Gigabit Take-up Advisory Group
Terms of Reference

1. Background

It is vital that consumers and businesses across the UK have the right connections for their needs. More than ever, consumers rely on good connections, not just for entertainment and to stay in touch with friends and family, but to perform everyday tasks: to work, shop and bank. Businesses are now even more reliant on good quality connectivity to survive and thrive, from engaging customers and adopting technologies, to exporting online. For the economy as a whole, good connectivity can lead to improvements in productivity, transformations in public services, greater innovation and more flexible working.

The Government's ambition is for nationwide gigabit connectivity by 2025. While significant work has already been undertaken to ensure the right environment is in place for the supply of these connections, stimulating the demand for them is equally important. To ensure that consumers and businesses across the UK are ready to take advantage of these connections as they become available, the Government has asked Which?, the FSB and CBI to lead a Gigabit Take-Up Advisory Group (GigaTAG).

2. Challenge Statement

All consumers and businesses across the UK should be able to understand the benefits that gigabit-capable broadband offers them and be ready to take advantage of it when it becomes available in their area. At present, even though gigabit-capable infrastructure is being built, it is not clear whether consumers and businesses will upgrade to these connections as they are rolled out. There could be a number of reasons why they may choose not to upgrade, for example they may not understand the capabilities of these new broadband networks.

This means that consumers and businesses will be unable to experience the benefits of this improved connectivity, while industry will struggle to make a return on their investment, which will impact on future rollout plans. In addition, the transition away from copper-based broadband products may risk more disruption to customers, without a scale migration in advance.

3. Purpose

The Gigabit Take-Up Advisory Group (GigaTAG) has been set up to advise on a strategic, evidence based approach to stimulating demand among consumers and businesses for gigabit-capable broadband connections. GigaTAG will represent consumers and business across the whole of the UK and seek a wide range of views from a diverse group of stakeholders.

It will report back to the Government in Spring 2021 with recommendations for government, regulators, industry and other groups, to help ensure that all consumers and businesses across the UK are ready to take advantage of the benefits of gigabit connectivity.

4. Proposed scope

There are a range of issues that could be usefully discussed by the Group. However, we propose that the GigaTAG should focus primarily on the following key themes given there is already existing evidence and debate around what more could be done in these areas to help support the demand for gigabit capable connectivity:

- **Consumer understanding, information and terminology.** The GigaTAG will aim to understand what consumers need to be able to engage effectively with gigabit connectivity and take advantage of these connections. It will consider the consumer understanding, appetite and need for gigabit connectivity and what information might help consumers assess the benefits of a better quality connection.

- **Other factors that may influence consumer take-up.** The group will also consider other factors that could encourage or inhibit consumer take-up. It will look at the lessons that can be learnt from the rollout and subsequent take-up of superfast broadband. The Group will consider all consumers, including those in the different nations, rural areas, as well as people in vulnerable circumstances.

- **Business take-up and the role of employers.** This will include consideration of key barriers to gigabit adoption across different business groups (SMEs, rural businesses etc.), gaps in existing support, and policy recommendations to drive business take up (potentially including the development of clear use cases to encourage business take up). The group will also consider the role that employers can play in driving demand for gigabit connectivity.

The Advisory Group will focus on those consumers and businesses that already have a broadband connection and could be encouraged to upgrade to gigabit-capable connections. However, evidence will also be collected in relation to those who currently do not purchase a broadband connection.

5. Evidence review

It is critical that the Advisory Group takes an evidence based approach when forming its recommendations. To ensure this, it will undertake an evidence review to help inform its work. The Group will issue a call for evidence from other organisations with interests in this area. This will ensure that the GigaTAG draws on existing evidence related to the demand for gigabit connectivity.

Once this evidence review is complete, the Advisory Group will consider where there are evidence gaps and what further research may be useful to help inform and shape its recommendations. For example, it may undertake additional primary research to understand current consumer thoughts and perceptions about gigabit connectivity or qualitative research to test recommendations prior to them being included in the final report.

6. Membership

- Which? (Chair)

- CBI (vice-Chair)
- FSB (vice-Chair)
- Ofcom
- Broadband Stakeholder Group (BSG)
- Internet Service Providers' Association (ISPA)
- Be the Business
- DCMS (observer)
- Good Things Foundation (external advisor)

Alongside these members, the Advisory Group will engage with specific stakeholders on an ongoing basis throughout the process. It will seek diverse views from a range of stakeholders across the UK to ensure that all perspectives are considered.

Throughout, the GigaTAG will engage with a range of bodies representing different groups of consumers and businesses, for example, those in different nations, rural areas and those in vulnerable circumstances. This will help to ensure that the final recommendations take a holistic approach, and are supported by a broad range of stakeholders.

7. Meetings

The taskforce will convene regular roundtable meetings, bringing together a small group of experts to look at the specific issues related to the demand for gigabit connectivity across the UK. Further detail on each meeting will be provided separately.

8. Timeframe

The government has requested an interim progress report in Autumn 2020, followed by a full report setting out a range of recommendations in Spring 2021.