

2018: A year of change at UKRN

2018 has seen a huge amount of change for the UK Regulators' Network with a new UKRN team now in place: Emily Keaney has taken over as the new Director, with Seema Mistry and Adam Schwarz as the two new UKRN Managers. We continue to be supported by Karen Sharpe, our Administrator.

We have also been making progress on the 2018/19 [UKRN Work Programme](#), while starting work on developing the Work Programme for 2019/20. This will reflect the announcement in [Budget 2018](#), which set out our members' aspirations to increase the capacity of the UKRN in order to help address shared challenges such as adapting to technological change, delivering future infrastructure and protecting vulnerable consumers.

On 1 November 2018, UKRN published **'Making better use of data to identify customers in vulnerable situations: A follow-up report'**. The report provides an assessment of how water and energy companies are utilising data sharing to support vulnerable consumers in the water and energy sectors. An overview is provided on the next page.

Over the summer period, UKRN began its **Vulnerability Work Programme**, designed to coordinate and lead cross-sector work to support vulnerable consumers in regulated sectors. This work includes exploring the use of minimum standards and industry best practice, and forming a project group to draft and coordinate guidance on Power of Attorney with the Office of Public Guardian, alongside other work resulting from the [BEIS Consumer Green Paper](#).

UKRN held a [third conference on UK infrastructure regulation](#) with the Long-Term Infrastructure Investors Association (LTIIA) on 6 June 2018, bringing together executives from UK regulators, institutional investors in UK infrastructure, fund managers, multilateral institutions, advisers and industry bodies.

The [Annual UKRN Cost of Capital Update Report](#) and a **UKRN Position Paper On The Use Of Inflation Indices** were published in June 2018, following work and research by the UKRN Cost of Capital Network.

UKRN held its **third annual conference** on 23 April 2018, which brought together 120 representatives from the UKRN's 12 member regulators, government departments, think tanks and other stakeholders. Two morning panel sessions examined data and innovation, while five afternoon workshops explored a range of topics. Planning is now underway for our **2019 conference!** If there is anything you would like to see at conference 2019 please get in touch with one of the UKRN team.



Dermot Nolan opens the 2018 conference

A joint **workshop on 'Brexit Day One – Through the Consumer Lens'** was held on 6 March 2018 with the Whitehall and Industry Group. The workshop brought together regulators, consumer groups and the private sector.

Meet the new UKRN Office

60 seconds with Seema Mistry

Meet Seema Mistry, one of the UKRN's new Managers.



What is your role at the UKRN? Tell us a bit about it...

I see the role as understanding what is important to our members and stakeholders and finding commonalities between them, where joint working can add value. At UKRN we're responsible for the management of an extensive work programme, which includes policy projects and a large portfolio of internal and external engagement. Our main stakeholders are senior colleagues from other regulators, central government, think tanks and consumer bodies so stakeholder engagement is central to the role alongside the need (and ability) to grasp new, varied topics quickly.

What are the highlights and challenges of being a Manager?

Highlights: the variety of different topics that we work on & the fascinating people we get to meet as part of that. Challenges: Getting to grips with the intricacies of so many different sectors in a short space of time

What do you get up to in your free time?

Any free time I have is usually spent chasing my incredibly energetic 2-year old and walking the dog (a white

Labrador), however I also volunteer for Guide Dogs for the Blind. I act as a 'sighted guide' for a visually impaired person whilst their Guide Dog has a well-earned run in the park and I also actively support their campaigning work.

If I bumped into you in the kitchen, what should I ask you?

If I'd like another cup of tea. The answer is usually yes!

And finally, what country would you love to visit and why?

Iceland for the Northern Lights and hot springs, which have fascinated me for years.



Publications

Making better use of data to identify customers in vulnerable situations: A follow-up report

For consumers in vulnerable circumstances accessing the support they need across multiple providers can be time consuming and stressful. Safe and secure sharing of data across water and energy companies, with customer consent, can reduce this burden and enable companies to offer those consumers seamless priority support.

Ofgem, Ofwat and the UKRN have published a report showing energy and water companies are making progress in putting this kind of data sharing in place. However, rolling it out across England and Wales will require continued focus to overcome challenges around customer consent, staff training and data quality. The report also challenges energy and water companies to work together more to improve services for vulnerable consumers, and regulators to explore the possibility of extending these kinds of initiatives to other sectors.

Report extract

The pilot shows that there has been **significant progress towards cross-sector data sharing**, but continued focus will be needed for a successful roll out in 2020. Key challenges include the requirement for effective training of front line staff, technical issues in matching data sets, and data accuracy. Evidence shows that **human interaction is key** in gaining customer consent to share data and it will be essential that staff across all companies are given sufficient training to be able to articulate the benefits of data sharing and maintain enthusiasm ahead of national roll out.



Regulators will continue to explore what further help is needed for customers in vulnerable situations and how collaborating on utilising data can support them. UKRN encourages regulators to consider extending data sharing to other sectors, where similar support is available for PSR customers, and how PSR sign-up processes could be coordinated and simplified across sectors.

Volunteers needed to help us arrange the 2019 UKRN Annual Conference!

Would you like to get involved in interesting work, meet colleagues across other regulators and grow professionally? We are already planning our 2019 UKRN Annual Conference and are looking for volunteers to help us arrange the event. Roughly one afternoon a week.

Please get in touch to discuss if interested!



Quick links to previous data sharing publications

- [Making better use of data](#): identifying customers in vulnerable situations report, October 2017
- [Making better use of data](#): identifying customers in vulnerable situations (appendices), October 2017

UKRN Project Lead secondee opportunity

Join a dynamic and fast-paced cross-sector team!

The UKRN is seeking a six-month secondee to serve as a Project Lead, working across our member regulators on the UKRN's response to the BEIS Consumer Green Paper. The role will have a particular focus on driving forward work on the development of cross-sector performance scorecards. Working as part of a small team, the UKRN Project Lead will also help ensure progress and delivery of the UKRN's wider work plan.

Key to the role is building relationships with colleagues from across the regulators, as well as government and consumer bodies. The successful individual will be required to develop an understanding of the issues across multiple sectors and will participate in high-level conversations with senior figures from across the regulators.

We are currently accepting applications to take on the role either on a full-time or part-time basis.

Please contact Seema Mistry for more information – seema.mistry@fca.org.uk

Coming up...

November – UKRN Vulnerability Network workshop with Money and Mental Health, examining minimum standards and best practice as regulatory tools for supporting vulnerable consumers.

10 December – UKRN Strategy Network Seminar on 'resilience', with Lord Toby Harris from EIS, Liz Weston from the Cabinet Office (Critical Sector Security & Resilience) and Rob Hall from London Resilience.

18 December – UKRN on Tour at Ofcom – an introductory session to UKRN and its activities.

New UKRN office contacts

Emily Keaney, UKRN Director (Emily.Keaney@ofcom.org.uk), Seema Mistry (UKRN Manger (Seema.Mistry@fca.org.uk), Adam Schwarz, UKRN Manager (Adam.UKRN@ssro.gov.uk)