

Welcome to the March 2022 newsletter



It finally feels like life is moving towards a new normal, it is certainly nice to see the team more frequently. We have had a few changes since the last newsletter with Barbara Hughes returning to the FCA and the

arrival of two new joiners to the team, both from Ofcom. Mark Austin who will help with the cost of capital/investment work and Diarmuid Cowan who will take on data and assist with the vulnerability work.

The team have been working hard in the cost of capital space, helping to facilitate the work from the BEIS paper. This has been a strong collaboration between members and the work is progressing well.

We have also published the D&I pledges and data use joint statement and would like to thank all our members for working together with us in these areas.

The UKRN team is working towards the publication next month of our annual review and our forward look which will be based around our multi-year plan so please look out for that.

Attricia Archer, UKRN Director

A focus on the most vulnerable

UKRN's vulnerability network provides an important forum for members to consider consumer interests, particularly the needs of the most vulnerable in society. Our meetings and activities have been put into sharper focus by the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis.

I have found chairing and participating in network meetings to be invaluable. Our regular meetings provide an opportunity to collaborate and work closer together on common challenges, as well as sharing insights and learning at what has been an incredibly challenging time.

Priority areas

Recent network areas of focus include:

- Debt and affordability: This has been a key area of focus since the Covid-19 pandemic, with UKRN members collaborating closely to understand the impact on consumers across sectors. This has included working with BEIS to provide advice on the support available for people struggling to pay essential bills because of the pandemic.
- Data sharing and use: We recently published a joint statement on data use for five UKRN member regulators: [data use joint statement](#). It highlights our shared aims for how data use can help to better support all consumers, including those in vulnerable circumstances, across all our sectors.
- Consumer representative group engagement: Our network meetings provide members with the opportunity to connect with a variety of consumer representative groups. This year we have heard from Citizens Advice, Fair By Design, Plain Numbers, Consumer Council for Water and many others.
- Finally, we have also tapped into and benefited from UKRN's recently established expert panel – the panel has added value to our work by providing both advice and challenge on our priority areas of focus.

Forward work plan

UKRN's workplan for 2022/3 will be published shortly. In the next year we will continue our focus on debt and affordability, as the current cost of living crisis continues to impact. Several members will also be participating in a Vulnerability Academy to ensure we continue to improve our understanding of vulnerability and embed this in our network meetings and beyond into regulatory practice.

Thanks

Finally, I would like to thank members of the network for their positive contributions and particularly the UKRN team (Agnese and Kate) for all their invaluable help and support behind the scenes. I look forward to working with members to deliver our work programme over the year ahead.

Andrew Lincoln, UKRN vulnerability network chair



Next Generation NEDs

Placements have begun across 5 UKRN members and the working group are gathering lessons learnt, planning for the next wave in 2022 and building the wider community of interest.

Collaboration network

Just before the Christmas break, Kate Mitchenall chaired the collaboration network's focus group on debt and affordability, which is a key theme featuring within UKRN's vulnerability network 2022 workplan. On 24 March Kate and Steve will also be presenting UKRN's annual review and workplan at the collaboration network's Spring annual conference.

UKRN annual review

In December, we began drafting our 2021 annual review and 2022 workplan. The review provides a look into UKRN's achievements in 2021 and shows how the team have added value and been flexible to our members' changing priorities. This has been a collaborative piece of work and our members have provided both feedback from 2021 and input into priorities for 2022. We are finalising the document with our governance networks and aim to publish on our website in April.

Vulnerability update

Throughout December and January the vulnerability network has been busy setting its priorities for the new year. The vulnerability workplan cuts across various themes, including first and foremost debt and affordability, data use, digital exclusion etc. As well as finalising the workplan, UKRN and Money Advice Trust are currently working towards the setup of the Vulnerability Academy for regulators. We are also facilitating a number of vulnerability workshops, covering financial domestic abuse (in March), cost of living (April) and debt messaging (June).

