivity;
 - (ab) facilitating the changing by end-users of their communications provider;
 - (ac) facilitating the retention by end-users of their telephone numbers after a change of communications provider; and]
 - (b) securing freedom of choice for the customers of communications providers.
- (10) Those standards are—
- (a) standards or specifications from time to time drawn up and published [^{F29}by the European Commission] in accordance with Article 17 of the Framework Directive [^{F30}or Article 39 of the EECC Directive][^{F31}(whether before or after IP completion day)];
 - (b) the standards and specifications from time to time adopted by—
 - (i) the European Committee for Standardisation;
 - (ii) the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardisation; [^{F32}and]
 - (iii) the European Telecommunications Standards Institute; and
 - (c) the international standards and recommendations from time to time adopted by—
 - (i) the International Telecommunication Union;
 - (ii) the International Organisation for Standardisation; ^{F33} ...
 - [^{F34}(ia) the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations; and]
 - (iii) the International Electrotechnical Committee.
- [^{F35}(10A) The [^{F36}sixth] requirement is a requirement to promote connectivity and access to very high capacity networks by members of the public and businesses in the United Kingdom.]
- (11) Where it appears to OFCOM that any of the [^{F37}six requirements in this section] conflict with each other, they must secure that the conflict is resolved in the manner they think best in the circumstances.
- (12) In this section—
- ^{F38}
...

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[^{F39}“end-to-end connectivity” has the meaning given by section 74(3);
“network access” and “service interoperability” each has the same meaning
as in Chapter 1 of Part 2.

[^{F40}“telephone number” has the meaning given by section 56(5).]

[^{F41}(12A) In this Act “very high capacity network” means an electronic communications network which—

- (a) consists wholly of optical fibre elements at least up to the distribution point at the serving location; or
- (b) is capable of delivering, under usual peak-time conditions, network performance that, in OFCOM’s opinion, is similar, in terms of available downlink and uplink bandwidth, resilience, error-related parameters and latency and its variation, to the network performance of a network falling within paragraph (a).

(12B) For the purposes of subsection (12A)(b), network performance can be considered similar regardless of whether the end-user experience varies due to the inherently different characteristics of the medium by which the network ultimately connects with the network termination point.]

[^{F42}(13) In this section and sections 4A and 5, “the Framework Directive” means [Directive 2002/21/EC](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council on a common regulatory framework for electronic communications networks and services, as amended by [Directive 2009/140/EC](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council.]

Textual Amendments

- F13** Words in s. 4 heading substituted (31.12.2020) by [The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy \(Amendment etc.\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019 \(S.I. 2019/246\)](#), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 3(11)**; 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)
- F14** Words in s. 4(2) substituted (31.12.2020) by [The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy \(Amendment\) \(European Electronic Communications Code and EU Exit\) Regulations 2020 \(S.I. 2020/1419\)](#), reg. 1(3)(a), **Sch. 1 para. 67(2)**
- F15** Word in s. 4(3) omitted (31.12.2020) by virtue of [The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy \(Amendment etc.\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019 \(S.I. 2019/246\)](#), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 3(3)**; 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)
- F16** S. 4(4) omitted (31.12.2020) by virtue of [The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy \(Amendment etc.\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019 \(S.I. 2019/246\)](#), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 3(4)**; 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)
- F17** Word in s. 4(5) substituted (31.12.2020) by [The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy \(Amendment etc.\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019 \(S.I. 2019/246\)](#), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 3(5)(a)**; 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)
- F18** Words in s. 4(5) substituted (31.12.2020) by [The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy \(Amendment etc.\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019 \(S.I. 2019/246\)](#), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 3(5)(b)**; 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)
- F19** Word in s. 4(6) substituted (31.12.2020) by [The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy \(Amendment etc.\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019 \(S.I. 2019/246\)](#), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 3(6)**; 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)
- F20** S. 4(6A) inserted (26.5.2011) by [The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy Regulations 2011 \(S.I. 2011/1210\)](#), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 5(a)** (with Sch. 3 para. 2)
- F21** Word in s. 4(6A) substituted (31.12.2020) by [The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy \(Amendment etc.\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019 \(S.I. 2019/246\)](#), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 3(6)**; 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)

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- F22** Word in s. 4(7) substituted (31.12.2020) by The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (S.I. 2019/246), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 3(7)**; 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)
- F23** Words in s. 4(8)(a) omitted (26.5.2011) by virtue of The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy Regulations 2011 (S.I. 2011/1210), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 5(b)(i)** (with Sch. 3 para. 2)
- F24** Word in s. 4(8) omitted (26.5.2011) by virtue of The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy Regulations 2011 (S.I. 2011/1210), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 5(b)(ii)** (with Sch. 3 para. 2)
- F25** S. 4(8)(aa) inserted (26.5.2011) by The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy Regulations 2011 (S.I. 2011/1210), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 5(b)(ii)** (with Sch. 3 para. 2)
- F26** Words in s. 4(8)(b) substituted (26.5.2011) by The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy Regulations 2011 (S.I. 2011/1210), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 5(b)(iii)** (with Sch. 3 para. 2)
- F27** Word in s. 4(9) substituted (31.12.2020) by The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (S.I. 2019/246), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 3(8)**; 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)
- F28** S. 4(9)(aa)-(ac) substituted for word (21.12.2020) by The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy (Amendment) (European Electronic Communications Code and EU Exit) Regulations 2020 (S.I. 2020/1419), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 3(3)**
- F29** Words in s. 4(10)(a) inserted (31.12.2020) by The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (S.I. 2019/246), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 3(9)**; 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)
- F30** Words in s. 4(10)(a) inserted (21.12.2020) by The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy (Amendment) (European Electronic Communications Code and EU Exit) Regulations 2020 (S.I. 2020/1419), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 3(4)**
- F31** Words in s. 4(10)(a) inserted (31.12.2020) by The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy (Amendment) (European Electronic Communications Code and EU Exit) Regulations 2020 (S.I. 2020/1419), reg. 1(3)(a), **Sch. 1 para. 67(3)**
- F32** Word in s. 4(10)(b) substituted (26.5.2011) by The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy Regulations 2011 (S.I. 2011/1210), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 5(c)(i)** (with Sch. 3 para. 2)
- F33** Word in s. 4(10)(c)(ii) omitted (26.5.2011) by virtue of The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy Regulations 2011 (S.I. 2011/1210), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 5(c)(ii)** (with Sch. 3 para. 2)
- F34** S. 4(10)(c)(ia) inserted (26.5.2011) by The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy Regulations 2011 (S.I. 2011/1210), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 5(c)(ii)** (with Sch. 3 para. 2)
- F35** S. 4(10A) inserted (21.12.2020) by The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy (Amendment) (European Electronic Communications Code and EU Exit) Regulations 2020 (S.I. 2020/1419), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 3(5)**
- F36** Word in s. 4(10A) substituted (31.12.2020) by The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy (Amendment) (European Electronic Communications Code and EU Exit) Regulations 2020 (S.I. 2020/1419), reg. 1(3)(a), **Sch. 1 para. 67(4)**
- F37** Words in s. 4(11) substituted (31.12.2020) by The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy (Amendment) (European Electronic Communications Code and EU Exit) Regulations 2020 (S.I. 2020/1419), reg. 1(3)(a), **Sch. 1 para. 67(5)**
- F38** Words in s. 4(12) omitted (26.5.2011) by virtue of The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy Regulations 2011 (S.I. 2011/1210), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 5(d)** (with Sch. 3 para. 2)
- F39** Words in s. 4(12) inserted (21.12.2020) by The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy (Amendment) (European Electronic Communications Code and EU Exit) Regulations 2020 (S.I. 2020/1419), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 3(6)(a)**
- F40** Words in s. 4(12) inserted (21.12.2020) by The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy (Amendment) (European Electronic Communications Code and EU Exit) Regulations 2020 (S.I. 2020/1419), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 3(6)(b)**
- F41** S. 4(12A)(12B) inserted (21.12.2020) by The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy (Amendment) (European Electronic Communications Code and EU Exit) Regulations 2020 (S.I. 2020/1419), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 3(7)**

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F42 S. 4(13) substituted (21.12.2020) by [The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy \(Amendment\) \(European Electronic Communications Code and EU Exit\) Regulations 2020 \(S.I. 2020/1419\)](#), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 3(8)**

Commencement Information

I9 S. 4 in force at 25.7.2003 for specified purposes by [S.I. 2003/1900](#), arts. 1(2), 2(1), **Sch. 1** (with art. 3) (as amended by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), art. 1(3))

I10 S. 4 in force at 29.12.2003 in so far as not already in force by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), **art. 3(2)** (with art. 11)

[^{F44}**4A.** ^{F43}... **European Commission recommendations for harmonisation** **U.K.**]

(1) This section applies to the following functions of OFCOM—

- (a) their functions under Chapter 1 of Part 2;
- (b) their functions under the enactments relating to the management of the radio spectrum;
- (c) their functions under Chapter 3 of Part 2 in relation to disputes referred to them under section 185;
- (d) their functions under sections 24 and 25 so far as they relate to information required for purposes connected with matters in relation to which functions specified in this subsection are conferred on OFCOM; and
- (e) their functions under section 26 so far as they are carried out for the purpose of making information available to persons mentioned in subsection (2)(a) to (c) of that section.

[^{F45}(2) In carrying out those functions, OFCOM may take account of recommendations issued by the European Commission under Article 19(1) of the Framework Directive or Article 38(1) of the EECC Directive (including recommendations issued before the coming into force of this section or after IP completion day) if the recommendations appear to OFCOM to be relevant to those functions.]

^{F46}(3)]

Textual Amendments

F43 Words in s. 4A heading omitted (31.12.2020) by virtue of [The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy \(Amendment etc.\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019 \(S.I. 2019/246\)](#), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 4(4)**; 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)

F44 S. 4A inserted (26.5.2011) by [The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy Regulations 2011 \(S.I. 2011/1210\)](#), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 6** (with Sch. 3 para. 2)

F45 S. 4A(2) substituted (31.12.2020) by [The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy \(Amendment\) \(European Electronic Communications Code and EU Exit\) Regulations 2020 \(S.I. 2020/1419\)](#), reg. 1(3)(a), **Sch. 1 para. 68**

F46 S. 4A(3) omitted (31.12.2020) by virtue of [The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy \(Amendment etc.\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019 \(S.I. 2019/246\)](#), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 4(3)**; 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)

5 **Directions in respect of networks and spectrum functions** **U.K.**

(1) This section applies to the following functions of OFCOM—

- (a) their functions under Part 2; and

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- (b) their functions under the enactments relating to the management of the radio spectrum that are not contained in that Part.
- (2) It shall be the duty of OFCOM to carry out those functions in accordance with such general or specific directions as may be given to them by the Secretary of State.
- (3) The Secretary of State's power to give directions under this section shall be confined to a power to give directions for one or more of the following purposes—
- (a) in the interests of national security;
 - (b) in the interests of relations with the government of a country or territory outside the United Kingdom;
 - (c) for the purpose of securing compliance with international obligations of the United Kingdom;
 - (d) in the interests of the safety of the public or of public health.
- [^{F47}(3A) The Secretary of State may not give a direction under this section in respect of a function that Article 3(3a) of the Framework Directive [^{F48}would have required] OFCOM to exercise without seeking or taking instructions from any other body.]
- (4) The Secretary of State is not entitled by virtue of any provision of this section to direct OFCOM to suspend or restrict—
- (a) a person's entitlement to provide an electronic communications network or electronic communications service; or
 - (b) a person's entitlement to make available associated facilities.
- [^{F49}(4A) Before giving a direction under this section, the Secretary of State must take due account of the desirability of not favouring—
- (a) one form of electronic communications network, electronic communications service or associated facility, or
 - (b) one means of providing or making available such a network, service or facility, over another.]

