

## CC STAKEHOLDER SURVEY RESPONSE

The Competition Commission (CC) has [published](#) the results of its latest Stakeholder Perception Survey.

The survey was commissioned in order to monitor stakeholders' levels of satisfaction with the CC's performance and track any changes from the previous study conducted in 2007. GfK NOP carried out the survey during September and October 2009, conducting a total of 303 interviews with stakeholders. Stakeholders included individuals from businesses, government departments, trade associations, consumer advocacy organizations or professional advisers, who had either been involved in an inquiry or had a longer-term relationship with the CC during the period since the 2007 survey.

Overall satisfaction with the CC was highly positive with two-fifths (41 per cent) of stakeholders giving a high overall satisfaction rating—a significant increase on the previous survey. The average satisfaction rating among participants has also risen very slightly since 2007. The CC also performed well on the two factors most important to stakeholders—'clarity and thoroughness' and 'transparency'.

The CC improved on virtually all statements relating to service elements in inquiries, performing highest on 'sticking to the timetable it set or providing reasons for any changes' and 'clearly explaining its decisions in plain language'. It also scored highly on attributes with over four-fifths of respondents agreeing that the 'Competition Commission consults in an open and fair way'.

The survey also highlighted some areas of stakeholder dissatisfaction. Business main parties were the least likely to be positive about the CC, particularly those in receipt of a 'negative' outcome. The CC's lowest scores related to 'understanding its impact' on organizations and the demands that its investigations make on parties.

The CC is assessing the actions it will be taking in response to these findings. Highlighted below are some of the key areas where stakeholders indicated that improvement was required together with the action the CC will be taking in response to the survey.

The survey revealed that business main parties were unhappy about the burden placed by CC processes on their business. A CC inquiry is an intensive and at times burdensome process and the CC endeavours to take account of the burden placed on business by information requests and the necessary liaison during an inquiry. Before an information request is made, the inquiry group and staff team consider the necessity of the request being made and the impact it will have on the party required to submit it. At the end of an inquiry, the CC's staff evaluate the use that was made of the data which was requested in order to check that overly burdensome requests are not made and to enable the CC to learn from its experience on inquiries and not to make unnecessary requests. In the light of this survey finding, the CC will give a high priority to ensuring that the lessons from this evaluation are communicated effectively to members and staff.

The survey indicated that parties were unhappy with the time allowed to submit all the information asked for. This is an issue that is kept under review by the CC. Feedback from stakeholders suggests that minimizing overall inquiry length is also very important; therefore there is a limit to the flexibility that can be agreed with parties regarding the time allowed for information requests without compromising overall inquiry length. The CC is shortening its timetables and streamlining its processes and this necessarily has an impact on the time parties will be allowed to respond to an information request.

While the CC scored highly on 'explaining its decisions in plain language', it did less well on 'making well reasoned decisions based on sound analysis'; the CC will assess how it can improve this score and it will continue its work to ensure all of the analysis carried out on inquiries is explained clearly in its reports.

The survey suggested that the CC could improve on 'being up to date on policies and practices in your industry and market sector'. The CC expects that improvements can be made in this area with increased use of site visits, greater use of presentations from the parties on their industry and occasional use of expert panels on inquiries.

Overall the CC takes the view that in response to this survey it should do more to help stakeholders understand how the CC works, its role and its processes. It intends to address this by providing clearer guidance to parties at the start of inquiries both in meetings and in written documents.