Cyber security network

The first meeting of 2022 was held on 8th February with a focused group discussion on enforcement activity and included a special guest; Rosemary Greenhill from the Drinking Water Quality Regulator. The meetings are held quarterly and topics for 2022 focused group discussion will include;

1. Communication
2. Scoping of critical systems
3. Internet of Things
4. Enforcement

Climate change network

We are very pleased to announce that Barbara Perata-Smith, Principal Environment Strategy at CAA, joins us as new chairperson for the CCN, following the departure of James Jenkins from Ofwat, who moves onto a new opportunity at UK Export Finance. The network thanks James for his support and leadership over the past year.

Publications

Data recording

During July 2021, UKRN hosted a roundtable on data recording. Some members of the group decided to work on a joint policy statement and commit to working together on "encouraging the use of, and innovation in, data to improve vulnerable customer outcomes". The statement outlines shared aims and a joint approach to the problem of data use - [data use statement](#). This work also continues to feature in the vulnerability network 2022 workplan.

UKRN member regulator D&I pledges

Since Spring 2021, UKRN have facilitated a number of workshops with members on the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

In recognition of the importance of this work, members have agreed to a set of pledges - [D&I pledges](#)

Events

Young professionals network / regulators in Scotland exchange – joint data event

The YPN and RSE jointly hosted three data events, focusing on how regulators use data internally. Speakers from Ofcom, the FCA and Ofgem shared insights on how their regulators utilise data internally and offered perspectives on the different approaches taken in using data. The third and final event took place in March with Ofcom, FCA and CMA discussing the use of algorithms.

WIG

In November, we co-hosted the second of the years sessions with Whitehall Industry Group on COVID-19's impact on consumer debt - cross-sector approaches to economic recovery, where one of our expert panel members, Mick McAteer, presented his thoughts. The next session is in April and the topic for discussion is Regulation and Emerging Technologies.

What's coming up

UKRN are co-hosting another event on 28 April on Regulation and Emerging Technologies: Balancing agility with certainty [WIG/UKRN event link](#)

The rapid advent of disruptive and emerging technologies such as AI, UAVs and 3D printing has the potential to impact all regulated industries in the UK, as well as representing huge opportunities for economic growth and job creation. WIG is delighted to partner with the UK Regulators Network (UKRN) to discuss how regulators can effectively work with businesses to adapt to ever-changing technological contexts; continuing to support fair competition, investment and innovation, alongside consumer protection.

Join our expert panel for your opportunity to:

- Learn how the Regulatory Horizons Council (RHC) and UKRN are working with key stakeholders to futureproof the UK regulatory landscape
- Discuss how we can balance consumers and investors need for certainty, with the agility required to respond to emerging and disruptive technologies
- Pose your questions to the speakers during a live Q&A

Changes to the team

Barbara Hughes returns to FCA, January 2022



At the end of January, Barbara returned to the FCA after a year with UKRN. During this time, Barbara supported our Chairs meetings, expert panel, Comms Directors and strategy networks, as well as supporting external events. We wish Barbara well and

thank her for the excellent support that she provided to the wider UKRN team.

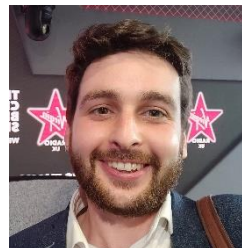
Mark Austin joins from Ofcom, February 2022



Mark joined the UKRN in February 2022 on secondment from Ofcom, where he was Head of Engineering Projects in the Spectrum Engineering Team, leading Radio Frequency measurements projects, such as 5G benchmarking

and 5G EMF surveys. He is looking forward to using the knowledge gained from his recent MBA in the fields of Cost of Capital and Net Zero investment with the UKRN, an interesting change after a 34 year career in electronics and radio engineering.

Diarmuid Cowan joins from Ofcom, March 2022



Diarmuid joined the UKRN in March 2022 on secondment from Ofcom, where he worked in Online Strategy & Planning, examining potential grey areas in online regulation, researching approaches to possible regulation of algorithms, and exploring exogenous risks to communications in the UK. Diarmuid is looking forward to leading on the Vulnerability and Data Strategy networks, as well as supporting young professionals across member regulators.



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Contact the UKRN team

For questions about the UKRN, or to sign up to our newsletter, please get in touch with the team:

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