(5) The Secretary of State must publish a direction under this section in such manner as appears to him to be appropriate for bringing it to the attention of the persons who, in his opinion, are likely to be affected by it.

(6) The Secretary of State is not required by subsection (5) to publish a direction, and he may exclude matter from a direction he does publish, if he considers the publication of the direction or matter to be—

 - (a) against the interests of national security; or
 - (b) against the interests of relations with the government of a country or territory outside the United Kingdom.

(7) Subsection (4) does not affect the Secretary of State's powers under section 132.

Textual Amendments

F47 S. 5(3A) inserted (26.5.2011) by [The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy Regulations 2011 \(S.I. 2011/1210\)](#), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 7(a)** (with Sch. 3 para. 2)

F48 Words in s. 5(3A) substituted (21.12.2020) by [The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy \(Amendment\) \(European Electronic Communications Code and EU Exit\) Regulations 2020 \(S.I. 2020/1419\)](#), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 5**

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F49 S. 5(4A) inserted (26.5.2011) by [The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy Regulations 2011 \(S.I. 2011/1210\)](#), reg. 1(2), [Sch. 1 para. 7\(b\)](#) (with Sch. 3 para. 2)

Commencement Information

I11 S. 5 in force at 25.7.2003 for specified purposes by [S.I. 2003/1900](#), arts. 1(2), 2(1), [Sch. 1](#) (with art. 3) (as amended by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), art. 1(3))

I12 S. 5 in force at 18.9.2003 in so far as not already in force by [S.I. 2003/1900](#), art. 2(2), [Sch. 2](#)

I13 S. 5 in force at 29.12.2003 in so far as not already in force by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), [art. 3\(2\)](#) (with art. 11)

6 Duties to review regulatory burdens **U.K.**

- (1) OFCOM must keep the carrying out of their functions under review with a view to securing that regulation by OFCOM does not involve—
 - (a) the imposition of burdens which are unnecessary; or
 - (b) the maintenance of burdens which have become unnecessary.
- (2) In reviewing their functions under this section [^{F50}(except their online safety functions)] it shall be the duty of OFCOM—
 - (a) to have regard to the extent to which the matters which they are required under section 3 to further or to secure are already furthered or secured, or are likely to be furthered or secured, by effective self-regulation; and
 - (b) in the light of that, to consider to what extent it would be appropriate to remove or reduce regulatory burdens imposed by OFCOM.
- (3) In determining for the purposes of this section whether procedures for self-regulation are effective OFCOM must consider, in particular—
 - (a) whether those procedures are administered by a person who is sufficiently independent of the persons who may be subjected to the procedures; and
 - (b) whether adequate arrangements are in force for funding the activities of that person in relation to those procedures.
- (4) OFCOM must, from time to time, publish a statement setting out how they propose, during the period for which the statement is made, to secure that regulation by OFCOM does not involve the imposition or maintenance of unnecessary burdens.
- (5) The first statement to be published under this section—
 - (a) must be published as soon as practicable after the commencement of this section; and
 - (b) shall be a statement for the period of twelve months beginning with the day of its publication.
- (6) A subsequent statement—
 - (a) must be published during the period to which the previous statement related; and
 - (b) must be a statement for the period of twelve months beginning with the end of the previous period.
- (7) It shall be the duty of OFCOM, in carrying out their functions at times during a period for which a statement is in force under this section, to have regard to that statement.
- (8) OFCOM may, if they think fit, revise a statement under this section at any time before or during the period for which it is made.

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- (9) Where OFCOM revise a statement, they must publish the revision as soon as practicable.
- (10) The publication under this section of a statement, or of a revision of a statement, must be in such manner as OFCOM consider appropriate for bringing it to the attention of the persons who, in their opinion, are likely to be affected by the matters to which it relates.

[^{F51}(11) In this section “online safety functions” has the same meaning as in section 3.]

Textual Amendments

F50 Words in s. 6(2) inserted (26.10.2023) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), **ss. 91(9)(a)**, 240(4)

F51 S. 6(11) inserted (26.10.2023) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), **ss. 91(9)(b)**, 240(4)

Commencement Information

I14 S. 6 in force at 29.12.2003 by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), **art. 3(1)**, **Sch. 1** (with [art. 11](#))

7 Duty to carry out impact assessments **U.K.**

- (1) This section applies where—
- OFCOM are proposing to do anything for the purposes of, or in connection with, the carrying out of their functions; and
 - it appears to them that the proposal is important;
- but this section does not apply if it appears to OFCOM that the urgency of the matter makes it impracticable or inappropriate for them to comply with the requirements of this section.
- (2) [^{F52}Subject to subsection (2A),] a proposal is important for the purposes of this section only if its implementation would be likely to do one or more of the following—
- to involve a major change in the activities carried on by OFCOM;
 - to have a significant impact on persons carrying on businesses in the markets for any of the services, facilities, apparatus or directories in relation to which OFCOM have functions; or
 - to have a significant impact on the general public in the United Kingdom or in a part of the United Kingdom.

[^{F53}(2A) A proposal to do any of the following is important for the purposes of this section—

- to prepare a code of practice under section 41 of the Online Safety Act 2023;
- to prepare amendments of such a code of practice; or
- to prepare a code of practice as a replacement for such a code of practice.]

- (3) Before implementing their proposal, OFCOM must either—
- carry out and publish an assessment of the likely impact of implementing the proposal; or
 - publish a statement setting out their reasons for thinking that it is unnecessary for them to carry out an assessment.
- (4) An assessment under subsection (3)(a) must set out how, in OFCOM’s opinion, the performance of their general duties (within the meaning of section 3) is secured or furthered by or in relation to what they propose.

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- [^{F54}(4A) An assessment under subsection (3)(a) that relates to a proposal mentioned in subsection (2A) must include an assessment of the likely impact of implementing the proposal on small businesses and micro businesses.
- (4B) An assessment under subsection (3)(a) that relates to a proposal to do anything else for the purposes of, or in connection with, the carrying out of OFCOM's online safety functions (within the meaning of section 235 of the Online Safety Act 2023) must, so far as the proposal relates to such functions, include an assessment of the likely impact of implementing the proposal on small businesses and micro businesses.]
- (5) An assessment carried out under this section—
- (a) may take such form, and
 - (b) must relate to such matters,
- as OFCOM consider appropriate.
- (6) In determining the matters to which an assessment under this section should relate, OFCOM must have regard to such general guidance relating to the carrying out of impact assessments as they consider appropriate.
- (7) Where OFCOM publish an assessment under this section—
- (a) they must provide an opportunity of making representations to them about their proposal to members of the public and other persons who, in OFCOM's opinion, are likely to be affected to a significant extent by its implementation;
 - (b) the published assessment must be accompanied by a statement setting out how representations may be made; and
 - (c) OFCOM are not to implement their proposal unless the period for making representations about it has expired and they have considered all the representations that were made in that period.
- (8) Where OFCOM are required (apart from this section)—
- (a) to consult about a proposal to which this section applies, or
 - (b) to give a person an opportunity of making representations about it,
- the requirements of this section are in addition to, but may be performed contemporaneously with, the other requirements.
- (9) Every report under paragraph 12 of the Schedule to the Office of Communications Act 2002 (c. 11) (OFCOM's annual report) must set out—
- (a) a list of the assessments under this section carried out during the financial year to which the report relates; and
 - (b) a summary of the decisions taken during that year in relation to proposals to which assessments carried out in that year or previous financial years relate.
- (10) The publication of anything under this section must be in such manner as OFCOM consider appropriate for bringing it to the attention of the persons who, in OFCOM's opinion, are likely to be affected if their proposal is implemented.

Textual Amendments

- F52** Words in s. 7(2) inserted (26.10.2023) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), ss. 93(2), 240(4)
- F53** S. 7(2A) inserted (26.10.2023) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), ss. 93(3), 240(4)
- F54** S. 7(4A)(4B) inserted (26.10.2023) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), ss. 93(4), 240(4)

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Commencement Information

I15 S. 7 in force at 29.12.2003 by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), art. 3(1), [Sch. 1](#) (with art. 11)

8 Duty to publish and meet promptness standards **U.K.**

- (1) It shall be the duty of OFCOM to publish a statement setting out the standards they are proposing to meet with respect to promptness in—
 - (a) the carrying out of their different functions; and
 - (b) the transaction of business for purposes connected with the carrying out of those functions.
- (2) This section does not require standards to be set out with respect to anything which (apart from this section) is required to be done by a time, or within a period, provided for by or under an enactment.
- (3) OFCOM may, if they think fit, at any time revise the statement for the time being in force under this section.
- (4) It shall be the duty of OFCOM—
 - (a) in carrying out their functions, and
 - (b) in transacting business for purposes connected with the carrying out of their functions,to have regard to the statement for the time being in force under this section.
- (5) Where OFCOM revise a statement under this section, they must publish the revision as soon as practicable.
- (6) The publication under this section of a statement, or of a revision of a statement, must be in such manner as OFCOM consider appropriate for bringing it to the attention of the persons who, in their opinion, are likely to be affected by the matters to which it relates.
- (7) OFCOM's report under paragraph 12 of the Schedule to the Office of Communications Act 2002 (c. 11) (annual report) for each financial year must contain a statement by OFCOM summarising the extent to which they have complied during that year with the standards set out under this section.

Commencement Information

I16 S. 8 in force at 29.12.2003 by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), art. 3(1), [Sch. 1](#) (with art. 11)

9 Secretary of State's powers in relation to promptness standards **U.K.**

- (1) Where the Secretary of State considers that the statement published by OFCOM under section 8 is not adequate for securing that they meet satisfactory promptness standards, he may give them a notification to that effect.
- (2) If the period of three months after the date of the giving of a notification under subsection (1) expires without OFCOM taking steps which the Secretary of State is satisfied remedy the situation, he may give them a direction under this section.

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- (3) A direction under this section is one requiring OFCOM to issue a new or revised statement under section 8 in accordance with the direction.
- (4) Before giving a direction under this section, the Secretary of State must—
 - (a) give OFCOM an opportunity of making representations to him about his proposed direction; and
 - (b) have regard to any representations made to him by them.
- (5) Where the Secretary of State gives a direction to OFCOM under this section, he must publish a copy of it in such manner as he considers appropriate for bringing it to the attention of persons who, in his opinion, are likely to be affected by OFCOM's promptness standards.
- (6) It shall be the duty of OFCOM to revise their statement under section 8 in accordance with any direction of the Secretary of State under this section.
- (7) In this section “promptness standards” means standards of promptness in—
 - (a) the carrying out by OFCOM of their different functions; and
 - (b) the transaction by them of business for purposes connected with the carrying out of those functions.
- (8) No notification is to be given under subsection (1) at any time in the period of twelve months beginning with the commencement of section 8.

Commencement Information

I17 S. 9 in force at 29.12.2003 by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), art. 3(1), [Sch. 1](#) (with art. 11)

Accessible domestic communications apparatus

10 Duty to encourage availability of easily usable apparatus **U.K.**

- (1) It shall be the duty of OFCOM to take such steps, and to enter into such arrangements, as appear to them calculated to encourage others to secure—
 - (a) that domestic electronic communications apparatus is developed which is capable of being used with ease, and without modification, by the widest possible range of individuals (including those with disabilities); and
 - (b) that domestic electronic communications apparatus which is capable of being so used is as widely available as possible for acquisition by those wishing to use it.
- (2) It shall be the duty of OFCOM from time to time to review whether they need to take further steps, or to enter into further arrangements, for the purpose of performing their duty under this section.
- (3) OFCOM must not do anything under this section that would be inconsistent with the ^{F55}... requirements set out in section 4.
- (4) In this section “electronic communications apparatus” means apparatus that is designed or adapted for a use which consists of or includes the sending or receiving of communications or other signals that are transmitted by means of an electronic communications network.

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- (5) For the purposes of this section electronic communications apparatus is domestic electronic communications apparatus except to the extent that it is designed or adapted for use solely for the purposes of, or in connection with, a business.
- (6) In this section “signal” includes—
- (a) anything comprising speech, music, sounds, visual images or communications or data of any description; and
 - (b) signals serving for the impartation of anything between persons, between a person and a thing or between things, or for the actuation or control of apparatus.

Textual Amendments

F55 Word in s. 10(3) omitted (31.12.2020) by virtue of [The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy \(Amendment etc.\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019 \(S.I. 2019/246\)](#), reg. 1(2), [Sch. 1 para. 6](#); 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)

Commencement Information

I18 S. 10 in force at 29.12.2003 by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), art. 3(1), [Sch. 1](#) (with art. 11)

Media literacy

11 ^[F56]Duties] to promote media literacy **U.K.**

^[F57](A1) In this section—

- (a) subsection (1) imposes duties on OFCOM which apply in relation to material published by means of the electronic media (including by means of regulated services), and
 - (b) subsections (1A) to (1E) expand on those duties, and impose further duties on OFCOM, in relation to regulated services only.]
- (1) It shall be the duty of OFCOM to take such steps, and to enter into such arrangements, as appear to them calculated—
- (a) to bring about, or to encourage others to bring about, a better public understanding of the nature and characteristics of material published by means of the electronic media;
 - (b) to bring about, or to encourage others to bring about, a better public awareness and understanding of the processes by which such material is selected, or made available, for publication by such means;
 - (c) to bring about, or to encourage others to bring about, the development of a better public awareness of the available systems by which access to material published by means of the electronic media is or can be regulated;
 - (d) to bring about, or to encourage others to bring about, the development of a better public awareness of the available systems by which persons to whom such material is made available may control what is received and of the uses to which such systems may be put; and
 - (e) to encourage the development and use of technologies and systems for regulating access to such material, and for facilitating control over what material is received, that are both effective and easy to use.

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Changes to legislation: There are outstanding changes not yet made by the legislation.gov.uk editorial team to Communications Act 2003. Any changes that have already been made by the team appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

- [^{F58}(1A) OFCOM must take such steps, and enter into such arrangements, as they consider most likely to be effective in heightening the public’s awareness and understanding of ways in which they can protect themselves and others when using regulated services, in particular by helping them to—
- (a) understand the nature and impact of harmful content and the harmful ways in which regulated services may be used, especially content and activity disproportionately affecting particular groups, including women and girls;
 - (b) reduce their and others’ exposure to harmful content and to the use of regulated services in harmful ways, especially content and activity disproportionately affecting particular groups, including women and girls;
 - (c) use or apply—
 - (i) features included in a regulated service, including features mentioned in section 15(2) of the Online Safety Act 2023, and
 - (ii) tools or apps, including tools such as browser extensions, so as to mitigate the harms mentioned in paragraph (b);
 - (d) establish the reliability, accuracy and authenticity of content;
 - (e) understand the nature and impact of disinformation and misinformation, and reduce their and others’ exposure to it;
 - (f) understand how their personal information may be protected.
- (1B) OFCOM must take such steps, and enter into such arrangements, as they consider most likely to encourage the development and use of technologies and systems for supporting users of regulated services to protect themselves and others as mentioned in paragraph (a), (b), (c), (d) or (e) of subsection (1A), including technologies and systems which—
- (a) provide further context to users about content they encounter;
 - (b) help users to identify, and provide further context about, content of democratic importance present on regulated user-to-user services;
 - (c) signpost users to resources, tools or information raising awareness about how to use regulated services so as to mitigate the harms mentioned in subsection (1A)(b).
- (1C) OFCOM’s duty under subsection (1A) is to be performed in the following ways (among others)—
- (a) pursuing activities and initiatives,
 - (b) commissioning others to pursue activities and initiatives,
 - (c) taking steps designed to encourage others to pursue activities and initiatives, and
 - (d) making arrangements for the carrying out of research (see section 14(6)(a)).
- (1D) OFCOM must draw up, and from time to time review and revise, a statement recommending ways in which others, including providers of regulated services, might develop, pursue and evaluate activities or initiatives relevant to media literacy in relation to regulated services.
- (1E) OFCOM must publish the statement and any revised statement in such manner as they consider appropriate for bringing it to the attention of the persons who, in their opinion, are likely to be affected by it.]
- (2) In this section, references to the publication of anything by means of the electronic media are references to its being—

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- (a) broadcast so as to be available for reception by members of the public or of a section of the public; or
- (b) distributed by means of an electronic communications network to members of the public or of a section of the public.

[^{F59}(3) In this section and in section 11A, “regulated service” means—

- (a) a regulated user-to-user service, or
- (b) a regulated search service.

“Regulated user-to-user service” and “regulated search service” have the same meaning as in the Online Safety Act 2023 (see section 4 of that Act).

(4) In this section—

- (a) “content”, in relation to regulated services, means regulated user-generated content, search content or fraudulent advertisements;
- (b) the following terms have the same meaning as in the Online Safety Act 2023—
 - “content of democratic importance” (see section 17 of that Act);
 - “fraudulent advertisement” (see sections 38 and 39 of that Act);
 - “harm” (see section 234 of that Act) (and “harmful” is to be interpreted consistently with that section);
 - “provider” (see section 226 of that Act);
 - “regulated user-generated content” (see section 55 of that Act);
 - “search content” (see section 57 of that Act).]

Textual Amendments

- F56** Word in s. 11 heading substituted (10.1.2024) by Online Safety Act 2023 (c. 50), ss. 165(5), 240(1); S.I. 2023/1420, reg. 2(z19)
- F57** S. 11(A1) inserted (10.1.2024) by Online Safety Act 2023 (c. 50), ss. 165(2), 240(1); S.I. 2023/1420, reg. 2(z19)
- F58** S. 11(1A)-(1E) inserted (10.1.2024) by Online Safety Act 2023 (c. 50), ss. 165(3), 240(1); S.I. 2023/1420, reg. 2(z19)
- F59** S. 11(3)(4) inserted (10.1.2024) by Online Safety Act 2023 (c. 50), ss. 165(4), 240(1); S.I. 2023/1420, reg. 2(z19)

Commencement Information

- I19** S. 11 in force at 29.12.2003 by S.I. 2003/3142, art. 3(1), Sch. 1 (with art. 11)

[^{F60}11A Regulated services: media literacy strategy and media literacy statement **U.K.**

- (1) OFCOM must prepare and publish a media literacy strategy within the period of one year beginning with the day on which the Online Safety Act 2023 is passed.
- (2) A media literacy strategy is a plan setting out how OFCOM propose to exercise their functions under section 11 in the period covered by the plan, which must be not more than three years.
- (3) In particular, a media literacy strategy must state OFCOM’s objectives and priorities for the period it covers.

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- (4) Before the end of the period covered by a media literacy strategy, OFCOM must prepare and publish a media literacy strategy for a further period, ensuring that each successive strategy covers a period beginning immediately after the end of the last one.
- (5) In preparing or revising a media literacy strategy, OFCOM must consult such persons as they consider appropriate.
- (6) OFCOM’s annual report must contain a media literacy statement.
- (7) A media literacy statement is a statement by OFCOM—
 - (a) summarising what they have done in the financial year to which the report relates in the exercise of their functions under section 11, and
 - (b) assessing what progress has been made towards achieving the objectives and priorities set out in their media literacy strategy in that year.
- (8) A media literacy statement must include a summary and an evaluation of the activities and initiatives pursued or commissioned by OFCOM in the exercise of their functions under section 11 in the financial year to which the report relates.
- (9) The first annual report that is required to contain a media literacy statement is the report for the financial year during which OFCOM’s first media literacy strategy is published, and that first statement is to relate to the period from publication day until the end of that financial year.
- (10) But if OFCOM’s first media literacy strategy is published during the second half of a financial year—
 - (a) the first annual report that is required to contain a media literacy statement is the report for the next financial year, and
 - (b) that first statement is to relate to the period from publication day until the end of that financial year.
- (11) References in this section to OFCOM’s functions under section 11 are to those functions so far as they relate to regulated services.
- (12) In this section—

“annual report” means OFCOM’s annual report under paragraph 12 of the Schedule to the Office of Communications Act 2002;

“financial year” means a year ending with 31 March.]

Textual Amendments

F60 S. 11A inserted (10.1.2024) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), ss. 166, 240(1); S.I. 2023/1420, reg. 2(z19)

OFCOM’s Content Board

12 Duty to establish and maintain Content Board U.K.

- (1) It shall be the duty of OFCOM, in accordance with the following provisions of this section, to exercise their powers under paragraph 14 of the Schedule to the Office of Communications Act 2002 (c. 11) (committees of OFCOM) to establish and maintain a committee to be known as “the Content Board”.

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- (2) The Content Board shall consist of—
 - (a) a chairman appointed by OFCOM; and
 - (b) such number of other members appointed by OFCOM as OFCOM think fit.
- (3) The chairman of the Content Board must be a non-executive member of OFCOM but is not to be the chairman of OFCOM.
- (4) At least one of the other members of the Content Board must also be a non-executive member of OFCOM other than the chairman of OFCOM.
- (5) In appointing persons to be members of the Content Board, OFCOM must secure that, for each of the following parts of the United Kingdom—
 - (a) England,
 - (b) Scotland,
 - (c) Wales, and
 - (d) Northern Ireland,there is a different member of the Board capable of representing the interests and opinions of persons living in that part of the United Kingdom.
- (6) In appointing a person for the purposes of subsection (5)(a), OFCOM must have regard to the desirability of ensuring that the person appointed is able to represent the interests and opinions of persons living in all the different regions of England.
- (7) The validity of any proceedings of the Content Board shall not be affected by any failure by OFCOM to comply with subsection (5) or (6).
- (8) It shall be the duty of OFCOM when appointing members of the Content Board to secure, so far as practicable, that a majority of the members of the Board (counting the chairman) consists of persons who are neither members nor employees of OFCOM.
- (9) The following shall be disqualified from being the chairman or another member of the Content Board—
 - (a) governors and employees of the BBC;
 - (b) members and employees of the Welsh Authority; and
 - (c) members and employees of C4C.
- (10) Before appointing a person to be the chairman or another member of the Content Board, OFCOM must satisfy themselves that he will not have any financial or other interest which would be likely prejudicially to affect the carrying out by him of any of his functions as chairman or member of the Content Board.
- (11) A person is not to be taken to have such an interest by reason only that he is or will be a member or employee of OFCOM.
- (12) Every person whom OFCOM propose to appoint to be the chairman or another member of the Content Board, shall, whenever requested to do so by OFCOM, furnish OFCOM with any information they consider necessary for the performance of their duty under subsection (10).
- (13) In addition to paying remuneration and expenses under paragraph 14(4) of the Schedule to the Office of Communications Act 2002 (c. 11), OFCOM may—
 - (a) pay to, or in respect of, any member of the Content Board who is not a member or employee of OFCOM, such sums by way of pensions, allowances or gratuities as OFCOM may determine; and

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- (b) provide for the making of such payments to or in respect of any such member of the Content Board.
- (14) In subsection (13)—
- (a) the reference to pensions, allowances and gratuities includes a reference to similar benefits payable on death or retirement; and
 - (b) the reference to providing for the payment of a pension, allowance or gratuity to, or in respect of, a person includes a reference to the making of payments towards the provision or payment of a pension, allowance or gratuity, or of any such similar benefits, to or in respect of that person.

Commencement Information

I20 S. 12 in force at 29.12.2003 by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), art. 3(1), [Sch. 1](#) (with art. 11)

13 Functions of the Content Board **U.K.**

- (1) The Content Board shall have such functions as OFCOM, in exercise of their powers under the Schedule to the Office of Communications Act 2002 (c. 11), may confer on the Board.
 - (2) [^{F61}Subject to subsection (3A),] the functions conferred on the Board must include, to such extent and subject to such restrictions and approvals as OFCOM may determine, the carrying out on OFCOM's behalf—
 - (a) functions in relation to matters that concern the contents of anything which is or may be broadcast or otherwise transmitted by means of electronic communications networks; and
 - (b) functions in relation to the promotion of public understanding or awareness of matters relating to the publication of matter by means of the electronic media.
 - (3) In determining what functions to confer on the Content Board, OFCOM must have particular regard to the desirability of securing that the Board have at least a significant influence on decisions which—
 - (a) relate to the matters mentioned in subsection (2); and
 - (b) involve the consideration of different interests and other factors as respects different parts of the United Kingdom.
- [^{F62}(3A) OFCOM may, but need not, confer on the Content Board functions in relation to matters that concern the nature or kind of online content in relation to which OFCOM have functions under the Online Safety Act 2023 (see Parts 3 and 5 of that Act).]
- (4) It shall be the duty of the Content Board to ensure, in relation to—
 - (a) the carrying out of OFCOM's functions under Part 3 of this Act, Parts 1 and 3 of the 1990 Act and Parts 1 and 2 of the 1996 Act,
 - (b) the matters with respect to which functions are conferred on the Board, and
 - (c) such other matters mentioned in subsection (2) as OFCOM may determine,that OFCOM are aware of the different interests and other factors which, in the Board's opinion, need to be taken into account as respects the different parts of the United Kingdom in relation to the carrying out of OFCOM's functions.

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- (5) The power of OFCOM to determine the Content Board’s functions includes power to authorise the Board to establish committees and panels to advise the Board on the carrying out of some or all of the Board’s functions.
- (6) The power of OFCOM to authorise the establishment of a committee or panel by the Content Board includes power to authorise the establishment of a committee or panel that includes persons who are not members of the Board.
- (7) In this section references to the publication of anything by means of the electronic media are references to its being—
- (a) broadcast so as to be available for reception by members of the public or of a section of the public; or
 - (b) distributed by means of an electronic communications network to members of the public or of a section of the public.
- [^{F63}(8) In this section references to “matters mentioned in subsection (2)” do not include references to the matters mentioned in subsection (3A).]

Textual Amendments

- F61** Words in s. 13(2) inserted (10.1.2024) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), **ss. 153(2)**, 240(1); S.I. 2023/1420, reg. 2(z18)
- F62** S. 13(3A) inserted (10.1.2024) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), **ss. 153(3)**, 240(1); S.I. 2023/1420, reg. 2(z18)
- F63** S. 13(8) inserted (10.1.2024) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), **ss. 153(4)**, 240(1); S.I. 2023/1420, reg. 2(z18)

Commencement Information

- I21** S. 13 in force at 29.12.2003 by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), art. 3(1), **Sch. 1** (with art. 11)

Functions for the protection of consumers

14 Consumer research **U.K.**

- (1) OFCOM must make arrangements for ascertaining—
- (a) the state of public opinion from time to time about the manner in which electronic communications networks and electronic communications services are provided;
 - (b) the state of public opinion from time to time about the manner in which associated facilities are made available;
 - (c) the experiences of consumers in the markets for electronic communications services and associated facilities, in relation to the manner in which electronic communications networks and electronic communications services are provided and associated facilities made available;
 - (d) the experiences of such consumers in relation to the handling, by communications providers and by persons making such facilities available, of complaints made to them by such consumers;
 - (e) the experiences of such consumers in relation to the resolution of disputes with communications providers or with persons making associated facilities available; and

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- (f) the interests and experiences of such consumers in relation to other matters that are incidental to, or are otherwise connected with, their experiences of the provision of electronic communications networks and electronic communications services or of the availability of associated facilities.
- (2) The matters to which the arrangements must relate do not include the incidence or investigation of interference (within the meaning of [^{F64}the Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006]) with wireless telegraphy.
 - (3) The matters to which the arrangements must relate do not (except so far as authorised or required by subsections (4) to (6)) include public opinion with respect to—
 - (a) the contents of anything broadcast or otherwise published by means of an electronic communications network; or
 - (b) the experiences or interests of consumers in any market for electronic communications services with respect to anything so broadcast or published.
 - (4) OFCOM must make arrangements for ascertaining—
 - (a) the state of public opinion from time to time concerning programmes included in television and radio services;
 - (b) any effects of such programmes, or of other material published by means of the electronic media, on the attitudes or behaviour of persons who watch, listen to or receive the programmes or material; and
 - (c) so far as necessary for the purpose mentioned in subsection (5), the types of programmes that members of the public would like to see included in television and radio services.
 - (5) That purpose is the carrying out by OFCOM of their functions under Chapter 4 of Part 3 of this Act.
 - (6) OFCOM must make arrangements for the carrying out of research into the following—
 - (a) the matters mentioned in section 11(1) [^{F65}, (1A) and (1B)];
 - (b) matters relating to, or connected with, the setting of standards under section 319 of this Act;
 - (c) matters relating to, or connected with, the observance of those standards by persons providing television and radio services;
 - (d) matters relating to, or connected with, the prevention of unjust or unfair treatment in programmes included in such services; and
 - (e) matters relating to, or connected with, the prevention of unwarranted infringements of privacy resulting from activities carried on for the purposes of such services.
- [^{F66}(6A) OFCOM must make arrangements for ascertaining—
- (a) the state of public opinion from time to time about the way in which postal services are provided;
 - (b) the experiences of consumers in the markets for postal services, in relation to the way in which those services are provided;
 - (c) the experiences of such consumers in relation to the handling, by persons providing postal services, of complaints made to them by such consumers;
 - (d) the experiences of such consumers in relation to the resolution of disputes with persons providing postal services;

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- (e) the interests and experiences of such consumers in relation to matters that are incidental to or otherwise connected with their experiences of the provision of postal services.]
- [^{F67}(6B) OFCOM must make arrangements for ascertaining—
- (a) the state of public opinion from time to time concerning providers of regulated services and their manner of operating their services;
 - (b) the experiences of United Kingdom users of regulated services in relation to their use of such services;
 - (c) the experiences of United Kingdom users of regulated user-to-user services and regulated search services in relation to the handling of complaints made by them to providers of such services; and
 - (d) the interests and experiences of United Kingdom users of regulated services in relation to matters that are incidental to or otherwise connected with their experiences of using such services.
- (6C) OFCOM’s report under paragraph 12 of the Schedule to the Office of Communications Act 2002 for each financial year must contain a statement by OFCOM about the research that has been carried out in that year under subsection (6B).]
- (7) Arrangements made by OFCOM for the purposes of this section may include arrangements for the carrying out of research in one or more of the following ways—
- (a) by members or employees of OFCOM;
 - (b) by the Content Board;
 - (c) in accordance with arrangements made by that Board;
 - (d) by persons who are neither members nor employees of OFCOM.
- (8) In this section references to the publication of anything by means of the electronic media are references to its being—
- (a) broadcast so as to be available for reception by members of the public or of a section of the public; or
 - (b) distributed by means of an electronic communications network to members of the public or of a section of the public.
- [^{F68}(8A) In subsection (6B) the following terms have the same meaning as in the Online Safety Act 2023—
- “provider” (see section 226 of that Act);
- “regulated service”, “regulated user-to-user service” and “regulated search service” (see section 4 of that Act);
- “United Kingdom user” (see section 227 of that Act).]
- (9) This section does not restrict OFCOM’s power to make any arrangements they consider to be incidental or conducive to the carrying out of any of their functions.

Textual Amendments

- F64** Words in s. 14(2) substituted (8.2.2007) by [Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006 \(c. 36\), s. 126\(2\), Sch. 7 para. 26](#)
- F65** Words in s. 14(6)(a) inserted (10.1.2024) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\), ss. 165\(6\), 240\(1\); S.I. 2023/1420, reg. 2\(z19\)](#)
- F66** S. 14(6A) inserted (1.10.2011) by [Postal Services Act 2011 \(c. 5\), s. 93\(2\)\(3\), Sch. 12 para. 58; S.I. 2011/2329, art. 3](#)

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F67 S. 14(6B)(6C) inserted (26.10.2023 for specified purposes, 10.1.2024 in so far as not already in force) by Online Safety Act 2023 (c. 50), ss. 154(2), 240(4); S.I. 2023/1420, reg. 2(z18)

F68 S. 14(8A) inserted (26.10.2023 for specified purposes, 10.1.2024 in so far as not already in force) by Online Safety Act 2023 (c. 50), ss. 154(3), 240(4); S.I. 2023/1420, reg. 2(z18)

Commencement Information

I22 S. 14 in force at 29.12.2003 by S.I. 2003/3142, art. 3(1), Sch. 1 (with art. 11)

15 Duty to publish and take account of research **U.K.**

- (1) It shall be the duty of OFCOM—
 - (a) to publish the results of any research carried out by them or on their behalf under section 14; and
 - (b) to consider and, to such extent as they think fit, to take account of the results of such research in the carrying out of their functions.
- (2) OFCOM are not required under this section—
 - (a) to publish any matter that is confidential in accordance with subsection (3) or (4); or
 - (b) to publish anything that it would not be reasonably practicable to publish without disclosing such a matter.
- (3) A matter is confidential under this subsection if—
 - (a) it relates specifically to the affairs of a particular body; and
 - (b) publication of that matter would or might, in OFCOM's opinion, seriously and prejudicially affect the interests of that body.
- (4) A matter is confidential under this subsection if—
 - (a) it relates to the private affairs of an individual; and
 - (b) publication of that matter would or might, in OFCOM's opinion, seriously and prejudicially affect the interests of that individual.
- (5) The publication of research under this section must be in such manner as OFCOM consider appropriate.

Commencement Information

I23 S. 15 in force at 29.12.2003 by S.I. 2003/3142, art. 3(1), Sch. 1 (with art. 11)

16 Consumer consultation **U.K.**

- (1) It shall be the duty of OFCOM to establish and maintain effective arrangements for consultation about the carrying out of their functions with—
 - (a) consumers in the markets for the services and facilities in relation to which OFCOM have functions;
 - (b) consumers in the markets for apparatus used in connection with any such services or facilities [^{F69}(other than postal services)] ;
 - (c) consumers in the markets for directories capable of being used in connection with the use of an electronic communications network or electronic communications service.

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- (2) The arrangements must include the establishment and maintenance of a panel of persons (in this Act referred to as “the Consumer Panel”) with the function of advising both—
- (a) OFCOM; and
 - (b) such other persons as the Panel think fit.
- (3) The arrangements must secure that the matters about which the Consumer Panel are able to give advice include the interests of domestic and small business consumers in relation to the following matters—
- (a) the provision of electronic communications networks;
 - (b) the provision and making available of the services and facilities mentioned in subsection (4);
 - (c) the supply of apparatus designed or adapted for use in connection with [^{F70}a service or facility mentioned in subsection (4)(a) to (e)] ;
 - (d) the supply of directories capable of being used in connection with the use of an electronic communications network or electronic communications service;
 - (e) the financial and other terms on which [^{F71}services or facilities mentioned in subsection (4)] are provided or made available, or on which such apparatus or such a directory is supplied;
 - (f) standards of service, quality and safety for such services, facilities, apparatus and directories;
 - (g) the handling of complaints made by persons who are consumers in the markets for such services, facilities, apparatus or directories to the persons who provide the services or make the facilities available, or who are suppliers of the apparatus or directories;
 - (h) the resolution of disputes between such consumers and the persons who provide such services or make such facilities available, or who are suppliers of such apparatus or directories;
 - (i) the provision of remedies and redress in respect of matters that form the subject-matter of such complaints or disputes;
 - (j) the information about service standards and the rights of consumers that is made available by persons who provide or make available such services or facilities, or who are suppliers of such apparatus or directories;
 - (k) any other matter appearing to the Panel to be necessary for securing effective protection for persons who are consumers in the markets for any such services, facilities, apparatus or directories.
- (4) Those services and facilities are—
- (a) electronic communications services;
 - (b) associated facilities;
 - (c) directory enquiry facilities;
 - (d) a service consisting in the supply of information for use in responding to directory enquiries or of an electronic programme guide; ^{F72} ...
 - [^{F73}(da) regulated services;]
 - (e) every service or facility not falling within any of the preceding paragraphs which is provided or made available to members of the public—
 - (i) by means of an electronic communications network; and

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- (ii) in pursuance of agreements entered into between the person by whom the service or facility is provided or made available and each of those members of the public.
- [^{F74}(f) postal services.]
- (5) The matters about which the Consumer Panel are to be able to give advice do not include any matter that concerns the contents of anything which is or may be broadcast or otherwise transmitted by means of electronic communications networks.
- [^{F75}(5A) As regards OFCOM's functions under the Online Safety Act 2023 in relation to regulated services—
 - (a) the reference in subsection (5) to “the contents” of a thing includes a reference to specific pieces of online content, but
 - (b) subsection (5) is not to be read as preventing the Consumer Panel from being able to give advice about any matter that more generally concerns—
 - (i) different kinds of online content in relation to which OFCOM have functions under that Act (see Parts 3 and 5 of that Act), and
 - (ii) the impact that different kinds of such content may have on United Kingdom users of regulated services.]
- (6) The arrangements made by OFCOM under this section must also secure that the Consumer Panel are able, in addition to giving advice on the matters mentioned in subsection (3), to do each of the following—
 - (a) at the request of OFCOM, to carry out research for OFCOM in relation to any of the matters in relation to which OFCOM have functions under section 14;
 - (b) to make arrangements for the carrying out of research into such other matters appearing to the Panel to be relevant to the carrying out of the Panel's functions as they think fit;
 - (c) to give advice to OFCOM in relation to any matter referred to the Panel by OFCOM for advice;
 - (d) to publish such information as the Panel think fit about the advice they give, about the carrying out of the Panel's other functions and about the results of research carried out by them or on their behalf.
- (7) It shall be the duty of OFCOM, in the carrying out of their functions, to consider and, to such extent as they think appropriate, to have regard to—
 - (a) any advice given to OFCOM by the Consumer Panel; and
 - (b) any results notified to OFCOM of any research undertaken by that Panel.
- (8) It shall also be the duty of OFCOM (subject to subsection (9))—
 - (a) to provide the Consumer Panel with all such information as, having regard, in particular, to the need to preserve commercial confidentiality, OFCOM consider appropriate to disclose to the Panel for the purpose of enabling the Panel to carry out their functions; and
 - (b) to provide the Panel with all such further information as the Panel may require.
- (9) OFCOM are not required to provide information by virtue of subsection (8)(b) if, having regard to—
 - (a) the need to preserve commercial confidentiality, and
 - (b) any other matters that appear to OFCOM to be relevant,it is reasonable for OFCOM to refuse to disclose it to the Panel.

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- (10) It shall be the duty of OFCOM, in the case of any advice or opinion received from and published by the Panel which OFCOM propose to disregard in whole or in part, or with which OFCOM disagree in whole or in part—
- (a) to ensure that the Panel know OFCOM’s reasons for disregarding or disagreeing with the advice or opinion; and
 - (b) to ensure that those reasons are or have been published in such manner as OFCOM consider appropriate for bringing them to the attention of persons who are aware of the Panel’s advice or opinion.
- (11) The Consumer Panel must—
- (a) as soon as practicable after the end of the period of twelve months beginning with the commencement of this section, and
 - (b) as soon as practicable after the end of each subsequent period of twelve months,
- prepare a report on the carrying out of their functions in that period.
- (12) The Consumer Panel must publish each report—
- (a) as soon as practicable after its preparation is complete; and
 - (b) in such manner as they consider appropriate.
- [^{F76}(12A) OFCOM’s report under paragraph 12 of the Schedule to the Office of Communications Act 2002 for each financial year must contain a statement by OFCOM about the arrangements for consultation that have been made in that year under this section, so far as the arrangements relate to regulated services.]
- (13) In this section—
- “domestic and small business consumer” means a person who—
- (a) is a consumer in the market for services or facilities mentioned in subsection (4) or for apparatus designed or adapted for use in connection with [^{F77}a service or facility mentioned in subsection (4)(a) to (e)]; but
 - (b) is neither—
 - (i) a communications provider or a person who makes associated facilities available [^{F78}or a provider of a regulated service]; nor
 - (ii) a person who is a consumer in the market in respect of an undertaking carried on by him for which more than ten individuals work (whether as employees or volunteers or otherwise);
- “electronic programme guide” means a service which consists of—
- (a) the listing or promotion, or both the listing and the promotion, of some or all of the programmes included in any one or more programme services the providers of which are or include persons other than the provider of the guide; and
 - (b) a facility for obtaining access, in whole or in part, to the programme service or services listed or promoted in the guide.
- [^{F79}(14) In this section the following terms have the same meaning as in the Online Safety Act 2023—
- “provider”, in relation to a regulated service (see section 226 of that Act);
- “regulated service” (see section 4 of that Act);
- “United Kingdom user” (see section 227 of that Act).]

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Textual Amendments

- F69** Words in s. 16(1)(b) inserted (1.10.2011) by [Postal Services Act 2011 \(c. 5\)](#), s. 93(2)(3), [Sch. 12 para. 59\(2\)](#); [S.I. 2011/2329](#), art. 3
- F70** Words in s. 16(3)(c) substituted (1.10.2011) by [Postal Services Act 2011 \(c. 5\)](#), s. 93(2)(3), [Sch. 12 para. 59\(3\)\(a\)](#); [S.I. 2011/2329](#), art. 3
- F71** Words in s. 16(3)(e) substituted (1.10.2011) by [Postal Services Act 2011 \(c. 5\)](#), s. 93(2)(3), [Sch. 12 para. 59\(3\)\(b\)](#); [S.I. 2011/2329](#), art. 3
- F72** Word in s. 16(4)(d) omitted (1.10.2011) by virtue of [Postal Services Act 2011 \(c. 5\)](#), s. 93(2)(3), [Sch. 12 para. 59\(4\)\(a\)](#); [S.I. 2011/2329](#), art. 3
- F73** [S. 16\(4\)\(da\)](#) inserted (10.1.2024) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), [ss. 155\(2\)](#), 240(1); [S.I. 2023/1420](#), reg. 2(z18)
- F74** [S. 16\(4\)\(f\)](#) inserted (1.10.2011) by [Postal Services Act 2011 \(c. 5\)](#), s. 93(2)(3), [Sch. 12 para. 59\(4\)\(b\)](#); [S.I. 2011/2329](#), art. 3
- F75** [S. 16\(5A\)](#) inserted (10.1.2024) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), [ss. 155\(3\)](#), 240(1); [S.I. 2023/1420](#), reg. 2(z18)
- F76** [S. 16\(12A\)](#) inserted (10.1.2024) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), [ss. 155\(4\)](#), 240(1); [S.I. 2023/1420](#), reg. 2(z18)
- F77** Words in s. 16(13) substituted (1.10.2011) by [Postal Services Act 2011 \(c. 5\)](#), s. 93(2)(3), [Sch. 12 para. 59\(5\)](#); [S.I. 2011/2329](#), art. 3
- F78** Words in s. 16(13) inserted (10.1.2024) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), [ss. 155\(5\)](#), 240(1); [S.I. 2023/1420](#), reg. 2(z18)
- F79** [S. 16\(14\)](#) inserted (10.1.2024) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), [ss. 155\(6\)](#), 240(1); [S.I. 2023/1420](#), reg. 2(z18)

Commencement Information

- I24** [S. 16](#) in force at 29.12.2003 by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), art. 3(1), [Sch. 1](#) (with art. 11)

17 Membership etc. of the Consumer Panel **U.K.**

- (1) The members of the Consumer Panel shall be appointed by OFCOM and shall comprise a chairman and such other members as OFCOM may determine.
- (2) The approval of the Secretary of State is required for the appointment of a person to be the chairman or to be another member of the Panel.
- (3) In appointing persons to be members of the Consumer Panel, OFCOM must secure that, for each of the following parts of the United Kingdom—
 - (a) England,
 - (b) Scotland,
 - (c) Wales, and
 - (d) Northern Ireland,there is a different member of the Panel capable of representing the interests and opinions of persons living in that part of the United Kingdom.
- (4) In appointing persons to be members of the Consumer Panel, OFCOM must secure, so far as practicable, that the Panel are able to give informed advice about matters referable to each of the following—
 - (a) the interests of persons living in rural areas;
 - (b) the interests of persons living in urban areas;
 - (c) the interests of small businesses;

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- (d) the interests of disadvantaged persons, persons with low incomes and persons with disabilities; and
- (e) the interests of the elderly.

[^{F80}(4A) The Secretary of State may direct OFCOM to appoint as a member of the Consumer Panel a person specified by the Secretary of State who—

- [^{F81}(a) is an employee of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (“Citizens Advice”), and
- (b) is nominated for the purposes of this subsection by Citizens Advice after consultation with OFCOM.]

(4B) Only one person may, at any time, be a member of the Consumer Panel appointed in accordance with a direction under subsection (4A); but that does not prevent OFCOM appointing as a member of the Consumer Panel any person who is also [^{F82}an employee of Citizens Advice] .

[The Secretary of State may direct OFCOM to appoint as a member of the Consumer Panel a person specified by the Secretary of State who—

- [^{F83}(4BA) (a) is an employee of the Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (“Citizens Advice Scotland”) Citizens Advice Scotland, and
- (b) is nominated for the purposes of this subsection by Citizens Advice Scotland after consultation with OFCOM.

(4BB) Only one person may, at any time, be a member of the Consumer Panel appointed in accordance with a direction under subsection (4BA); but that does not prevent OFCOM appointing as a member of the Consumer Panel any person who is also an employee of Citizens Advice Scotland.]

[The Secretary of State may direct OFCOM to appoint as a member of the Consumer Panel a person specified by the Secretary of State who—

- [^{F84}(4BC) (a) is a member or a member of staff of Consumer Scotland, and
- (b) is nominated for the purposes of this subsection by Consumer Scotland after consultation with OFCOM.

(4BD) Only one person may, at any time, be a member of the Consumer Panel appointed in accordance with a direction under subsection (4BC); but that does not prevent OFCOM appointing as a member of the Consumer Panel any person who is also a member or member of staff of Consumer Scotland.]

[^{F85}(4C) A person appointed in accordance with a direction under subsection (4A) or (4BA) ceases to be a member of the Consumer Panel—

- (a) on ceasing to be an employee of Citizens Advice or, as the case may be, Citizens Advice Scotland, or
- (b) if Citizens Advice or, as the case may be, Citizens Advice Scotland decide that the person is no longer to be on the Consumer Panel.]]

[^{F86}(4D) A person appointed in accordance with a direction under subsection (4BC) ceases to be a member of the Consumer Panel—

- (a) on ceasing to be a member or, as the case may be, a member of staff of Consumer Scotland, or
- (b) if Consumer Scotland decides that the person is no longer to be on the Consumer Panel.]

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- (5) The validity of any proceedings of the Consumer Panel shall not be affected by any failure by OFCOM to comply with [F87 subsections (3) to (4A)] [F88, (4BA) and (4BC)].
- (6) It shall be the duty of the Consumer Panel, in carrying out their functions, to have regard to the following interests—
- (a) the interests of persons from the different parts of the United Kingdom; and
 - (b) the interests specified in subsection (4).
- (7) A person shall be disqualified from being the chairman or a member of the Consumer Panel if he is a member or employee of OFCOM.
- (8) The chairman and every member of the Consumer Panel—
- (a) shall be appointed for a fixed period specified in the terms of his appointment but shall be eligible for re-appointment at the end of that period; and
 - (b) may at any time be removed from the Panel by a notice given by OFCOM with the approval of the Secretary of State.
- (9) OFCOM may pay to the chairman and to any other member of the Consumer Panel such remuneration and allowances as OFCOM consider appropriate.

Textual Amendments

- F80** S. 17(4A)-(4C) inserted (21.12.2007) by Consumers, Estate Agents and Redress Act 2007 (c. 17), **ss. 40(a)**, 66(2) (with s. 6(9)); S.I. 2007/3546, art. 3, Sch.
- F81** S. 17(4A)(a)(b) substituted (1.4.2014) by The Public Bodies (Abolition of the National Consumer Council and Transfer of the Office of Fair Trading's Functions in relation to Estate Agents etc) Order 2014 (S.I. 2014/631), art. 1(3), **Sch. 1 para. 11(2)(a)** (with Sch. 1 para. 28, Sch. 2 paras. 13-15)
- F82** Words in s. 17(4B) substituted (1.4.2014) by The Public Bodies (Abolition of the National Consumer Council and Transfer of the Office of Fair Trading's Functions in relation to Estate Agents etc) Order 2014 (S.I. 2014/631), art. 1(3), **Sch. 1 para. 11(2)(b)** (with Sch. 1 para. 28, Sch. 2 paras. 13-15)
- F83** S. 17(4BA)(4BB) inserted (1.4.2014) by The Public Bodies (Abolition of the National Consumer Council and Transfer of the Office of Fair Trading's Functions in relation to Estate Agents etc) Order 2014 (S.I. 2014/631), art. 1(3), **Sch. 1 para. 11(2)(c)** (with Sch. 1 para. 28, Sch. 2 paras. 13-15)
- F84** S. 17(4BC)(4BD) inserted (13.1.2022) by The Consumer Scotland Act 2020 (Consequential Provisions and Modifications) Order 2022 (S.I. 2022/34), art. 1(1), **Sch. para. 6(2)(a)** (with art. 5)
- F85** S. 17(4C) substituted (1.4.2014) by The Public Bodies (Abolition of the National Consumer Council and Transfer of the Office of Fair Trading's Functions in relation to Estate Agents etc) Order 2014 (S.I. 2014/631), art. 1(3), **Sch. 1 para. 11(2)(d)** (with Sch. 1 para. 28, Sch. 2 paras. 13-15)
- F86** S. 17(4D) inserted (13.1.2022) by The Consumer Scotland Act 2020 (Consequential Provisions and Modifications) Order 2022 (S.I. 2022/34), art. 1(1), **Sch. para. 6(2)(b)** (with art. 5)
- F87** Words in s. 17(5) substituted (21.12.2007) by Consumers, Estate Agents and Redress Act 2007 (c. 17), **ss. 40(b)**, 66(2) (with s. 6(9)); S.I. 2007/3546, art. 3, Sch.
- F88** Words in s. 17(5) substituted (13.1.2022) by The Consumer Scotland Act 2020 (Consequential Provisions and Modifications) Order 2022 (S.I. 2022/34), art. 1(1), **Sch. para. 6(2)(c)** (with art. 5)

Commencement Information

- I25** S. 17 in force at 29.12.2003 by S.I. 2003/3142, art. 3(1), **Sch. 1** (with art. 11)

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18 Committees and other procedure of the Consumer Panel **U.K.**

- (1) The Consumer Panel may make such arrangements as they think fit for committees established by the Panel to give advice to them about matters relating to the carrying out of the Panel's functions.
- (2) The Consumer Panel may make such other arrangements for regulating their own procedure, and for regulating the procedure of the committees established by them, as they think fit.
- (3) Those arrangements may include arrangements as to quorums and as to the making of decisions by a majority.
- (4) The committees established by the Panel may include committees the membership of which includes persons (including persons constituting a majority of the committee) who are not members of the Panel.
- (5) The membership of every committee established by the Consumer Panel must contain at least one person who is a member of the Panel.
- (6) Where a person who is not a member of the Consumer Panel is a member of a committee established by the Panel, OFCOM may pay to that person such remuneration and expenses as OFCOM may determine.

Commencement Information

I26 S. 18 in force at 29.12.2003 by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), art. 3(1), [Sch. 1](#) (with art. 11)

19 Power to amend remit of Consumer Panel **U.K.**

- (1) The Secretary of State may by order modify subsection (3) of section 16 so as to add to the matters about which the Consumer Panel are required to be able to give advice.
- (2) Before making an order under this section the Secretary of State must consult OFCOM and such other persons as he thinks fit.
- (3) No order is to be made containing provision authorised by this section unless a draft of the order has been laid before Parliament and approved by a resolution of each House.
- (4) The power to amend or revoke an order under this section does not include power to provide for a matter to cease to be a matter about which the Consumer Panel are required to be able to give advice.

Commencement Information

I27 S. 19 in force at 29.12.2003 by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), art. 3(1), [Sch. 1](#) (with art. 11)

Advisory committees

20 Advisory committees for different parts of the United Kingdom **U.K.**

- (1) It shall be the duty of OFCOM, in accordance with the following provisions of this section, to exercise their powers under paragraph 14 of the Schedule to the Office of

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Communications Act 2002 (c. 11) (committees of OFCOM) to establish and maintain a committee for each of the following parts of the United Kingdom—

- (a) England;
 - (b) Wales;
 - (c) Scotland; and
 - (d) Northern Ireland.
- (2) Each committee shall consist of—
- (a) a chairman appointed by OFCOM; and
 - (b) such number of other members appointed by OFCOM as OFCOM think fit.
- (3) In appointing a person in accordance with this section to be a member of a committee, OFCOM must have regard to the desirability of ensuring that the person appointed is able to represent the interests and opinions, in relation to communications matters, of persons living in the part of the United Kingdom for which the committee has been established.
- (4) The function of each committee shall be to provide advice to OFCOM (including other committees established by OFCOM) about the interests and opinions, in relation to communications matters, of persons living in the part of the United Kingdom for which the committee has been established.
- (5) A committee established under this section may also, at the request of the Consumer Panel, provide advice about those interests and opinions to the Consumer Panel.
- (6) The consent of OFCOM is required for the giving of advice under subsection (5).
- (7) In this section “communications matters” has the same meaning as in section 3.

Commencement Information

I28 S. 20 in force at 29.12.2003 by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), art. 3(1), [Sch. 1](#) (with art. 11)

21 Advisory committee on elderly and disabled persons **U.K.**

- (1) It shall be the duty of OFCOM, in accordance with the following provisions of this section, to exercise their powers under paragraph 14 of the Schedule to the Office of Communications Act 2002 (c. 11) (committees of OFCOM) to establish and maintain a committee to provide the advice specified in this section.
- (2) The committee shall consist of—
- (a) a chairman appointed by OFCOM; and
 - (b) such number of other members appointed by OFCOM as OFCOM think fit.
- (3) In appointing persons to be members of the committee, OFCOM must have regard to the desirability of ensuring that the members of the committee include—
- (a) persons who are familiar with the needs of the elderly; and
 - (b) persons who are familiar with the needs of persons with disabilities.
- (4) The function of the committee shall be to provide advice to OFCOM (including other committees established by OFCOM) about the interests, in relation to communications matters, of—
- (a) the elderly; and

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- (b) persons with disabilities.
- (5) The committee may also, at the request of the Consumer Panel, provide advice about those interests to the Consumer Panel.
- (6) The consent of OFCOM is required for the giving of advice under subsection (5).
- (7) In this section “communications matters” has the same meaning as in section 3.

Commencement Information

I29 S. 21 in force at 29.12.2003 by S.I. 2003/3142, art. 3(1), Sch. 1 (with art. 11)

International matters

22 Representation on international and other bodies **U.K.**

- (1) It shall be the duty of OFCOM to do, as respects the United Kingdom, such of the following things as they are required to do by the Secretary of State—
 - (a) provide representation on behalf of Her Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom on international and other bodies having communications functions;
 - (b) become or serve as a member of an international or other body having such functions;
 - (c) subscribe to such a body;
 - (d) provide representation on behalf of Her Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom at international meetings about communications.
- (2) OFCOM shall also have the power, if requested to do so by the Secretary of State, to do one or more of those things as respects any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or a British overseas territory.
- (3) It shall be the duty of OFCOM to carry out their functions under this section in accordance with such general or specific directions as may be given to them by the Secretary of State.
- (4) The Secretary of State—
 - (a) is not entitled to direct OFCOM to comply with a request made under subsection (2); but
 - (b) may give directions about how OFCOM are to carry out any representative role that they undertake in accordance with such a request.
- (5) In this section—

“communications functions” means—

 - (a) functions relating to the use of the electro-magnetic spectrum for wireless telegraphy;
 - (b) functions relating to the regulation of television or radio broadcasting or the provision of television and radio services ;^{F89} ...
 - (ba) [^{F90}functions relating to postal services; and]
 - (c) any other function which relates to, or is connected with, a matter in respect of which OFCOM have functions;

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“international meetings about communications” means international meetings relating to, or to matters connected with, one or more of the following—

- (a) the use of the electro-magnetic spectrum for wireless telegraphy;
- (b) the regulation of television or radio broadcasting or of the provision of television and radio services;
- (ba) [^{F91}the regulation of postal services;]
- (c) any other matter in respect of which OFCOM have functions.

(6) In relation to—

- (a) a part of the British Islands outside the United Kingdom, or
- (b) a British overseas territory,

the references in subsection (5) to matters in respect of which OFCOM have functions include references to matters corresponding, in the case of that part of those Islands or of that territory, to matters in respect of which OFCOM’s functions are confined to the United Kingdom.

(7) In subsection (5) “television or radio broadcasting” includes the provision by means other than broadcasting of services similar to those provided by television or radio broadcasts.

Textual Amendments

- F89** Word in s. 22(5) omitted (1.10.2011) by virtue of [Postal Services Act 2011 \(c. 5\), s. 93\(2\)\(3\)](#), [Sch. 12 para. 60\(2\)](#); [S.I. 2011/2329, art. 3](#)
- F90** Words in s. 22(5) inserted (1.10.2011) by virtue of [Postal Services Act 2011 \(c. 5\), s. 93\(2\)\(3\)](#), [Sch. 12 para. 60\(2\)](#); [S.I. 2011/2329, art. 3](#)
- F91** Words in s. 22(5) inserted (1.10.2011) by [Postal Services Act 2011 \(c. 5\), s. 93\(2\)\(3\)](#), [Sch. 12 para. 60\(3\)](#); [S.I. 2011/2329, art. 3](#)

Commencement Information

- I30** S. 22 in force at 29.12.2003 by [S.I. 2003/3142, art. 3\(1\)](#), [Sch. 1](#) (with [art. 11](#))

23 Directions for international purposes in respect of broadcasting functions U.K.

(1) This section applies to—

- (a) OFCOM’s functions under the enactments relating to broadcasting; and
- (b) the matters in relation to which those functions are conferred.

(2) It shall be the duty of OFCOM—

- (a) to carry out those functions in accordance with any general or specific directions given to them by the Secretary of State for the purpose mentioned in subsection (3); and
- (b) to carry out such other functions in relation to the matters to which this section applies as they are required to carry out by any general or specific directions so given.

(3) The Secretary of State is not to give a direction under this section except for the purpose of securing compliance, in relation to a matter to which this section applies, with an international obligation of the United Kingdom.

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- (4) A direction under this section must be contained in an order made by the Secretary of State.
- (5) In this section “the enactments relating to broadcasting” means—
- (a) the 1990 Act;
 - (b) the 1996 Act;
 - (c) Part 3 of this Act; and
 - (d) the other provisions of this Act so far as relating to the 1990 Act, the 1996 Act or that Part.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C2** S. 23(1) applied (with modifications) (8.5.2017) by [The Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(Fire and Rescue Functions\) Order 2017 \(S.I. 2017/469\)](#), art. 1(3), **Sch. para. 5**

Commencement Information

- I31** S. 23 in force at 29.12.2003 by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), art. 3(1), **Sch. 1** (with art. 11)

General information functions

24 Provision of information to the Secretary of State **U.K.**

- (1) It shall be the duty of OFCOM to comply with a direction by the Secretary of State to provide him with information falling within subsection (2).
- (2) The information that may be the subject of a direction under this section is any information reasonably required by the Secretary of State for the purpose of enabling him to secure compliance with an international obligation of the United Kingdom.
- (3) Information that is required to be provided by a direction under this section must be provided in such manner and at such times as may be required by the direction.

Commencement Information

- I32** S. 24 in force at 25.7.2003 for specified purposes by [S.I. 2003/1900](#), arts. 1(2), 2(1), **Sch. 1** (with art. 3) (as amended by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), art. 1(3))
- I33** S. 24 in force at 29.12.2003 in so far as not already in force by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), **art. 3(2)** (with art. 11)

[^{F92}24A Provision of information before publication **U.K.**

- (1) OFCOM must provide the Secretary of State, at least 24 hours before publication, with any information that they propose to publish.
- (2) If exceptional circumstances make it impracticable to provide the information to the Secretary of State 24 hours before publication it must instead be provided to the Secretary of State as long before publication as is practicable.
- (3) Subsections (1) and (2) have effect in any particular case subject to any agreement made between the Secretary of State and OFCOM in that case.

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- (4) The Secretary of State may by regulations specify descriptions of information in relation to which the duty under subsection (1) does not apply.
- (5) Before making regulations under subsection (4), the Secretary of State must consult OFCOM.
- (6) Information provided to the Secretary of State under this section may not be disclosed by the Secretary of State during the protected period, except to another Minister of the Crown.
- (7) A Minister of the Crown to whom the information is disclosed under subsection (6) may not disclose the information during the protected period to any other person.
- (8) A Minister of the Crown may not make any representations to OFCOM during the protected period that specify or describe changes that the Minister considers should be made to information that has been provided under this section when it is published.
- (9) In this section—
 - “the protected period”, in relation to information provided to the Secretary of State under this section, means the period beginning with the provision of the information and ending when either of the following occurs—
 - (a) OFCOM publish the information;
 - (b) OFCOM inform the Secretary of State that they consent to the disclosure of the information;
 - “Minister of the Crown” has the same meaning as in the Ministers of the Crown Act 1975.

Textual Amendments

F92 Ss. 24A, 24B inserted (31.7.2017) by [Digital Economy Act 2017 \(c. 30\)](#), ss. **98(2)**, 118(6) (with s. [98\(3\)](#)); [S.I. 2017/765](#), reg. [2\(aa\)](#)

24B Provision of information to assist in formulation of policy **U.K.**

- (1) OFCOM may provide the Secretary of State with any information that they consider may assist the Secretary of State in the formulation of policy.
- (2) Information with respect to a particular business that has been obtained in the exercise of a power conferred by—
 - (a) this Act,
 - (b) the 1990 Act,
 - (c) the 1996 Act,
 - (d) the Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006, ^{F93} ...
 - (e) Part 3 of the Postal Services Act 2011, [^{F94}or]
 - ^{F95}(f) [the Online Safety Act 2023,]

is not, so long as the business continues to be carried on, to be provided to the Secretary of State under this section without the consent of the person for the time being carrying on that business.

[But subsection (2) does not prevent OFCOM providing the Secretary of State with ^{F96}(3) any information that they consider may assist the Secretary of State in the formulation

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of policy in relation to the security of public electronic communications networks or public electronic communications services.]]

[^{F97}(4) Subsection (2) does not apply to information—

- (a) obtained by OFCOM—
 - (i) in the exercise of a power conferred by section 100 of the Online Safety Act 2023 for the purpose mentioned in subsection (6)(c) of that section (information in connection with a consultation about a threshold figure for the purposes of charging fees under that Act), or
 - (ii) in the exercise of a power conferred by section 175(5) of that Act (information in connection with circumstances presenting a threat), and
- (b) reasonably required by the Secretary of State.]

Textual Amendments

- F92** Ss. 24A, 24B inserted (31.7.2017) by [Digital Economy Act 2017 \(c. 30\)](#), **ss. 98(2)**, 118(6) (with s. 98(3)); S.I. 2017/765, reg. 2(aa)
- F93** Word in s. 24B(2)(d) omitted (26.10.2023) by virtue of [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), **ss. 117(2)(a)**, 240(4)
- F94** Word in s. 24B(2)(e) inserted (26.10.2023) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), **ss. 117(2)(b)**, 240(4)
- F95** S. 24B(2)(f) inserted (26.10.2023) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), **ss. 117(2)(c)**, 240(4)
- F96** S. 24B(3) inserted (1.10.2022) by [Telecommunications \(Security\) Act 2021 \(c. 31\)](#), **ss. 12(2)**, 28(2)(b); S.I. 2022/931, reg. 2(b)
- F97** S. 24B(4) inserted (26.10.2023) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), **ss. 117(3)**, 240(4)

25 [^{F98}Information requested by EU bodies] **U.K.**

- (1) This section applies if—
- (a) the European [^{F99}Commission or BEREC requests] OFCOM to provide it with information for the purpose of enabling it to perform any of its functions in relation to electronic communications networks, electronic communications services or associated facilities; and
 - (b) the information is information obtained by OFCOM in the course of carrying out any of their functions under—
 - (i) Part 2; ^{F100} ...
 - (ii) the enactments relating to the management of the radio spectrum that are not contained in that Part [^{F101}; or]
 - ^{F102}(iii) any other enactment relating to the regulation of electronic communications networks and electronic communications services.]

[^{F103}(2) OFCOM may comply with the request if and to the extent that—

- (a) they consider it appropriate to do so in connection with their functions, and
 - (b) in the case of information relating to a particular business, they are satisfied that arrangements exist for preserving confidentiality.]
- (3) If information provided to the European Commission [^{F104}or BEREC] under this section has been obtained by OFCOM from a person who is or, at the time the information was obtained from him, was—
- (a) a communications provider, or
 - (b) a person making associated facilities available,

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OFCOM must notify him that they have provided the information to the Commission [F105 or, as the case may be, to BEREC].

- (4) It shall be for OFCOM to determine the manner in which a notification is given under subsection (3).

Textual Amendments

- F98** S. 25 heading substituted (31.12.2020) by The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (S.I. 2019/246), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 7(5)**; 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)
- F99** Words in s. 25(1)(a) substituted (31.12.2020) by The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (S.I. 2019/246), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 7(2)(a)**; 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)
- F100** Word in s. 25(1)(b)(i) omitted (31.12.2020) by virtue of The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (S.I. 2019/246), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 7(2)(b)(i)**; 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)
- F101** Word in s. 25(1)(b)(ii) inserted (31.12.2020) by The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (S.I. 2019/246), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 7(2)(b)(ii)**; 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)
- F102** S. 25(1)(b)(iii) inserted (31.12.2020) by The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (S.I. 2019/246), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 7(2)(b)(iii)**; 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)
- F103** S. 25(2) substituted (31.12.2020) by The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (S.I. 2019/246), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 7(3)**; 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)
- F104** Words in s. 25(3) inserted (31.12.2020) by The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (S.I. 2019/246), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 7(4)(a)**; 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)
- F105** Words in s. 25(3) inserted (31.12.2020) by The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (S.I. 2019/246), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 7(4)(b)**; 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)

Commencement Information

- I34** S. 25 in force at 25.7.2003 for specified purposes by S.I. 2003/1900, arts. 1(2), 2(1), **Sch. 1** (with art. 3) (as amended by S.I. 2003/3142, art. 1(3))
- I35** S. 25 in force at 29.12.2003 in so far as not already in force by S.I. 2003/3142, **art. 3(2)** (with art. 11)

26 Publication of information and advice for consumers etc. **U.K.**

- (1) OFCOM [F106 must] arrange for the publication of such information and advice about matters in relation to which they have functions as it appears to them to be appropriate to make available to the persons mentioned in subsection (2).
- (2) Those persons are—
- (a) the customers of communications providers;
 - (b) the customers of persons who make associated facilities available;
 - [F107 (ba) any person affected by the application of the electronic communications code (within the meaning of section 106(1));]
 - (c) persons who use electronic communications networks, electronic communications services or associated facilities; F108 ...

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- (d) persons to whom radio and television services are provided or who are otherwise able or likely to take advantage of any of those services.
- [^{F109}(da) United Kingdom users of regulated services;]
- [^{F110}(e) the customers of persons who provide postal services.]
- [^{F111}(2A) In subsection (2)(e) the reference to customers of persons who provide postal services includes—
- (a) persons who wish to be provided with such services,
- (b) persons who are likely to seek to be provided with such services, and
- (c) addressees.]
- (3) In arranging for the publication of information or advice under this section, OFCOM must have regard to the need to exclude from publication, so far as that is practicable, the matters which are confidential in accordance with subsections (4) and (5).
- (4) A matter is confidential under this subsection if—
- (a) it relates specifically to the affairs of a particular body; and
- (b) publication of that matter would or might, in OFCOM’s opinion, seriously and prejudicially affect the interests of that body.
- (5) A matter is confidential under this subsection if—
- (a) it relates to the private affairs of an individual; and
- (b) publication of that matter would or might, in OFCOM’s opinion, seriously and prejudicially affect the interests of that individual.
- (6) The publication of information or advice under this section must be in such manner as OFCOM consider appropriate.
- [^{F112}(7) In this section the following terms have the same meaning as in the Online Safety Act 2023—
- “regulated service” (see section 4 of that Act);
- “United Kingdom user” (see section 227 of that Act).]

Textual Amendments

- F106** Word in s. 26(1) substituted (26.5.2011) by [The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy Regulations 2011 \(S.I. 2011/1210\)](#), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 8(a)** (with Sch. 3 para. 2)
- F107** S. 26(2)(ba) inserted (26.5.2011) by [The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy Regulations 2011 \(S.I. 2011/1210\)](#), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 8(b)** (with Sch. 3 para. 2)
- F108** Word in s. 26(2)(c) omitted (1.10.2011) by virtue of [Postal Services Act 2011 \(c. 5\)](#), s. 93(2)(3), **Sch. 12 para. 61(2)(a)**; S.I. 2011/2329, art. 3
- F109** S. 26(2)(da) inserted (10.1.2024) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), **ss. 119(2)**, 240(1); S.I. 2023/1420, reg. 2(z14)
- F110** S. 26(2)(e) inserted (1.10.2011) by [Postal Services Act 2011 \(c. 5\)](#), s. 93(2)(3), **Sch. 12 para. 61(2)(b)**; S.I. 2011/2329, art. 3
- F111** S. 26(2A) inserted (1.10.2011) by [Postal Services Act 2011 \(c. 5\)](#), s. 93(2)(3), **Sch. 12 para. 61(3)**; S.I. 2011/2329, art. 3
- F112** S. 26(7) inserted (10.1.2024) by [Online Safety Act 2023 \(c. 50\)](#), **ss. 119(3)**, 240(1); S.I. 2023/1420, reg. 2(z14)

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Commencement Information

- I36** S. 26(1)(2)(a)-(c)(3)-(6) in force at 25.7.2003 for specified purposes by [S.I. 2003/1900](#), arts. 1(2), 2(1), [Sch. 1](#) (with [art. 3](#)) (as amended by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), art. 1(3))
- I37** S. 26(1) (2)(a)-(c) (3)-(6) in force at 29.12.2003 in so far as not already in force by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), art. 3(1), [Sch. 1](#) (with [art. 11](#))
- I38** S. 26(2)(d) in force at 29.12.2003 by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), art. 3(1), [Sch. 1](#) (with [art. 11](#))

Employment in broadcasting

27 Training and equality of opportunity **U.K.**

- (1) It shall be the duty of OFCOM to take all such steps as they consider appropriate for promoting the development of opportunities for the training and retraining of persons—
- for employment by persons providing television and radio services; and
 - for work in connection with the provision of such services otherwise than as an employee.
- (2) It shall be the duty of OFCOM to take all such steps as they consider appropriate for promoting equality of opportunity in relation to both—
- employment by those providing television and radio services; and
 - the training and retraining of persons for such employment.
- (3) It shall also be the duty of OFCOM, in relation to such employment, training and retraining, to take all such steps as they consider appropriate for promoting the equalisation of opportunities for disabled persons.
- (4) The reference in subsection (2) to equality of opportunity is a reference to equality of opportunity—
- between men and women; and
 - between persons of different racial groups.
- (5) In this section—
- “disabled” has the same meaning as in ^[F113]the Equality Act 2010 or, in Northern Ireland,] the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (c. 50);
- “racial group” has the same meaning as in the ^[F114]Race Relations Act 1976 (c. 74)]^[F114]Equality Act 2010] or, in Northern Ireland, the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 (S.I. 1997/869 (N.I. 6)).
- (6) The Secretary of State may by order amend subsection (4) by adding any other form of equality of opportunity that he considers appropriate.
- (7) No order is to be made containing provision authorised by subsection (6) unless a draft of the order has been laid before Parliament and approved by a resolution of each House.

Textual Amendments

- F113** Words in s. 27(5) inserted by 2010 c. 15, Sch. 26 Pt. 1 para. 54(a) (as inserted (E.W.S.) (1.10.2010) by [The Equality Act 2010 \(Consequential Amendments, Saving and Supplementary Provisions\) Order 2010](#) (S.I. 2010/2279), art. 1(2), [Sch. 1 para. 5](#)) (see S.I. 2010/2317, art. 2)

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F114 Words in s. 27(5) substituted by 2010 c. 15, Sch. 26 Pt. 1 para. 54(b) (as inserted (E.W.S.) (1.10.2010) by [The Equality Act 2010 \(Consequential Amendments, Saving and Supplementary Provisions\) Order 2010 \(S.I. 2010/2279\)](#), art. 1(2), [Sch. 1 para. 5](#)) (see S.I. 2010/2317, art. 2)

Commencement Information

I39 S. 27 in force at 29.12.2003 by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), art. 3(1), [Sch. 1](#) (with art. 11)

Charging

28 General power to charge for services **U.K.**

- (1) OFCOM may provide a service to which this section applies to any person on such terms as to the making of payments to OFCOM—
 - (a) as they may determine in advance; or
 - (b) as may be agreed between that person and OFCOM.
- (2) This section applies to a service which is provided by OFCOM to a person in the course of carrying out their functions and is neither—
 - (a) a service which OFCOM are under a duty to provide to that person; nor
 - (b) one in respect of which express provision is made by or under an enactment for authorising or forbidding the payment of fees or charges.
- (3) In this section references to providing a service to a person include references to a service consisting in—
 - (a) the giving of advice to that person;
 - (b) the entry of his particulars in a register or other record kept by OFCOM otherwise than in pursuance of an express statutory duty to keep the register or record; or
 - (c) the taking of steps for the purposes of determining whether to grant an application for an entry in a register or record so kept.

Commencement Information

I40 S. 28 in force at 18.9.2003 by [S.I. 2003/1900](#), art. 2(2), [Sch. 2](#)

[^{F115}28A International recognition of satellite frequency assignments: power to charge fees **U.K.**

- (1) This section applies where functions conferred on OFCOM under section 22 include functions of the administration of the United Kingdom under the ITU Radio Regulations.
- (2) OFCOM may require any person to pay them a fee for doing satellite filing work at the request of that person.
- (3) In this section “satellite filing work” means anything connected with obtaining or maintaining international recognition under the ITU Radio Regulations of assignments (or changes in assignments) of radio frequencies to stations in satellite systems or satellite networks.

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- (4) OFCOM may vary from time to time the amount of any fee set by them under this section.
- (5) OFCOM may not require a person to pay a fee under this section unless they have taken such steps as they consider appropriate to bring the fact that they charge the fee, and the amount of the fee, to the attention of those persons who, in their opinion, are likely to be required to pay it.
- (6) As soon as reasonably practicable after the end of each reporting year, OFCOM must publish a statement setting out—
- (a) the aggregate amount of the fees charged under this section that have been received by OFCOM during that year;
 - (b) the aggregate amount of the fees charged under this section during that year which remain outstanding and are likely to be paid or recovered; and
 - (c) the total cost to OFCOM of doing the requested satellite filing work they have done during that year.
- (7) If the total of the amounts set out in a statement under subsection (6)(a) and (b) exceeds the total cost set out under subsection (6)(c), OFCOM must take this into account with a view to securing that the aggregate amount of fees charged under this section in the following reporting year does not exceed the likely total cost to them of doing requested satellite filing work during that year.
- (8) In this section—
- “administration”, “assignment” (of a radio frequency), “station”, “satellite system” and “satellite network” have the same meanings as in the ITU Radio Regulations;
 - “reporting year” means—
 - (a) the period beginning with the coming into force of this section and ending with the next 31st March, or
 - (b) any subsequent period of twelve months beginning with 1st April;
 - “the ITU Radio Regulations” means the radio regulations of the International Telecommunication Union.]

Textual Amendments

F115 S. 28A inserted (31.7.2017) by [Digital Economy Act 2017 \(c. 30\)](#), ss. **101(2)**, 118(6) (with s. 101(4)); S.I. 2017/765, reg. 2(cc)

Guarantees

29 Secretary of State guarantees for OFCOM borrowing **U.K.**

- (1) The Secretary of State may guarantee—
- (a) the repayment of the principal of any borrowing by OFCOM;
 - (b) the payment of interest on any such borrowing; and
 - (c) the discharge of other financial obligations incurred by OFCOM in connection with any such borrowing.

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- (2) The power of the Secretary of State to give a guarantee under this section is a power (subject to subsection (3)) to give it in such manner and on such conditions as he thinks fit.
- (3) The Secretary of State must not give a guarantee under this section if the aggregate of—
 - (a) the amounts that he may be required to pay for fulfilling that guarantee, and
 - (b) the amounts that he may be required to pay for fulfilling other guarantees previously given under this section and still in force,
 exceeds £5 million.
- (4) The Secretary of State may by order substitute another amount for the amount for the time being specified in subsection (3).
- (5) No order is to be made containing provision authorised by subsection (4) unless a draft of the order has been laid before Parliament and approved by a resolution of the House of Commons.
- (6) Immediately after a guarantee is given under this section, the Secretary of State must lay a statement of the guarantee before each House of Parliament.
- (7) Where any sum is paid by the Secretary of State under a guarantee given under this section, he must lay a statement relating to that sum before each House of Parliament as soon as practicable after the end of each of the financial years—
 - (a) beginning with the one in which the sum is paid; and
 - (b) ending with the one in which OFCOM's liabilities under subsection (8) in respect of that sum are finally discharged.
- (8) If sums are paid by the Secretary of State in fulfilment of a guarantee given under this section OFCOM must pay him—
 - (a) such amounts in or towards the repayment to him of those sums as he may direct; and
 - (b) interest, at such rates as he may determine, on amounts outstanding under this subsection.
- (9) Payments to the Secretary of State under subsection (8) must be made at such times and in such manner as he may determine.

Commencement Information

I41 S. 29 in force at 18.9.2003 by [S.I. 2003/1900](#), [art. 2\(2\)](#), [Sch. 2](#)

Provisions supplemental to transfer of functions

30 Transfers of property etc. from pre-commencement regulators **U.K.**

- (1) The Secretary of State may, by a direction to any of the pre-commencement regulators, require that regulator to make one or more schemes for the transfer from that regulator to OFCOM of such of the regulator's property, rights and liabilities as may be specified or described in the direction.

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- (2) Where a pre-commencement regulator is required to make a scheme, the scheme must be made by such date as may be specified in the direction.
- (3) Before making a scheme in pursuance of a direction under subsection (1), a pre-commencement regulator must consult OFCOM.
- (4) A pre-commencement regulator who makes a scheme in pursuance of a direction under subsection (1) shall submit that scheme to the Secretary of State for approval.
- (5) A scheme that is required to be so submitted shall have effect only if, and to the extent that, it is approved by the Secretary of State.
- (6) The Secretary of State, in approving a scheme, may do so subject to such modifications as he thinks fit.
- (7) Where the Secretary of State approves a scheme subject to modifications specified by him, it shall have effect with those modifications.
- (8) A scheme approved by the Secretary of State under this section shall come into force either—
 - (a) if no time is appointed under paragraph (b), at the time when the approval is given; or
 - (b) if the Secretary of State appoints a later time for the coming into force of the scheme (whether when approving the scheme or by subsequently varying a time appointed under this paragraph), at that later time.
- (9) Where a scheme is submitted to the Secretary of State under this section, he must—
 - (a) consult OFCOM about any proposal of his to approve the scheme; and
 - (b) consult both OFCOM and the pre-commencement regulator in question about any modifications subject to which he proposes to give his approval, or about any proposal of his to refuse approval.
- (10) The Secretary of State may, after consulting OFCOM, himself make a scheme for the transfer of property, rights and liabilities—
 - (a) from a pre-commencement regulator to OFCOM; or
 - (b) from himself to OFCOM;and such a scheme shall come into force on such day as the Secretary of State may appoint (whether in the scheme or subsequently).
- (11) The Secretary of State is not to make a scheme for the transfer of property, rights and liabilities from a pre-commencement regulator to OFCOM unless—
 - (a) that regulator has failed to comply with a direction under subsection (1); or
 - (b) that regulator has complied with such a direction by submitting a scheme to the Secretary of State that he has decided not to approve (with or without modifications).
- (12) Schedule 2 (which makes further provision about schemes under this section) shall have effect.

Commencement Information

I42 S. 30 in force at 18.9.2003 by [S.I. 2003/1900](#), art. 2(2), [Sch. 2](#)

Status: Point in time view as at 10/01/2024.

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31 Transitional functions and abolition of pre-commencement regulators **U.K.**

- (1) It shall be the duty of the pre-commencement regulators to take all such steps as are necessary or expedient for ensuring that OFCOM are able effectively to carry out OFCOM's functions from the time when they are vested in OFCOM.
- (2) The pre-commencement regulators, in taking those steps, must comply with every direction given to them by the Secretary of State.
- (3) The pre-commencement regulators and OFCOM shall each have a duty to provide the Secretary of State with all such information and assistance as he may require for the purposes of, or in connection with—
 - (a) his power to give directions under subsection (1) of section 30; and
 - (b) his powers and duties in relation to the approval and making of schemes under that section.
- (4) On such day as the Secretary of State may by order appoint—
 - (a) the office of the Director General of Telecommunications shall be abolished; and
 - (b) the Broadcasting Standards Commission, the Independent Television Commission and the Radio Authority shall cease to exist.
- (5) Section 54 of the Telecommunications Act 1984 (c. 12) (which provides for the establishment of advisory bodies) shall cease to have effect; and each of the bodies established under that section shall cease to exist on such day as the Secretary of State may by order appoint.
- (6) Different days may be appointed under this section for the Director General of Telecommunications and for each of the different bodies mentioned in subsections (4) (b) and (5).

Commencement Information

I43 S. 31 partly in force; s. 31(1)(2)(3)(4)(6) in force at Royal Assent see s. 411(3)

I44 S. 31(5) in force at 29.12.2003 by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), [art. 3\(1\)](#), [Sch. 1](#) (with [art. 11](#))

Status:

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Changes to legislation:

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